

**Prof. Suzanne M. Robbins**  
205 Anderson Hall  
[Suzanne.Robbins@ufl.edu](mailto:Suzanne.Robbins@ufl.edu)  
Office Hours: W/F 11:45-2:15 pm

### POS 2041— Various

Lecture: MW 9:35-10:25 ZOOM

Discussion: R/F various ZOOM

Links to class/office hours on Canvas



### Discussion Section Leaders

- Jacob Caldwell  
[jacobcaldwell@ufl.edu](mailto:jacobcaldwell@ufl.edu)  
OH: Fridays, 12-1 pm  
Sections: 19859, 19892 (Fridays)
- Kristen Gary  
[kristengary@ufl.edu](mailto:kristengary@ufl.edu)  
OH: Mondays, 3-4 pm  
Sections: 19888, 19858 (Thursdays)
- Montray Love  
[Montray.love@ufl.edu](mailto:Montray.love@ufl.edu)  
OH: Thursdays 1-2 pm  
Sections: 19887, 19893 (Fridays)
- Torrian Pace  
[tmpace@ufl.edu](mailto:tmpace@ufl.edu)  
OH: Wednesdays 10:30 am-12 pm  
Sections: 19890, 19889 (Thursdays)

### Course Goals

- Differentiate between myths and reality of American politics
- Distinguish between assumptions and evidence in evaluating arguments
- Evaluate the credibility of public information
- Assess the validity of assumptions
- Apply what you learn substantively to others areas of civic life
- Develop critical thinking skills

# American Federal Government

## The University of Florida

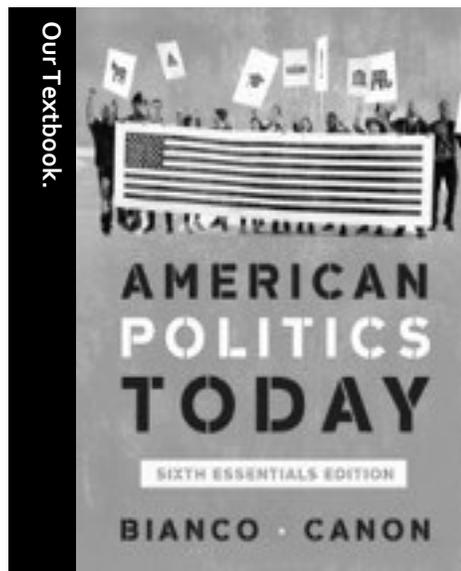
Fall 2020

### Course Overview

This class provides a college-level introduction to American Politics and Government. Students are expected to improve their knowledge necessary for informed civic participation. Each week is an introduction to an important topic in American government to prepare you for further study in upper division Political Science courses.

The underlying theme of this class is the tension between individual liberty and collective responsibility. We will use the 2020 elections, racial justice, and COVID as our guiding examples and discussion prompts (along with other contemporary political issues). We will discuss process, politics as conflict and compromise, and how politics is everywhere. The electoral incentive will be prevalent throughout the semester, as we seek to understand why things are the way they are, not what they should be. Our discussions will include some historical and current events. By the end of the course, students should be able to critically evaluate claims about the U.S. political system using empirical evidence.

This course satisfies a Social and Behavioral Science (S) General Education requirement, and is required of all Political Science and College of Journalism majors. It is also a prerequisite to many other courses in American politics in the Department of Political Science.



### Weekly Pattern

During lectures (M/W, ZOOM), I will present the basic structure of various aspects of the American political system. We will focus more on the why than the descriptive element though at times description and history will be covered. The PowerPoint slides are available on canvas, but will not replace note-taking. **Lectures and Discussions are NOT recorded.**

I encourage thoughtful participation at all times. The Polling option in Zoom is useful for taking quick opinion polls or assessing your understanding of what I have said. I also make time for additional free-form discussion especially of current events in the major newspapers. We will use the chat feature and breakout rooms in Zoom to do so.

Essays and exams will assess what you have learned.

Discussion sections (with TAs, R/F) focus on discussions of weekly readings, assignments, and current events.

# VOTE!

### How to Succeed in this Class

**Go to class (ZOOM).** The lectures emphasize what information is most important and explain the material. Discussion sections go into detail on an important related topic. You cannot do well if you skip.

**Read** the book (*American Politics Today, 6th Essentials Edition*, Bianco and Canon, from W.W. Norton, 2019). You should also read *The New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*. UF offers free subscriptions. You will be able to follow the material more easily, participate more fully, and take better notes.

Complete all the assignments on time and **do not miss exams.**

**Visit me or your TA** during office hours if you have questions. Links to our “Zoom Offices” are on Canvas.

## Reading Schedule

### Rule of Law & Rights:

Aug. 31	Who Governs (Ch. 1)
Sep. 2	The Constitution (Ch. 2)
Sep. 3/4	Discussion: Pandemic Voting
Sep. 7	NO CLASS: Labor Day
Sep. 9	The Constitution (Ch. 2)
Sep. 10/11	Discussion: Racial Justice
Sep. 14/16	Federalism (Ch. 3)
Sep. 17/18	Discussion: COVID
Sep. 21/23	Civil Rights (Ch. 5)
Sep. 24/25	Discussion: Mass Incarceration
Sep. 28	<b>EXAM 1</b>

### Elections 2020:

Sep. 30	Public Opinion (Ch. 6)
Oct. 1/2	Discussion: Conspiracies & Social Media
Oct. 5	Public Opinion (Ch. 6)
Oct. 7	Political Parties (Ch. 7)
Oct. 8/9	Discussion: 2020 Forecast
Oct. 12	Political Parties (Ch. 7)
Oct. 14	Interest Groups (Ch. 9)
Oct. 15/16	Discussion: 2020 Spending
Oct. 19	Interest Groups (Ch. 7)
Oct. 21	Elections (Ch. 8)
Oct. 22/23	Discussion: Social Protest
Oct. 26/28	Elections (Ch. 8)
Oct. 29/30	Discussion: 2020 Election
Nov. 2	<b>EXAM 2</b>

### Policy & Governance:

Nov. 4	Congress/Elections (Ch.10)
Nov. 5/6	Discussion: 2020 Election
Nov. 9	Congress (Ch. 10)
Nov. 11	NO CLASS: Veteran's Day
Nov. 12/13	Discussion: Gerrymanders
Nov. 16/18	The Presidency (Ch. 11)
Nov. 19/20	Discussion: COVID Leaders
Nov. 23	The Bureaucracy (Ch. 12)
Nov 25-27	NO CLASS: Thanksgiving
Nov. 30/Dec. 2	The Courts (Ch. 13)
Dec. 3/4	Discussion: COVID & Liberty
Dec. 7/9	Civil Liberties (Ch. 4)
Dec. 17	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>

## Writing Assignments

Oct. 2	Essay 1 (Racial Justice)
Nov. 6	Essay 2 (Elections 2020)
Dec. 9	Essay 3 (COVID)

## Exam Dates

Sep. 28	Exam 1
Nov. 2	Exam 2
Dec. 17	Exam 3 (12:30-2:30 pm)

Have a question? More information is on Canvas!

## How Students are Evaluated and Graded

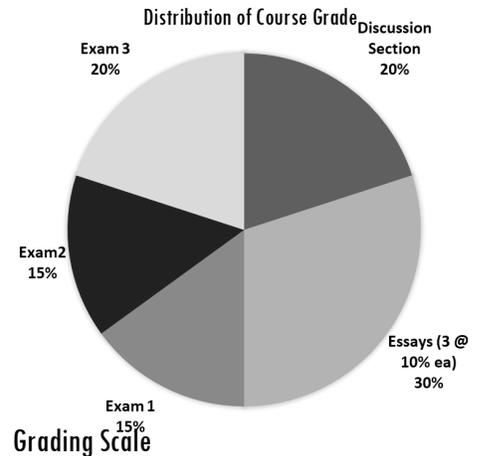
**Exams:** Three exams test your mastery of the material covered in lecture, discussion, reading, and current events. The exams will contain questions of fact, concepts, interpretation, and application. Multiple choice questions may have more than one answer that appears correct; you will have to distinguish between the responses to choose the best answer in light of what we covered in class. (Exams 1 & 2 are 15% each; the final is 20% of the course grade.)

**Essays:** You will write three essays on assigned topics. Turned in via Canvas, these will be graded by your TA. No late assignments will be accepted. (10% each)

**Participation/Attendance:** Attendance in the lectures is expected. It is required for discussion section meetings. In both cases, Zoom automatically records your attendance when you login with your UF credentials.

**Discussion:** TAs will assign 20% percent of the course grade based on performance in discussion sections including quizzes, participation, discussion board posts, and attendance.

**More details about grading & course policies are on Canvas.**



Lower boundaries for grades:

A	91.0%	C+	75%
A-	88.0%	C	71%
B+	85.0%	C-	68%
B	81.0%	D+	65%
B-	78.0%	D	61%

Note that 84.97% is less than 85.0%, and is therefore a "B". I only round the final course grade, and only to the nearest 10th.

## Policies and Other Requirements (the fine print)

**Contacting Us, Office Hours:** Please contact me or your TA if you need to discuss matters related to class. To protect your federal privacy rights, we cannot discuss your grade(s) over the phone, in front of the "class" or via non-official email. Always use your UFL email address. You should contact the UF help desk at 352-392-4357 to resolve technical issues with Canvas.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required in lecture and discussion section. Zoom records your presence. Students failing to attend class during the first week may be dropped from the course; excessive absences could result in a failing grade. The Undergraduate Catalog Regulations can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>. Please contact Dr. Robbins if you will miss lecture and your TA if you will miss discussion for documented absences (illness, academic/athletic competitions). Lectures and discussion are NOT recorded.

**Make-up Work:** All assignments are due when assigned. Canvas will assess a 5% per day penalty automatically to late work. Make-up exams will be offered only in documented emergencies. You must notify Dr. Robbins in writing in advance or within 24 hours of the exam. Make-up exams must be completed within one week of the original. *No early final exams, don't ask.*

**Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback is available at [gatorevals.gg.ufl.edu/students/](http://gatorevals.gg.ufl.edu/students/). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or [viaufl.bluer.com/ufl/](http://viaufl.bluer.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at [gatorevals.gg.ufl.edu/public-results/](http://gatorevals.gg.ufl.edu/public-results/).

**Disability Services:** Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/>. Please share your accommodation letter (and discuss your needs) with Dr. Robbins as early as possible.

**Plagiarism/Cheating:** NOT tolerated. Cheating/plagiarism will result in zero for the assignment and will be reported to the SCCR. Students are bound by the UF Honor Pledge: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>.

**Current UF Grading Policies/Grade Points:** Information on current UF grading policies for assigning grade points is here: [catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/](http://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/).

More information regarding course policies is on Canvas. General undergraduate policies are in the Student Catalog: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/Pages/academic-regulations.aspx>.