American Federal Government

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Lecture Meets:
8:30-9:20 am M/W
NPB, Rm 1001
Sections meet Th/F as noted on your One.UF schedule. (Fourteen Sections)

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 other areas of civic life

Develop critical thinking skills

Course Overview

This class provides a college-level introduction to American Federal Government. Students are expected to improve their knowledge necessary for informed civic participation. Each week introduces 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 how the logic of elections and institutional rules structure outcomes in American politics. 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. 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 require- ment providing instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and underlying theory or methodologies used in the social and behavioral sciences. Students will learn to identify, describe, and explain social institutions, structures or processes. These courses emphasize the effective application of accepted problem-solving techniques. Students will apply formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions, as well as the evaluation of opinions, outcomes or human behavior. Students are expected to assess and analyze ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions. Finally, it covers these Civic Literacy Competencies:

1. Understanding of the basic principles and practices of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government;
2. An understanding of the United States Constitution and its application;
3. Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-government; and
4. An understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation and landmark executive actions and their impact on law and society.

How to Succeed

Go to class. Lectures emphasize and explain important concepts and theories beyond the text. Discussion sections provide opportunities to debate important related topics. **PowerPoints are available on Canvas but will not replace notetaking.**

Read assigned readings, including:

· Bianco, W. and D. Canon. 2023.*American Politics Today, 8th Core Edition,* W.W. Norton.
· Emenaker, R., and J. Monroe, J., eds. 2022. *Current Debates in American Government, 3rd Ed,* Oxford University Press
· *The Federalist Papers*. (selected)
· *The New York Times or Wall Street Journal.*

The Bianco/Canon is linked in Canvas, but **you must opt-in to UF All Access to read the book; the *Current Debates* reader is an e-book.** *The Federalist Papers* are linked in Canvas and UF provides free subscriptions to both newspapers. More information about accessing the reading is on page 3.

 Visit me or your TA during office hours if necessary.

Complete all the assignments on time.

Weekly Pattern

This course includes lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays that will introduce material, and discussion sections that provide opportunities for students to engage synchronously in political discussions and civil debates with multiple points of view and to master the ability to synthesize information that informs civic decision making.

I encourage thoughtful participation in lectures. We will use the iClicker technology, available free to UF students, to enable snap polling, stimulate discussion, and track lecture participation and attendance. I also make time for additional free-form discussion especially of current events in the major newspapers.

Weekly discussion sections will allow you, along with your TA, to discuss complex and controversial issues in American politics to illustrate the themes of the course. Students should be prepared to read, evaluate, and discuss different points of view in discussion sections, and reaction post on Canvas.

Beginning July 1, 2021, students entering the University of Florida must satisfy the State of Florida's Civic Literacy requirement. To facilitate this, we have created 14 discussion sections to accommodate your schedules. For more info: BOG Regulation 8.006 (https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/8.006-Civic-Literacy.pdf); UF's Civic Literacy web site: (http://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/for-students/civic-literacy-requirement/) .

Assessment & Grading

To achieve our course goals and civic literacy competencies, students will acquire knowledge of the structural foundations of American politics, including the Constitution, the fragmentation of political power, political behavior, elections, institutions, and civil rights and liberties. Assessment of those goals occurs as follows:

Exams: You will take three machine-graded multiple-choice exams. Exams cover material from lecture, discussion, readings, and current events. While exams are not cumulative, some issues are revisited later in the semester and could appear on a later exam. **Exams must be taken on the scheduled date, except in documented emergencies. This includes the Final Exam.** Each exam is worth 20% of your course grade.
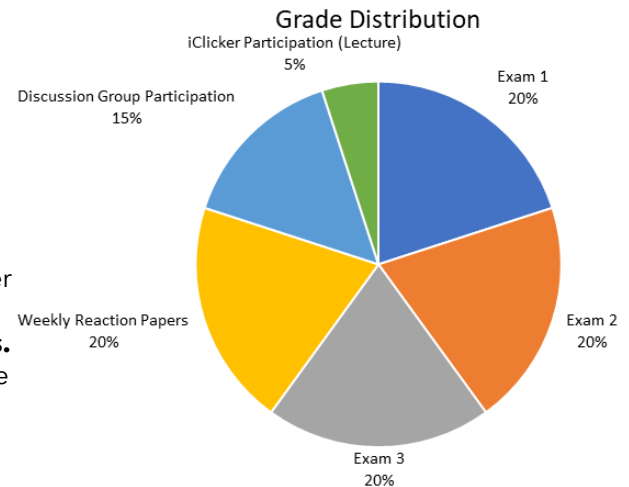
Lecture Participation/Attendance: Attendance in the lectures is required and is taken via iClicker Student – an app on your phone or tablet. Students will be awarded one point for each class session attended and one point for each iClicker Student question answered during a class session (up to five per class). These cannot be made up but may be waived with a documented excused absence. The lowest two scores are dropped. Lecture participation, the percentage of points earned out of those available, is worth 5% of your course grade.

Weekly Discussion Reaction Posts: Weekly reaction posts are due Wednesdays at 11:59 pm on Canvas; they form the basis of Thursday/ Friday class discussion. Assignments may take a variety of formats, including (1) a short reaction paper to one or more of the readings, or (2) a reflection on how a contemporary political issue or event is related to the readings. These tasks will help you to participate in the American political system. Reaction posts are short, not more than 300-400 words, and submitted via the discussion boards on Canvas. Your TA will grade these using the rubric on page 4. Together, these posts are worth 20% of your course grade. AI (e.g., ChatGPT is not permitted).

Discussion Sections: Weekly discussion groups are not mini lectures, but active discussions of the assigned readings (from *Current Debates*). Your TA will assign 15% percent of the course grade based on participation and attendance in discussion sections. Please see grading rubric for participation on page 4.

Grade Distribution

- iClicker Participation (Lecture) 5%
- Discussion Group Participation 15%
- Exam 1 20%
- Weekly Reaction Papers 20%
- Exam 2 20%
- Exam 3 20%

GRADING SCALE	
A	93.0 -100%
A-	90.0-92.9%
B+	87.0-89.9%
B	83.0-86.9%
B-	80.0-82.9%
C+	77.0-79.9%
C	73.0-76.9%
C-	70.0-72.9%
D+	67.0-69.9%
D	63.0-66.9%
D-	60.0-62.9%
F	below 60.0%

iClicker, UF All Access, & Free News

iClicker Student: Go to your device's "store" to download the iClicker Student App and search for UF and the course (American Federal Government (POS 2041)). Upon arriving to the MW lecture, open the app, check in, and answer any questions on screen. Please use your UFL email address when signing up (or it won't send your scores to Canvas). **UF All Access:** Our main text is available via UF All Access, delivered through Canvas. You must first opt-in: go to https://bsd.ufl.edu/allaccess, click opt-in and log in with your Gator Link account. You must opt-in within the first three weeks of the semester to continue to read the book in the modules on Canvas. The *Current Debates* reader is an ebook available from the bookstore. ***New York Times & Wall Street Journal:*** For access to the NYT subscription, go to my.ufl.edu (main menu, quick links, then NY Times). To activate your Wall Street Journal subscription, go to https://partner.wsj.com/enter-redemption-code/FLA043p2wca.

Grading Rubric: Discussion Section Participation

This portion of your grade (15%) is based on the quality of your participation in discussion group (Th/F), including listening, preparation, quality of contributions, impact on the class, and frequency of participation. Opinions held by other students, the instructor, the TA, and the guest speakers should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

	Strong (A+ to B+)	**Needs Development (B to C)**	**Unsatisfactory (C- or Lower)**
Listening (10 points possible)	Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor (10-8.7 points)	Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others (8.6-7.5 points)	Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others (including browsing other materials during class) (7.4-0 points)
Preparation (10 points possible)	Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, questions (10-8.7 points)	Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation (8.6-7.5 points)	Little evidence of having completed or thought about assigned material (7.4-0 points)
Quality and impact of contributions (35 points possible)	Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of assignments, previous remarks of other students, and insights about assigned material; comments frequently help move discussion forward (35-30.5 points)	Comments sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate lack of attention to previous remarks of other students; sometimes advances the conversation, but sometimes does little to move it forward (30.4-24 points)	Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in class; comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it (24.9 – 0 points)
Frequency of participation (15 points possible)	Actively participates at appropriate times (15-13 points)	Sometimes participates but at other times is "tuned out" (12.9-10.5 points)	Seldom participates and is generally not engaged or absent (10.4-0 points)
Attendance (30 points possible)	Attends regularly/no more than two unexcused absences (30-27 points)	Missed three to four classes (unexcused). (26-22 points)	Absent five or more times (unexcused). (21-0 points)

Grading Rubric: Weekly Reaction Papers

Your TA will use the following rubric to assess your weekly reaction posts; together they are worth 20% of your grade. Each post is worth 12 points. Your lowest score will be dropped. Use of AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is not permitted

Criteria	Exceeds	Proficient	Competent	Below
Analysis & Critical Thinking (8 points possible)	Synthesizes new concepts and formulates evidenced based conclusions; makes connections to other readings and/or current events. Key issues fully identified. (7.5-8 points)	Evaluates and analyzes the concepts provide some examples. Most key issues are identified. (6.5-7.4 points)	Understand and discusses basic concepts. Minimal use of readings and examples. Some key issues identified. (4.5-6.4 points)	Gathers and understands simple concepts related to the topic; discussion superficial; few or no examples given; key issues missing. (0-4.4 points)
Conventions (4 points possible)	Minimal spelling or grammar errors; well organized. Key organizing thesis present. (4 points)	Occasional spelling or grammar errors. Some sense of a thesis statement. (3 points)	Frequent errors, thesis not clear. (2 points)	Multiple grammatical and spelling errors, no thesis present. (1 point)

Reading & Assignment Schedule

Rule of Law & Rights:		Reading
Aug. 23	Who Governs	Chapter 1, APT*
Aug. 24/25	Discussion: The Spirit	Section 1, All*
Aug. 28	Who Governs, continued	
Aug. 30	The Constitution	Chapter 2, APT, Federalist # 51
Aug. 31/Sep 1	Discussion: Ideas	Section 2, Articles 2.1-2.3, 2.6, CDAG
Sep. 4	--No Class Labor Day --	
Sep. 6	The Constitution	
Sep. 7/8	Discussion: Constitution	Section 3, all except 3.2, CDAG
Sep. 11/13	Federalism	Chapter 3, APT
Sep. 14/15	Discussion: States v. Feds	Section 4, all, CDAG
Sep. 18/20	Civil Rights	Chapter 5, APT
Sep. 21/22	Discussion: Civil Rights	Section 6, Articles 6.1-6.3, CDAG
Sep. 25	***Exam 1***	

Linking Citizens to Government:		
Sep. 27	Public Opinion	Chapter 6, APT
Sep. 28/29	Discussion: Public Opinion	Section 7, Articles 7.1-7.2, 7.4 CDAG
Oct. 2/4	Public Opinion & Media	Chapter 7, APT
Oct. 5/6	--No Class UF Homecoming--	
Oct. 9/11	Political Parties	Chapter 8, APT, Federalist #10
Oct. 12/13	Discussion: Parties	Section 11, choose 4, CDAG
Oct. 16/18	Interest Groups	Chapter 10, APT
Oct. 19/20	Discussion: Interest Groups	Section 12, all, + Article 8.5, CDAG
Oct. 23/25	Elections/Voting	Chapter 9, APT
Oct. 26/27	Discussion: Participation	Sect. 8, Art. 8.1, 8.3; Sect. 10, Art. 10.1, 10.2, 10.4 CDAG
Oct. 30	***Exam 2***	

Policy & Governance:		
Nov. 1	Congress	Chapter 11, APT
Nov. 2-3	Discussion: Congress	Section 13, Articles 13.1, 13.4, 13.5, CDAG
Nov. 6/8	Congress	
Nov. 9/10	--No Class Veteran's Day--	
Nov. 13/15	The Presidency	Chapter 12, APT, Federalist #70
Nov. 16/17	Discussion: Presidency	Section 14, Articles 14.2, 14.3, 14.5, CDAG
Nov. 20	The Bureaucracy	Chapter 13, APT
Nov. 22-23	--No Class Thanksgiving--	
Nov. 27/29	The Courts	Chapter 14, APT
Nov. 30/Dec. 1	Discussion: Courts & Civ. Lib.	Sect. 5, Art. 5.1, 5.3, 5.4, Sect. 16, Art. 16.1, 16.5, CDAG
Dec. 4/6	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4, APT
Dec. 14	***Exam 3 (12:30-2:00 pm)***	

*Key: *American Politics Today* = APT, *Current Debates in American Government* = CDAG

The date and time for the final exam were assigned to this class by the UF Registrar to assure that all students have time to prepare for all their exams and avoid exam conflicts. Please advise parents, spouses, etc., who may be making travel plans for you of your final exam schedule. If you have unavoidable plans that prevent you from taking the final exam in Gainesville on December 14, you should consider dropping the course.

Contacting Prof. Robbins or Your TA

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 email from Canvas or your UFL email.*

Prof. Suzanne M. Robbins
205 Anderson Hall
Suzanne.Robbins@ufl.edu
Office Hours: M/F 1-3 pm

Discussion Leaders (TAs):
TA office: Anderson Hall 321
Julianna Mucci
j.mucci@ufl.edu
Class Nos. 25148, 17382
Office Hours: W 9:45-10:45

Colin Pelletier
cpelletier@ufl.edu
Class Nos. 25202,17383
Office Hours: M 10:30-11:30

Hunter Tierman
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Class Nos. 17380, 17364
Office Hours: Th 4:15-5:15

Christine Berry
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Class Nos. 28912, 17365
Office Hours: Tues., 9-10

Rory Church
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Class Nos. 17379, 17384
Office Hours: W 10-11

Villegas, Mario
mariovillegas@ufl.edu
Class Nos. 25147, 25149
Office Hours: F 11-12

Sullivan, Myles
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Class Nos. 17381, 25150
Office Hours: Thurs, 2:30-3:3-

The Fine Print: Course, Department, and University Policy in Brief

Attendance: Attendance is required. Students failing to attend class during the first week may be dropped from the course; excessive absences could result in a failing grade. Requirements for class attendance, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies (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 (e.g., religious observances, illness, or academic/athletic competitions). Documentation for excused absences must be received within one week of absence.

COVID-19 (and other illnesses): If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit one.uf for vaccination opportunities.

Late Work/Make up Exams: Canvas will assess a 5% per day penalty automatically to late work. **No late work will be accepted more than seven calendar days past due.** If you have an emergency on exam day, please email me immediately. Makeup exams are allowed with documentation, within seven calendar days. **No one will be permitted to take any exam early.**

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.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals or via Canvas. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/ .

Disability Services: Students 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: 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/. AI (e.g, ChatGPT) is not permitted in this course.

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/.

Recording lectures/discussion: Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.