

Prof. Suzanne M. Robbins
205 Anderson Hall
Suzanne.Robbins@ufl.edu
Office Hours: M/W 12-2 pm & appt.

POS 2041— Various
Lecture: MW 9:35-10:25 WEIM 1064
Discussion: R/F various



Discussion Section Leaders

- Rolda Darlington
rolly713@ufl.edu
(F3, AND 013) & (F4, MAT 112)
Office hours: W 10:40-11:40, AND 301
- Sarah Hollmann
shollmann@ufl.edu
(R6, TUR 2350) & (F5, RNK 110)
Office hours: M 10:40-11:40, AND 214
- Torrian Pace
tmpace@ufl.edu
(R7, FLI 113) & (R8, MAT 151)
Office hours: W 10:40-11:40, AND 214
- Kelly Richardson
kelly.richardson@ufl.edu
(R4, MCCA 1142) & (R5, FLI 117)
Office hours: W 12:00-1:00, AND 214

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

American Federal Government

The University of Florida

Spring 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 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. 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.

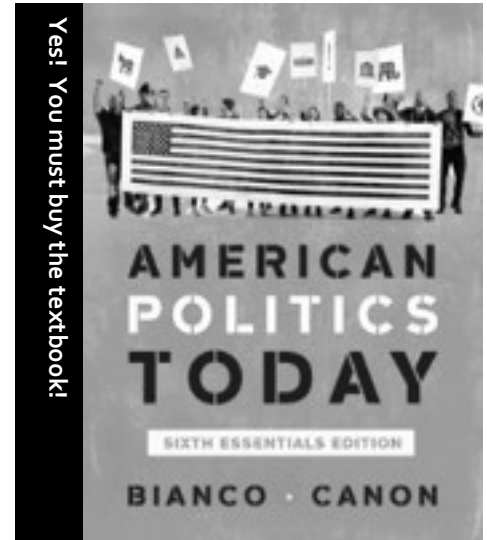
Weekly Pattern

During lectures (M/W, WEIM 1064), 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.

I encourage thoughtful participation at all times. Your **iClickers/Reef** are 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.

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.



iClicker®

The iClicker or iClicker Reef is required; a six month subscription is \$14.99 and available here: <https://www.iclicker.com/pricing/>. For more info, see Canvas.

How to Succeed in this Class

Go to class. 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*. 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.**

Bring your **iClicker/Reef** to class every day.

Visit me or your TA during office hours if you have questions.

Reading Schedule

Foundations:

Jan. 6/8	Who Governs (Ch. 1)
Jan. 9/10	NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS
Jan. 13/15	The Constitution (Ch. 2)
Jan. 16/17	Discussion: Constitution
Jan. 20	NO LECTURE—MLK Jr. Day
Jan. 22	Federalism (Ch. 3)
Jan. 23/24	Discussion: Federalism
Jan. 27	Federalism (Ch. 3)
Jan. 29	Civil Rights (Ch. 5)
Jan. 30/31	Discussion: Voting Rights
Feb. 3	Civil Rights (Ch. 5)
Feb. 5	EXAM 1

Linking Citizens to Government:

Feb. 6/7	Discussion: Pol. Jeopardy
Feb. 10/12	Public Opin./Media (Ch. 6)
Feb. 13/14	Discussion: Fake News
Feb. 17	Public Opin./Media (Ch. 6)
Feb. 19	Political Parties (Ch. 7)
Feb. 20/21	Discussion: Third Parties
Feb. 24	Political Parties (Ch. 7)
Feb. 26	Interest Groups (Ch. 9)
Feb. 27/28	Discussion: Social Protest
Mar. 2-6	SPRING BREAK
Mar. 9/11	Campaigns/Elections (Ch. 8)
Mar. 12/13	Discussion: 2020 Primaries
Mar. 16	Campaigns/Elections (Ch. 8)
Mar. 18	EXAM 2

Institutions of Government:

Mar. 19/20	Discussion: Pol. Jeopardy
Mar. 23/25	Congress (Ch. 10)
Mar. 26/27	Discussion: Gerrymanders
Mar. 30, Apr. 1	The Presidency (Ch. 11)
Apr. 2/3	Discussion: Presidents
Apr. 6/8	The Bureaucracy (Ch. 12)
Apr. 9/10	Discussion: Governing
Apr. 13/15	The Courts (Ch. 13)
Apr. 16/17	Discussion: the Courts
Apr. 20/22	Civil Liberties (Ch. 4)
Apr. 28	FINAL EXAM

Writing Assignments

Jan. 29	Essay 1 (Foundations)
Mar. 11	Essay 2 (Linking Citizens)
Apr. 22	Essay 3 (Institutions)

Exam Dates

Feb. 5	Exam 1
Mar. 18	Exam 2
Apr. 28	Exam 3 (7:30-9:30 am)

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.)

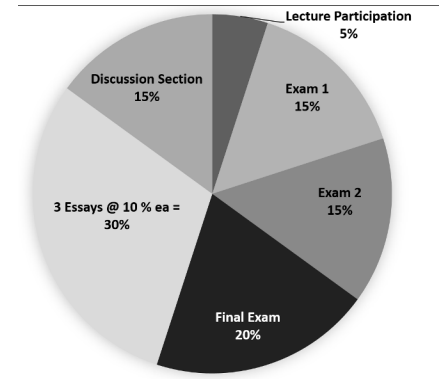
Essays: You will write three essays on assigned topics. Turned in via Canvas, these will be graded by your TA. No late assignments will be accepted. (10% each)

Participation/Attendance: Attendance in the lectures is required and is taken via iClicker/Reef. Students will be awarded one point for each class session attended and one point for each iClicker/Reef question answered during a class session. (5%)

Discussion: TAs will assign 15% percent of the course grade based on performance in discussion sections including quizzes, participation, and attendance.

More details about grading are on Canvas.

Distribution of Course Grade



Grading Scale

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, via email, or in front of the class. Always use your UFL email address. You should contact the UF help desk at 352-392-4357 to resolve technical issues.

Attendance/iClickers/Reef: Attendance is required in lecture and discussion section. You must bring your iClicker/Reef to lecture. 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).

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.*

Use of Personal Devices (laptops, notepads, phones, apple watch): These should be turned off and stowed during class times. Phones with Reef polling may be used during polling only.

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.ua.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/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at gatorevals.ua.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/.

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>.