

Dr. Michael D. Martinez @ The University of Florida

Lecture Meets:

8:30-9:20 am M/W

McCarty 100

Sections meet Th/F as noted
on your One.UF schedule.

(Ten Sections)

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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

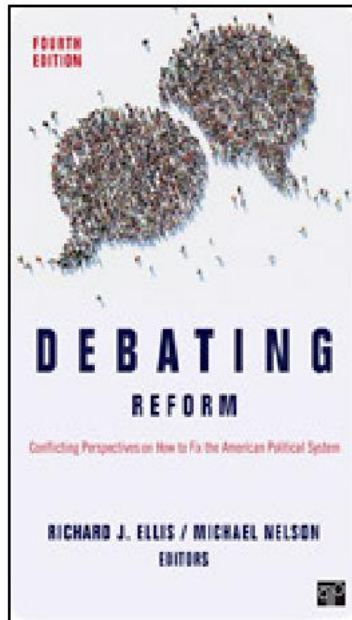
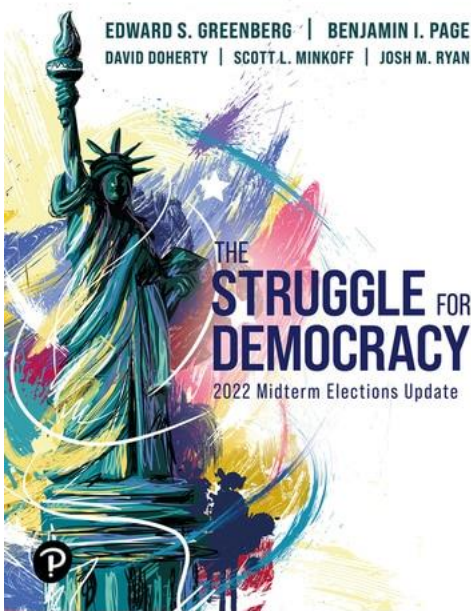
This class provides a college-level introduction to American Federal Government. Students are expected to improve their knowledge necessary for informed civic participation. Each week introduces an important topic in American government to prepare you for further study in upper division Political Science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

The underlying theme of this class is democracy. We will discuss various conceptions of democracy, and how to assess various aspects of the political system using those conceptions. We will discuss process, politics as conflict and compromise, and how politics is everywhere. We will also read about possible alternatives to the current structures of American politics. 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](#) 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.

American Federal Government (POS 2041)



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.

Readings from either [The Wall Street Journal](#) or [The New York Times](#) will usually be announced on Mondays in lecture and on Canvas.

Weekly assignments and weekly quizzes will be due on Wednesdays at 11:59 pm.

Weekly discussion sections (on Thursday or Friday) will allow you, along with your TA, to discuss complex 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 in weekly assignments.

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:

- Greenberg, E and B Page. 2021. *The Struggle for Democracy: 2022 Midterm Election Update* (ISBN-13: 9780137585137).
- Ellis, R and M Nelson. 2019. *Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System*. (Fourth Edition; ISBN: 9781544390604)
- [The Federalist Papers](#). (selected)
- [The New York Times](#)
- [The Wall Street Journal](#).

Both texts are linked in Canvas via the modules, but **you must opt-in to UF All Access to read the books.** *The Federalist Papers* are public domain and [online](#). UF provides [free subscriptions](#) to both newspapers.

Visit your TA or instructor during office hours if necessary.

Complete all the assignments on time.



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.



Assignments and weekly quizzes will be submitted via E-Learning (Canvas). E-Learning will also have grades for your Lecture Participation, Discussion Section participation, and Exams.

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 two exams, which will be a combination of multiple choice and true/false justify. Exams cover material from lecture, discussion, readings, and current events. While the final exam is not cumulative, some issues are revisited later in the semester and could appear on the final exam. **Each exam must be taken on the scheduled date, except in documented emergencies.** The Midterm will be on October 16 at 8:30 am, and the Final Exam will be December 12 at 10:00 am. Each exam is worth 25% of your grade.

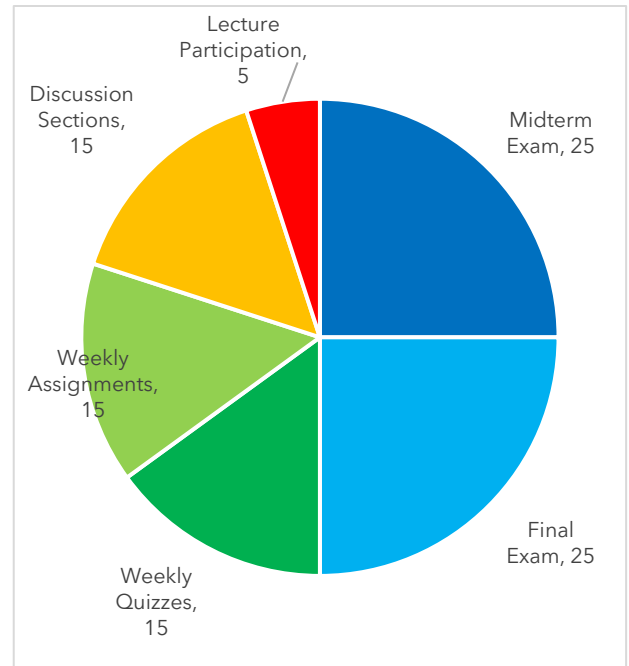
Lecture Participation: Attendance and participation in the lectures is required and is taken via iClicker Student - an app on your phone or tablet. These cannot be made up but may be waived with a documented excused absence. The lowest two scores are dropped. Lecture participation, the percentage of points earned out of those available, is worth 5% of your course grade.

Weekly Assignments 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 the readings in *Debating Reform*, (2) a reflection on how a contemporary political issue or event is related to the readings, or (3) an empirical analysis. Your TA will grade these using the rubric on page 4. Together, these posts are worth 15% of your course grade. AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is not permitted to complete these assignments.

Weekly Quizzes are multiple choice and short answer on Canvas, and due Wednesdays at 11:59 pm on Canvas. They are worth 15% of your final course grade.

Discussion Sections: Weekly discussion groups are not mini lectures, but active discussions of the assigned readings (from *Debating Reform*) or the weekly assignments. 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.

To receive SBS gen-ed credit, you must earn a C or better in the course.



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%

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 Assignments

Your TA will use the following rubric to assess your weekly assignments; together they are worth 15% of your grade. Your lowest score will be dropped. Use of AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is not permitted.

Criteria	Exceeds	Proficient	Competent	Below
Analysis & Critical Thinking (75 points possible)	Synthesizes new concepts and formulates evidenced based conclusions; makes connections to other readings and/or current events. Key issues fully identified. (68-75 points)	Evaluates and analyzes the concepts provide some examples. Most key issues are identified. (60-67 points)	Understand and discusses basic concepts. Minimal use of readings and examples. Some key issues identified. (53-59 points)	Gathers and understands simple concepts related to the topic; discussion superficial; few or no examples given; key issues missing. (0-52 points)
Conventions (25 points possible)	Minimal spelling or grammar errors; well organized. Key organizing thesis present. (23-25 points)	Occasional spelling or grammar errors. Some sense of a thesis statement. (20-22 points)	Frequent errors, thesis not clear. (17-19 points)	Multiple grammatical and spelling errors, no thesis present. (0-16 points)

Reading & Assignment Schedule:

Date	Topic	Readings
Aug 22-23	Introduction	
Aug 26-28	Power	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 1
Aug 29-30	Power	
Sep 2	Labor Day	
Sep 4	Constitution	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 2
Sep 5-6	Constitution	Debating Reform, Ch. 1
Sep 9-11	Constitution	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 2
Sep 12-13	Constitution	Debating Reform, Ch. 6
Sep 16	Federalism	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 3
Sep 18	Speaker: Keith Perry (Federalism)	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 3
Sep 19-20	Federalism	Debating Reform, Ch. 3
Sep 23	Structural Foundations	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 4
Sep 25	Speaker: Aaron Klein (Voting)	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 10
Sep 26-27	Voting	Debating Reform, Ch. 4
Sep 30	Public Opinion	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 5
Oct 2	Media	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 6
Oct 3-4	Media	Debating Reform, Ch. 5
Oct 7	Interest Groups	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 7
Oct 9	Speaker: Ian Rayder (Groups)	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 7
Oct 10-11	Campaign Finance	Debating Reform, Ch. 8
Oct 14	Social Movements	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 8
Oct 16	Midterm Exam	
Oct 17	Midterm Review	
Oct 18	Homecoming	
Oct 21	Parties	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 9
Oct 23	Elections	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 10
Oct 24-25	Elections	Debating Reform, Ch. 9
Oct 28-30	Congress	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 11
Oct 31-Nov 1	Congress	Debating Reform, Ch. 14
Nov 4-6	Presidency	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 12
Nov 7-8	Presidency	Debating Reform, Ch. 16
Nov 11	Bureaucracy	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 13
Nov 13	Courts	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 14
Nov 14-15	Courts	Debating Reform, Ch. 18
Nov 18	Speaker: Tom Rooney (Congress)	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 11
Nov 20	Speaker: Gary Jones (Courts)	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 14
Nov 21-22	Civil Liberties	Debating Reform, Ch. 20
Nov 25-29	Thanksgiving	
Dec 2	Civil Liberties or Civil Rights	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 15 or 16
Dec 4	Epilogue	
Dec 12, 10 am-12 Noon	Final Exam	

Contacting Prof. Martinez 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. Michael D. Martinez

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Discussion Leaders (TAs):

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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](#). Please contact your TA if you will miss lecture or discussion section, and provide verifiable documentation of illness, quarantine, serious family emergency, special curricular requirement (e.g., professional conference), military obligation, legal obligation (e.g., jury duty or subpoena), severe weather conditions (as verified by the National Weather Service), religious holiday, or participation in official university activities. Documentation for excused absences must be received within one week of absence.

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, as scheduled by the instructor. **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/get-started/>. Please share your accommodation letter (and discuss your needs) with Dr. Martinez as early as possible.

Plagiarism/Cheating: Cheating/plagiarism (including unauthorized use of AI tools in completing assignments) will result in zero for the assignment and will be reported to the SCCR. Students are bound by the [UF Honor Code](#).

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. *In such a proceeding, the recording may be used as evidence either in support of or against the interests of the person making the recording.* All other purposes are prohibited. Recording other students during discussion is prohibited. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

Cell phones (and cookies): Please silence and do not answer cell phones during lecture and Discussion Section. If a cell phone rings audibly during class, the owner of the phone will be required to bring cookies or alternative healthy treats for all Discussion Section participants (including the TA) at the next discussion section.

Extra-Credit: I do not offer extra credit on an individual basis. Any opportunities for extra credit will be announced on Canvas.