

Prof. Suzanne M. Robbins
205 Anderson Hall
Suzanne.Robbins@ufl.edu
Office Hours: MW 1:00-2:30

POS 2041— Various

Lecture: MW 9:35-10:25 Tur L007

Discussion: R/F various



Discussion Section Leaders

- Peter Licari
(plicari13@ufl.edu; F5 & F6)
- Robert Mermer
(rmermer@ufl.edu; R7 & R8)
- Stephen C. Phillips
(scphillips@ufl.edu; R4 & R5)
- Alex P. Smith
(alexpsmith@ufl.edu; F3 & F4)
- Katie Widner
(kwidner2013@ufl.edu; R6 & F2)

Office hours & locations on Canvas.

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 2018

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, Turlington), 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.
- I encourage thoughtful participation at all times. Your iClickers 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.
- The PowerPoint slides are available on canvas, but will not replace note-taking.

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 as well as *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 to class every day.



Reading Schedule

Foundations:

Jan. 8	Who Governs (Ch. 1)
Jan. 10	The Constitution (Ch. 2)
Jan. 11/12	Discussion: Fake News
Jan. 15	NO CLASS
Jan. 17	The Constitution (Ch. 2)
Jan. 18/19	Discussion: Constitution
Jan. 22 /24	Federalism (Ch. 3)
Jan. 25/26	Discussion: Marijuana
Jan. 29/31	Civil Rights (Ch. 5)
Feb. 1/2	Discussion: Voting Rights
Feb. 5	EXAM 1

Linking Citizens to Government:

Feb. 7	Public Opin./Media (Ch. 6)
Feb. 8/9	Discussion: Pol. Jeopardy
Feb. 12/14	Public Opin./Media (Ch. 6)
Feb. 15/16	Discussion: Public Opinion
Feb. 19/21	Political Parties (Ch. 7)
Feb. 22/23	Discussion: Third Parties
Feb. 26/28	Interest Groups (Ch. 9)
Mar. 1/2	Discussion: Interest Groups
Mar. 5-9	UF Spring Break
Mar. 12/14	Campaigns/Elections (Ch. 8)
Mar. 15/16	Discussion: Turnout
Mar. 19	EXAM 2

Institutions of Government:

Mar. 21	Congress (Ch. 10)
Mar. 22/23	Discussion: Pol. Jeopardy
Mar. 26/28	Congress (Ch. 10)
Mar. 29/30	Discussion: Gerrymanders
Apr. 2/4	The Presidency (Ch. 11)
Apr. 5/6	NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS
Apr. 9/10	The Bureaucracy (Ch. 12)
Apr. 12/13	Discussion: Bureaucracy
Apr. 16/18	The Judiciary (Ch. 13)
Apr. 19/20	Discussion: Judiciary
Apr. 23/24	Civil Liberties (Ch. 4)
May 3	FINAL EXAM

Writing Assignments

Jan. 17	Essay 1 (Constitution)
Jan. 31	Essay 2 (Voting Rights)
Feb. 14	Essay 3 (Public Opinion)
Feb. 28	Essay 4 (Interest Groups)
Mar. 28	Essay 5 (Gerrymanders)
Apr. 18	Essay 6 (Judiciary)

Exam Dates

Feb. 5	Exam 1
Mar. 19	Exam 2
May 3	Exam 3 (1230-230)

How Students are Evaluated and Graded

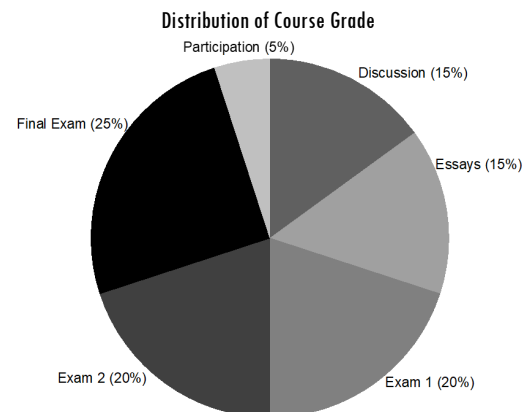
Exams: Three exams test your mastery of the material covered in lecture, discussion, reading, and current events. The exams will contain questions of fact, concepts, interpretation, and application. Multiple choice questions may have more than one answer that appears correct; you will have to distinguish between the responses to choose the best answer in light of what we covered in class. (Exam 1 & 2: 20% each; Final: 25%)

Essays: You will write six essays on assigned topics. Turned in via Canvas, these will be graded by your TA. No late assignments will be accepted. Your lowest essay grade will be dropped. (15% total)

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

Discussion: TAs will assign 15% percent of the course grade based on performance in discussion sections. Of this, 5% is attendance and 10% is the quality of your participation.

More details about grading are on Canvas.



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%
		D-	58%

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.



Have a question?
More information
is on Canvas!

Policies and Other Requirements

Contacting us, office hours: If you need to discuss anything about this class, you should bring the matter up with your TA. To protect your federal privacy rights, we cannot discuss your grade(s) over the phone, via email, or in front of class. Please make an appointment.

Attendance/iClickers: Attendance is required in lecture and discussion section. **You must bring your iClicker 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/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx#absences>.

Make-up Work: All assignments are due when assigned. 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.

Use of Personal Devices (laptops, notepads, phones, apple watch): These should be turned off and stowed during class times.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu> at semester's end.

Disability Services: Please give Dr. Robbins your accommodation letter in the first two weeks of the semester. For more information contact DRC at 352-392-8565, or <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/>.

Plagiarism/Cheating: **NOT** tolerated. If you are caught, you will fail that assignment.

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>.