

# UF HONORS POS2041 Section 201S AMERICAN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FALL 2024

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## INSTRUCTOR

Professor Dustin Fridkin, PhD

Class meetings: Tu MAT0015 11:45 - 1:35; Th MAT007 12:50-1:40

Office: AND 305

Hours: Tuesdays 1:45 - 3:00; Thursdays 11:00 - 12:30, 1:45 - 3:00

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Politics is a struggle for power. To borrow a phrase from [Harold Lasswell](#), it is the business of determining who gets what, when, and how. This class will introduce students to the institutions and processes that structure the struggle for power at the national level in the United States.

In this course, students will investigate how the national government is structured and how the American federal constitutional republic operates. The course covers the philosophical and historical foundations of American government and its founding documents including, but not limited to, the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and all its amendments, and selections from the Federalist Papers. The course also examines the branches of government, the ways in which citizens participate in their government, and the ways the government does or does not respond to citizens.

We will address the relationships between our founding documents, our political institutions, engaged citizens, organized groups, political parties, the media, national decision-makers, and public policy. We will do so with an eye toward understanding why particular individuals and groups get what, when, and how.

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## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

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 a prerequisite for many courses in the Political Science department.

By the end of the course, students will be able to explain the basic provisions of the Constitution and its amendments, identify how various political institutions such as Congress, the presidency and the executive branch, and the Supreme Court operate (as well as “linkage” institutions such as interest groups, parties, and the media), and how the interactions among citizens, political institutions, and linkage institutions impact public policy. Students should be able to critically evaluate claims about the U.S. political system using empirical evidence.

For details about general education subject objectives, see <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/general-education/gen-ed-program/subject-area-objectives/>

## **COMPETENCIES AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES**

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- **Content:** Students will acquire a basic knowledge of the elements of American democracy. These elements include: 1) the Constitution, 2) federalism, 3) American political cultures, 4) public opinion and political participation, 5) campaigns and voting behavior, 6) the role of political parties and interest groups, 7) the powers and operation of Congress and the presidency, 8) the role of courts, bureaucracy, and media, and 9) the basics of public policy with regard to the federal budget, economic policy, social welfare and healthcare, environment and energy, and foreign and national security policies.

In so doing, students will achieve the following **Civic Literacy Competencies**:

Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and practices of America's constitutional republic.

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and its amendments, and the Federalist Papers.

Students will demonstrate knowledge of landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions.

Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the American federal government and its impact on law and society.

Students will demonstrate an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates.

Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

Achievement of this learning outcome (Content) will be assessed by 3 exams and a semester-long research project.

- **Communication**: Students will develop their skills in communicating knowledge and making clearly reasoned arguments in both written and oral form. Students will have opportunities to engage synchronously in political discussions and civil debates with multiple points of view and master the ability to synthesize information that informs civic decision-making.

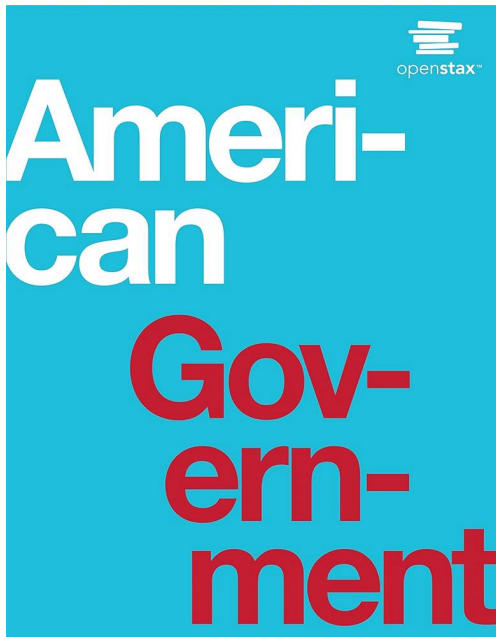
This learning outcome (Communication) will be assessed by written and oral submissions pursuant to the semester-long research project. Additionally, students' participation grades will reflect how well they communicate during in-class discussions.

- **Critical Thinking**: Students will analyze and discuss information presented in the textbook, secondary readings, and in lecture carefully and logically. They will evaluate and articulate "pro" and "con" arguments, analyzing the strength of each, as much as possible, on the basis of empirical evidence.

Achievement of this learning outcome (Critical Thinking) will be assessed by exams, oral presentations, written assignments, and participation in class discussions. Grades on these will reflect how well students apply concepts, general principles and empirical evidence to the operation of American government and to current issues and debates in American politics.

## REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Our primary textbook will be the OpenStax American Government, 3rd edition:



Additional readings will be distributed by the professor.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS

- **Attendance and participation.** Students are required to attend each class meeting having completed the assigned readings. I will take attendance for each class meeting. In addition to being physically present, students are required to be active participants in class activities and discussions. This honors class is meant to resemble a graduate-level seminar. To make this work, students are required to not only be present, but to also be prepared and engaged. Attendance and participation scores will assess content knowledge, communication

skills, and critical thinking, and will account for 20% of each student's grade in the class.

- **Multiple-choice exams.** Students will complete three multiple-choice exams over the course of the semester. The exams are designed primarily to assess content knowledge. Collectively, the three exams will account for 30% of each student's grade in the class.
- **The President's Cabinet Project.** In order to gain a better understanding of the way the American national political system works, you will be assigned one of the fifteen cabinet agencies (Departments of State, Treasury, Defense, Justice, Interior, Agriculture, Commerce, Labor, Health & Human Services, Housing & Urban Development, Transportation, Energy, Education, Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security), one of the major non-cabinet agencies (EPA, CIA, SEC, NLRB, etc), or the vice presidency.

Over the course of the semester, students will examine the roles their assigned agencies perform, their origins and history, and the issues with which they are currently engaged. Students will also look at the place of their agencies within the federal system, their relationship to the implementation and interpretation of law, to the president, to the courts, and to Congress. Students will examine the extent to which their department or agency interacts with outside actors in the rulemaking process.

This project will unfold through six steps:

1. **Initial discussion:** Describe your department or agency to your classmates. (5%)
2. **Office meeting:** come see me during office hours to discuss your department or agency and your approach to researching it. (5%)
3. **Introductory briefing:** having been assigned your cabinet department or agency, you will write a three to five page paper on the history and current goals of your institution. You will also come to class prepared to discuss what you've learned. (10%)
4. **Rough draft:** you must submit a complete draft of your research paper, which we will edit in class. (15%)
5. **Final Presentation:** Explain what you've learned to the class. This will be a series of informal in-class presentations. (15%)

6. **Final paper:** Your final draft, including bibliography, will be due at the end of the semester. (50%)

The cabinet project components will account for fifty percent (50%) of each student's final grade. The largest component is the final draft, which will be due during finals week.

## **GRADE CALCULATION POLICY**

Attendance and participation: 20%

Exams: 30%

Cabinet assignments: 50%

## **GRADING SCALE**

90% or higher - A

87% - 89.9% - B+

80% - 86.9% - B

77% - 79.9% - C+

70% - 76.9% - C

67% - 69.9% - D+

60% - 66.9% - D

59.9% or lower - F

## **LATE/MAKE-UP POLICY**

Work that is not submitted by the deadline will automatically receive a zero. Work turned in after the deadline will be subject to a penalty of **10% per day**. That means you have ten days to receive at least partial credit for any assignment. This is important, because **partial credit > zero credit**.

I do not offer make-up assignments. If you are experiencing a crisis, let me know ASAP, and we may be able to work out a plan. If you wait to contact me, it may be too late.

## **WRITING INTENSIVE**

This course is writing intensive, requiring students to engage in a writing process that includes idea development and/or information gathering, drafting, revising, and editing to produce effective discipline-based writing. It is a content-specific course that has as major instructional, learning and assessment objectives, a substantial writing component that consists of instructor-assessed writing assignments designed to help students achieve competency for writing within this discipline. Students will be expected to use instructor feedback to improve their ability to communicate in written forms appropriate to this field of study. Students must satisfactorily complete the writing portion of this course in order to be eligible for a final course grade of C or higher. A course grade of D or D+ will allow the course to count as an elective, but neither Gordon Rule for writing nor General Education credit will be given.

## **COMMUNICATION**

The **best way to reach me is through the Canvas** message system. Most messages will be answered within 48 hours during the week. If you contact me over the weekend, I will respond by the start of the following work week. If you contact me after normal work hours, which usually end at around 5:00 in the afternoon, plan to hear from me the following day.

## **PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Plagiarism is the use of ideas, facts, opinions, illustrative material, data, direct or indirect wording of another scholar and/or writer—professional or student—without giving proper credit. Cheating extends to other activities such as working with others on exams or copying other students' work (or other activities that are prohibited by the instructions in an assignment). Any assignments involving plagiarism or other cheating will receive anything from a reduction in points, a zero for the assignment, failure in the course or similar penalty and could possibly be referred to the dean for further action.

## **REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY**

This course has no special technological requirements other than **regular access to the internet**. The course does not require any special hardware, though having speakers or headphones might be helpful with the frequent videos.

## **TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Help for Canvas, our course management system, is available 24/7 by clicking the help button on the left of your browser window.

## **DISABILITY AND ACCOMMODATION**

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center.](#)

It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

I am enthusiastic about accommodating whatever needs you might have. I just need to know about them, so get in touch with the DRC asap.

## **A/V RECORDINGS**

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. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations



between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or guest lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code & Student Conduct Code.

## **STUDENT RESOURCES**

**Health and Wellness:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care](#) website to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

**Counseling and Wellness Center:** Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#)

[Links to an external site.](#)

or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

**Student Health Care Center:** Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#)

**University Police Department:** [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

**UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

**GatorWell Health Promotion Services:** For prevention services focused on optimal wellbeing, including Wellness Coaching for Academic Success, visit the [GatorWell website](#) or call 352-273-4450.

**E-learning technical support:** Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

**Career Connections Center:** Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. [Career assistance and counseling services](#)

**Library Support:** Various ways to receive [assistance with respect to using the libraries](#) or finding resources.

**Teaching Center:** Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. [General study skills and tutoring](#)

**Writing Studio:** 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. [Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers](#)

**Student Complaints On-Campus:** [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage](#) for more information.

**Civic Media Center:** Various community services and resources, particularly books and zines but also music, activism, and poetry. More information [here](#).

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## READING SCHEDULE

	Tue 11:45 - 1:50	Thu 12:50 - 1:50
Introduction to the class and the syllabus		
<b>August 22nd</b>		Welcome and overview
Supplementary material: Weber's <a href="#">Politics as a Vocation</a>		
Some principles of political science analysis		
<b>August 27 &amp; 29</b>	<a href="#">Political Science &amp; Politics</a>	<a href="#">Public Goods &amp; Collective Action</a>
Supplemental material: Mancur Olson's <a href="#">Logic of Collective Action</a> ; Elinor Ostrom on <a href="#">Collective Action and the Commons</a>		
Origins and foundations		
<b>September 3 &amp; 5</b>	<a href="#">From Colonies to the</a>	<a href="#">The US Constitution</a>

	<a href="#">Constitution</a>	
Supplemental material: the <a href="#">Declaration of Independence</a> ; <a href="#">Articles of Confederation</a> ; the <a href="#">Northwest Ordinance</a> ; the <a href="#">Federalist Papers</a> especially numbers <a href="#">5</a> , <a href="#">10</a> , <a href="#">32</a> , <a href="#">51</a> , and <a href="#">78</a> ; Antifederalist <a href="#">Brutus III</a>		
Founding ideas: rights, liberties, and federalism		
<b>September 10 &amp; 12</b>	<a href="#">Civil Liberties</a> <a href="#">Civil Rights</a>	<a href="#">The Bill of Rights and the Civil War Amendments</a>
Supplemental material: Goldwater's <a href="#">Liberty</a> speech; Malcolm X's <a href="#">Ballot or Bullet</a> speech		
<b>September 17 &amp; 19</b>	<a href="#">American Federalism</a>	<a href="#">State &amp; Local Government</a>
Supplemental material: <a href="#">Federalism and Civil Rights</a> ; <a href="#">Killing Reconstruction</a> ; state <a href="#">preemption</a>		
Formal Institutions: Congress, the Executive Branch, and the Courts		
<b>September 24 &amp; 26</b>	<a href="#">Congress: Purpose and Structure</a>	<a href="#">The Lawmaking Process</a>
Supplemental material: Rep <a href="#">Bolling on the lawmaking process</a> in the House;		
<b>October 1 &amp; 3</b>	<a href="#">The Presidency</a>	<a href="#">Presidential Elections &amp; Politics</a>
Supplemental material: TBD		
<b>October 8 &amp; 10</b>	<a href="#">The Bureacracy</a>	<a href="#">Public Administration</a>
Supplemental material: TBD		
<b>October 15 &amp; 17</b>	<a href="#">Federal Court Structure</a>	<a href="#">Federal Court Process</a>
Supplemental material: <a href="#">judicial common space scores</a> ; more TBD		
Linkage Institutions: Public, Media, Groups, and Elections		
<b>October 22 &amp; 24</b>	<a href="#">Public Opinion &amp; Media</a>	<a href="#">Interest Groups</a>
Supplemental material: TBD ( <a href="#">Public Opnion</a> )		
<b>October 29 &amp; 31</b>	<a href="#">Political Parties</a>	<a href="#">Voting &amp; Elections</a>
Supplemental material: TBD		
Public Policies: Where the Rubber Hits the Road		
<b>November 5 &amp; 7</b>	<a href="#">Fiscal Policy &amp; Monetary</a>	<a href="#">Political Economy &amp; The</a>

	<a href="#">Policy</a>	<a href="#">Budget</a>
Supplemental material: news articles on developments that haven't happened yet		
<b>November 12 &amp; 14</b>	<a href="#">Health and Welfare Policy</a>	<b>Policy presentations</b>
Supplemental material: policy paper materials		
<b>November 19 &amp; 21</b>	<a href="#">Foreign Policy History</a>	<b>NO CLASS MEETING (Prof Fridkin @ SRMUN Atlanta)</b>
Supplemental material: TBD		
<b>November 26 &amp; 28</b>	<a href="#">The End of History</a>	<b>NO CLASS MEETING (Thanksgiving)</b>
Supplemental material: TBD		
<b>December 3rd</b>	The End of the End of History	
Supplemental material: TBD		
We're done now. It's finals week.		