

American Federal Government

POS 2041

Summer B 2024

July 1, 2024 – August 9, 2024

M, T, W, R, F 11:00 A.M. – 12:15 P.M.

Turlington Hall, Room 2319

Instructor: Juliana Mucci

Office Hours: T/R 2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M. (or by appt.)

[Calendly Link](#)

Email: j.mucci@ufl.edu

Office: Anderson Hall 321

Course Description

This class provides a college-level introduction to American Federal Government. Each day introduces an important topic in American government to equip students with the knowledge necessary for informed civic participation and to prepare students for further study in upper-division Political Science courses.

The underlying theme of this class is how the logic of institutional rules and structures, as well as how we communicate with the government, can affect outcomes in American politics. We will discuss political processes, conflict and compromise, and how politics exist everywhere around us, even when not explicitly visible. Some of the topics we cover will be the fundamentals of democratic governance, the Constitutional debate and its ramifications, federalism, civil rights and liberties, elections, and public opinion. Throughout the course, we will examine how linkage institutions (such as the media and interest groups) and electoral pressures create incentive structures that influence the behavior of politicians and individuals. This course will use the function of lectures and discussion periods to ensure students can discuss politics as equal partners in their own education.

Note: this syllabus is subject to change as needed. Students are required to check Canvas and their UF email regularly to ensure they maintain the most current version of the syllabus.

Required Texts

Our main text will be Greenberg et al.'s ***The Struggle for Democracy: 2020 Presidential Election Edition*** (ISBN-13: 9780136901051). In the course schedule below, this book will be referred to as “TSD”. This textbook is available for purchase in both physical and digital form, and either format is acceptable. This textbook is also available to use via Library West. This text provides a thorough understanding of our government’s structure, our relation to government, and what government does.

We will also be reading from the ***Constitution of the United States*** as we progress through the course. You are more than welcome to purchase your own pocket Constitution, but visiting this site, <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution> will suffice.

Assignments and Evaluation

Discussion Posts (30%):

You will write three discussion posts over the term. These posts will allow you to engage critically and creatively with the topics that we will have discussed by the time they are due. Each of the three posts should be at least 500 words (1,000 words max.), they will be equally weighted at 10% per post, and they will be due on Canvas by the following Wednesday nights by 11:59 P.M.:

Post 1: Getting into Politics

- Due: Wednesday, July 3rd
- Prompt: Find a current event that interests you and that relates to something that we will talk about during this course. Provide a brief summary of the current event, highlight what part relates to a topic and/or phenomenon that we will discuss, and talk about how you envision your understanding of this event will change after this course ends. For example, does the current event involve something about government or politics that you don't yet understand? Discuss how you think this class will better inform your understanding of your chosen topic, as well as others like it.

Post 2: Who Even Are These People?

- Due: Wednesday, July 17th
- Prompt: By this point in the term, we have been discussing the structure of government and the branches that it consists of, but *who* is at work within these structures? For this post, find a member of Congress (can be a Representative in the House or a Senator) who you find interesting or who you agree with on policy-related matters and take a look at what they have been up to recently. This could include checking their official website, their social media pages, etc. Discuss what they've been up to, and how the chosen legislator is at work in the legislative process. For example, what are their committee assignments? Do their committee assignments match up well with the district/state that they represent? Is it important to the legislative process that they do? Are they currently running for re-election? How would their re-election relate to the legislative process? Have they been visiting or doing work in their constituency? How does that relate to the legislative process?

Post 3: To Vote or Not to Vote ...

- Due: Wednesday, July 31st
- Prompt: By this point in the term, we have been discussing our relationship with the government. One of the main ways we communicate with the government is through voting, but it is a well-established phenomenon that young people aren't likely to turn out in high numbers. As the 2024 general election is upon us, and as new voters, you've probably heard people your age either feel very enthused about voting or feel like voting doesn't matter. After learning about the many ways in which public opinion and partisanship can impact political participation, what do you think? Does voting matter? Are voters "dummies" like some political scientists say? Would you encourage your friends to vote?

Below is the grading rubric for the discussion posts. Each post is worth 15 points. The use of AI (e.g. Bing, Bard, Llama, ChatGPT, etc.) is prohibited and is grounds for receiving a failing grade.

Criteria	Exceeds	Proficient	Competent	Below
Analysis & Critical Thinking (10 points possible)	Synthesizes new concepts and formulates evidence-based conclusions; makes sound connections to readings and/or current events. Key issues fully identified. (9.0 – 10 points)	Evaluates, analyzes, and engages with core concepts. Most key issues identified. (8.0 – 8.9 points)	Understands and discusses basic concepts. Minimal use of and engagement with readings and examples. Some key issues identified. (6.7 – 7.9 points)	Gathers and understands simple concepts related to the topic; discussion superficial; few or no examples given; key issues missing. (0.0 – 6.6 points)
Writing Conventions (5 points possible)	Minimal spelling or grammar errors; well organized. Key organizing thesis present. Fully engages with and answers the assigned prompt. (5 points)	Occasional spelling or grammar errors. Some sense of a thesis statement. Most components of the assigned prompt are present. (4 points)	Frequent errors, thesis not clear. Missing most components of the assigned prompt. (3 points)	Multiple grammatical and spelling errors, no thesis present. Assigned prompt is not answered or followed. (1 – 2 points)

Attendance and Discussion (10%):

During our class time on the Fridays following these Wednesday night due dates, we will have an in-class discussion of the broad topics and themes that you have written about. While I do encourage you to attend lectures every day of the term, attendance and participation will be graded on these days. This means that we will have *three* in-class discussions for the term on the following days:

- In-Class Discussion #1: July 5th
- In-Class Discussion #2: July 19th
- In-Class Discussion #3: August 2nd

Below is the grading rubric for discussion participation. This portion of your grade is based on the quality of your participation including listening, preparation, and quality of contributions. Opinions held by other students and the instructor should be respected in the discussions, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at a minimum, if at all.

	Strong (A+ to B+)	Needs Development (B to C)	Unsatisfactory (C- or lower)
Listening (15 points possible)	Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor. (10 - 8.7 points)	Sometimes displays a lack of interest in the 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 (20 points possible)	Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed and with notes, observations, and questions. (10 – 8.7 points)	Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation. (8.6 – 7.5 points)	Little evidence of having prepared or thought about the assignment or discussion. (7.4 – 0 points)
Quality 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 the discussion forward. (35 – 30.5 points)	Comments are sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate a 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)
Attendance (30 points possible)	Has attended every discussion period or has an excused absence for missed discussions. (30 – 27 points)	Missed a discussion period with no excused absence. (26 – 22 points)	Never attended a discussion period with no excused absences. (21 – 0 points)

Exams (60%):

On Fridays when we are not having our discussions, we will have exams. Each exam is equally weighted (20% per exam). This means that we will have *three* exams for the term on the following days:

- Exam 1: July 12th
- Exam 2: July 26th
- Exam 3: August 9th

Civic Literacy Requirement

This course covers these Civic Literacy Competencies (as required by [Florida Statute 1007.25](#)):

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,
4. An understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation and landmark executive actions and their impact on law and society.

General Education

This course fulfills a Social and Behavioral Sciences (S) General Education requirement. A minimum grade of C (73%) is required for general education credit. More information on general education requirements can be found [here](#).

UF's Grading Policy

This course will follow UF's grading policy, which can be found [here](#). The following cutoffs will be used for grades:

94 – 100% (A)	84 – 86% (B)	74 – 76% (C)	64 – 66% (D)
90 – 93% (A-)	80 – 83% (B-)	70 – 73% (C-)	60 – 63% (D+)
87 – 89% (B+)	77 – 79% (C+)	67 – 69% (D+)	<60% (E)

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found [here](#).

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback professionally and respectfully is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email that they will receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Resources

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to share with me. If you need accommodation, please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Health & Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know is struggling with any crisis including, but not limited to, gender, sexual, racial, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Florida resources available. Some of these include:

- U Matter, We Care: 352-392-1575, umatter@ufl.edu
- RESPECT – UF Division of Student Affairs: respect.ufsa@ufl.edu
- Counseling and Wellness Center: 352-392-1575, counseling@ufl.edu (available 24/7)
- Alachua County Crisis Center’s Crisis Line: 352-264-6789
- Student Health Care Center: 352-392-1161, shcc@ufl.edu
- Multicultural & Diversity Affairs: 352-392-1217, multicultural@ufl.edu
- UFPD Office of Victim Services: 352-392-1111, police@ufl.edu
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: 352-733-0111

Academic Integrity

Every University of Florida student is subject to the following [Honor Pledge](#):

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.”

Most obviously, this means cheating on exams and plagiarism on written work is unacceptable. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to submitting entire posts or portions of posts written by others and/or artificial intelligence (e.g. Bing, Bard, Llama, ChatGPT, etc.), copying text without quotations and proper citation, or paraphrasing text without proper citation. In addition to harming your professional career, and especially your grade, academic dishonesty will ultimately destroy your ability to learn from this class.

In other words, *you* must be the one producing all written assignments (not AI), and you must appropriately reference all source material, including the assigned texts. If you do not do this, you are committing academic dishonesty, which is the grounds for a failing grade. Honor code violations often occur when students feel rushed and overwhelmed, especially during a shorter academic term such as this one. If this happens, do not panic, and instead reach out to me so we can address the situation together. It is far better to take a late penalty than to commit academic dishonesty.

In-Class Recording

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. Please note that this means that any in-class discussions cannot be recorded. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. More information about in-class recording can be found [here](#).

Schedule

Week 1		
7/1	Monday	Syllabus & Course Introduction
7/2	Tuesday	<i>TSD Ch. 1: Democracy & American Politics</i> To read: <i>The Declaration of Independence</i>
7/3	Wednesday	<i>TSD Ch. 2: The Constitution</i> To read: <i>Federalist Papers #10 and #51</i> Discussion Post 1 due by 11:59 PM
7/4	Thursday	** NO CLASS, HOLIDAY **
7/5	Friday	In-Class Discussion #1

Week 2		
7/8	Monday	<i>TSD Ch. 2: The Constitution</i> To read: <i>Federalist Papers #10 and #51</i>
7/9	Tuesday	<i>TSD Ch. 3: Federalism</i>
7/10	Wednesday	<i>TSD Ch. 3: Federalism</i>
7/11	Thursday	<i>TSD Ch. 4: Structural Foundations of Am. Govt & Politics</i>
7/12	Friday	Exam 1

Week 3		
7/15	Monday	<i>TSD Ch. 11: Congress</i> To read: <i>Article I of the Constitution</i>
7/16	Tuesday	<i>TSD Ch. 11: Congress</i> To read: <i>Article I of the Constitution</i>
7/17	Wednesday	<i>TSD Ch. 12: The Presidency</i> To read: <i>Article II of the Constitution</i> Discussion Post 2 due by 11:59 PM
7/18	Thursday	<i>TSD Ch. 13: The Executive Branch (Bureaucracy)</i>
7/19	Friday	In-Class Discussion #2

Week 4		
7/22	Monday	<i>TSD Ch. 14: The Courts</i> To read: <i>Article III of the Constitution</i>
7/23	Tuesday	<i>TSD Ch. 15: Civil Liberties</i> To read: <i>The Bill of Rights (Amendments 1-10)</i>
7/24	Wednesday	<i>TSD Ch. 15 & 16: Civil Liberties & Civil Rights</i>
7/25	Thursday	<i>TSD Ch. 16: Civil Rights</i>
7/26	Friday	Exam 2

Week 5		
7/29	Monday	<i>TSD</i> Ch. 9: Political Parties
7/30	Tuesday	<i>TSD</i> Ch. 10: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
7/31	Wednesday	<i>TSD</i> Ch. 10: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections Discussion Post 3 due by 11:59 PM
8/1	Thursday	<i>TSD</i> Ch. 5: Public Opinion
8/2	Friday	In-Class Discussion #3

Week 6		
8/5	Monday	<i>TSD</i> Ch. 6: The News Media
8/6	Tuesday	<i>TSD</i> Ch. 7: Interest Groups and Business Power
8/7	Wednesday	<i>TSD</i> Ch. 8: Social Movements
8/8	Thursday	We almost made it! In-class review and/or catch-up day
8/9	Friday	Exam 3