

American Federal Government

POS 2041

Fall 2024, UF Online Program

August 22, 2024 – December 4, 2024

Instructor: Juliana Mucci

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

[Calendly Link](#) (Also available on Canvas Homepage)

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Course Description:

In this course, students will investigate how the national government is structured and how the American constitutional republic operates. It covers the philosophical and historical foundations of American government, including but not limited to the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and all its Amendments, and the Federalist Papers. The course examines the branches of government and the government's laws, policies, and programs. It also examines the ways in which citizens participate in their government and ways their government responds to citizens.

The course will address questions such as: How does government work in the United States? How do the three branches of government interact with the public and each other? What is a democracy, and how does the United States fit into this framework? What are some suggestions for how to better our institutions? We will engage in thinking through these questions through a combination of lectures, civic discussions, videos, and readings. Ultimately, students should leave with a better understanding of how to engage in civic life, how to critically think about politics, and how to understand our institutions. To find our own individual answers to these questions, we must engage in the course material and weekly synchronous discussions. Students who do not read the assigned articles, view the assigned lectures, and interact during the course discussions should not expect to understand American government or receive a good grade for this course.

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

- *The Struggle for Democracy, the 2022 Midterm Elections Update*, 13th Edition by Greenberg and Page (available via UF All Access)
- The Constitution of the United States: <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution>
- The Federalist Papers: <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/full-text?ref=upstract.com>
- The Declaration of Independence: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>
- All other readings will be distributed through Canvas.

Course Objectives & Civic Literacy Requirement:

By the end of the course, students will be able to do the following, per the state's Civic Literacy Competencies (as required by [Florida Statute 1007.25](#)):

- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and practices of the U.S.'s constitutional republic.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and its Amendments, and the Federalist Papers.
- Demonstrate knowledge of landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the American Federal Government and its impact on law and society.
- Demonstrate an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates.
- Demonstrate the ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

General Education

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

How the Class Works

Modules:

The course will be organized into modules, with each week containing one module. Modules will contain lectures, videos, readings, and assignments. Students are required to read and watch all content within each module. As this course is asynchronous, students are free to complete their work whenever and at whatever pace suits them, but all assignments for each week are due on Sunday by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time.

Required Reading, Lectures, and Discussion Sections:

For each module, students are required to first read the textbook chapter, followed by the supplementary reading, watch any additional videos assigned, and then watch the lectures. Students are required to familiarize themselves with all course material before the discussion section for the week. Exams contain questions about assigned readings, lectures, and discussion topics, which means that there may be questions from a reading that is not covered in lecture.

Assignment Due Dates:

All quizzes and written assignments are due by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time on Sunday at the conclusion of each module. Each exam is only offered for one day (Exam 1: September 13, Exam 2: October 18, Exam 3: December 4), and the entire exam must be taken at once, in a single sitting. If you are not available on the day of the exam due to an excused absence, you will

be given a retake in the same format (see make-up policy directly below). Please communicate with me in advance if you know that you will be unavailable on an exam day.

Make-Up Policy

Makeup exams will be given in the same format as the original exam for students with excused absences. **There will be no makeup exams for unexcused absences. Excused absences require documentation from a physician, government agency, court, university, or other documentation on a case-by-case basis.** If a student is seeking an excused absence for a missed essay, quiz, discussion section, or other assignment, the documentation must indicate that the student is unable to perform their coursework for the entire week. Students with unexcused absences from discussion will receive a zero for that week.

Grades

- Attendance in discussion sections: 5%
- Participation in discussion sections: 10%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Writing Assignments: 15%
- Current Event Reactions: 15%
- Exam 1: 15%
- Exam 2: 15%
- Exam 3: 15%

Attendance and Participation in Discussion Sections:

Discussion sections will be held both as part of this course and in conjunction with the Department of History through the Bob Graham Center, hosted by Dr. Teresa Cornacchione. **Students must attend 7 (seven) discussions via Zoom throughout the semester. Students may choose to attend the course discussion sections, the discussion sections with the Bob Graham Center, or a combination thereof, to meet the required amount.** The schedule for these discussions can be found in the schedule below and on the Canvas page. Students are required to actively use their audio or chat feature in each discussion section and are required to stay on Zoom for the duration of the discussion. Video is welcomed, but not required. Student comments during discussions must be respectful and stay relevant to the topic, based on readings and other materials.

Please be aware that **this course's synchronous discussion component is a requirement of the state of Florida as per section 1007.25(4)(b), Florida Statutes.** The addition of synchronous discussions into this asynchronous course is a requirement of the state and university. More information on Civic Literacy Requirements can be found here: <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/for-students/civic-literacy-requirement/faq/>.

Quizzes

Timed quizzes will be assigned throughout the semester. Quizzes will cover assigned readings and lectures. There are currently 5 (five) quizzes, but the total number of quizzes is subject to change at any time.

Writing Assignments:

There will be 3 (three) essays throughout the semester. Each writing assignment will require that students respond to a prompt in that week's module. Essays must be between 1.5 to 2 pages (450 – 600 words) double-spaced in length and submitted as a Microsoft Word or PDF document in 12-point font, Times New Roman (or another comparable font) with 1-inch margins. UF students can download the entire Microsoft Office suite, including Microsoft Word, free of charge at this link: <https://it.ufl.edu/services/gatorcloud-microsoftoffice-online>.

In addition to these essays, there will be 4 (four) current event reactions. These are short (150 – 300 words) analyses of current events through the lens of the course. Here is a helpful guide on how to select reputable news sources: <https://libguides.ucmerced.edu/news/reputable>.

Also worth noting is that UF students can get free online *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Economist* subscriptions at this link: <https://businesslibrary.uflib.ufl.edu/wsj-nyt-economist>.

Exams

There will be 3 (three) equally weighted exams throughout the course. The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions. The exams are *not* cumulative. A schedule of the exams and what content they will cover can be found below:

- Exam 1 (September 13): Weeks 1 – 5
- Exam 2 (October 18): Weeks 6 – 10
- Exam 3 (December 4): Weeks 11 – 16

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:

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| 93.0 – 100% (A) | 83.0 – 86.9% (B) | 73.0 – 76.9% (C) | 63.0 – 66.9% (D) |
| 90.0 – 92.9% (A-) | 80.0 – 82.9% (B-) | 70.0 – 72.9% (C-) | 60.0 – 62.9% (D+) |
| 87.0 – 89.9% (B+) | 77.0 – 79.9% (C+) | 67.0 – 69.9% (D+) | <60% (F) |

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 Resources

The resources listed below are not exhaustive of all the academic resources that are available to students, but these encapsulate those that are helpful for students taking courses online, those seeking library support, or those looking for help with writing, tutoring, and general study skills:

- E-Learning Technical Support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2), learning-support@ufl.edu
- Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>.
- Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138, <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.
- Academic Resources: provides services like tutoring, <https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu>.

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.

Class 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. 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 | Module Topic | Readings | Weekly Assignment |
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| Week 1: August 22 – 23 | Welcome to POS2041! Syllabus Overview & Democracy and American Politics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 1 • <i>The Declaration of Independence</i> | <u>Quiz 1</u> : Syllabus |
| Week 2: August 26 – 30 | The Constitution | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 2 • <i>Federalist</i> #51 • Scalia Reading, “Constitutional Interpretation the Old-Fashioned Way” • Breyer Excerpt, “Active Liberty” | <u>Essay 1</u> (450 – 600 words) <u>Discussion 1</u> : How does the Constitution work to balance sovereignty, equality, and liberty, and where does it fall short? |
| Week 3: September 3 – 6 | Federalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 3 • <i>Federalist</i> #10 • Introduction of <i>Marijuana Federalism</i>, Adler | <u>Current Event Reaction 1</u> : How has federalism been in the news lately? Choose a news article from a reputable source and discuss how federalism applies to a current event. |
| Week 4: September 9 – 13 | The Structural Foundations of American Government & Politics | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 4 | Exam 1: September 13 |
| Week 5: September 16 – 20 | Congress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 11 • <i>Article I of the Constitution</i> • Gallagher, “How to Save Congress” | <u>Quiz 2</u> <u>Discussion 2</u> : How do institutional rules impact the legislative process? Should some of those rules be amended, and if so, how? |

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| <p>Week 6: September 23 – 27</p> | <p>The Presidency</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 12 • <i>Article II of the Constitution</i> • Klein, “Why the president becomes more powerful when Congress fails” | <p><u>Essay 2</u> (450 – 600 words)</p> |
| <p>Week 7: September 30 – October 4</p> | <p>The Executive Branch (the Bureaucracy)</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 13 • Schulman, “The United States needs more bureaucracy, not less” | <p><u>Quiz 3</u></p> <p><u>Discussion 3:</u> What is important about the tradeoff between expertise and control in regards to the bureaucracy? Does the existence of the federal bureaucracy challenge or support representative government?</p> |
| <p>Week 8: October 7 – 11</p> | <p>The Courts</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 14 • <i>Article III of the Constitution</i> • Bazelon, et al., “How to Fix the Supreme Court” | <p><u>Current Event Reaction 2:</u> How do recent Supreme Court rulings reflect the history of the Court? Link and discuss a reputable news article in your reaction.</p> <p><u>Discussion 4:</u> Does the Supreme Court have a responsibility to be responsive to the American public?</p> |
| <p>Week 9: October 14 – 18</p> | <p>Civil Liberties & Civil Rights</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapters 15 & 16 • <i>The Bill of Rights (Amendments 1 – 10 of Constitution)</i> | <p>Exam 2: October 18</p> |

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| <p>Week 10: October 21 – 25</p> | <p>Political Parties</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 9 • Accetti, “The Quiet and Dangerous Way U.S. Politics is Becoming Europeanized” | <p><u>Quiz 4</u></p> <p><u>Discussion 5:</u> How does our party system reflect the spectrum of American political views? How might the party system be leading to polarization?</p> |
| <p>Week 11: October 28 – November 1</p> | <p>Voting, Campaigns, & Elections</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 10 • Drutman, “This voting reform solves 2 of America’s biggest political problems” | <p><u>Current Event Reaction 3:</u> The 2024 presidential election will be held next Tuesday. Choose a reputable news article and discuss each party’s/ presidential candidate’s approach to campaigning in the lead-up to the election.</p> |
| <p>Week 12: November 4 – 8</p> | <p>Public Opinion & The News Media</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 5 • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 6 • Gorvett, “How the news changes the way we think and behave” | <p><u>Current Event Reaction 4:</u> How does public opinion shape media coverage? Choose a reputable news article and discuss the ways that public opinion and media coverage intersect.</p> <p><u>Discussion 6:</u> What is public opinion to politics? What is media to politics? Are fears of a biased media warranted? In what ways are biases in the media generated and driven by the public?</p> |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 7 • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 8 • Finger, “Interest groups’ influence | |

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| Week 13: November 12 – 15 | Interest Groups & Social Movements | on policy comes through the presence of faithful legislative allies – not gifts to their campaigns” | <u>Essay 3</u> (450 – 600 words) |
| Week 14: November 18 – 22 | Domestic & Foreign Policy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TSD Chapter 17 • TSD Chapter 18 | <u>Quiz 5</u> <u>Discussion 7:</u> How much power does the president or Congress wield in policymaking, and under what conditions? |
| Week 15: November 25 – 29 | ** THANKSGIVING BREAK ** | | |
| Week 16: December 2 – 4 | Where to Go from Here | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD | Final Exam: December 4 |

Last updated: July 1, 2024