

Syllabus – Fall, 2020

Political Science 101 -Introduction to American Political Institutions

Online

Peter Bowman, Professor

Virtual Office Hours: M-TH, 9AM-5PM: During these times, I frequently check my email and VM. I shall reply to your email or call/VM message with any questions, concerns or comments that you have within 24 hours, often sooner.

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Required Text: Bardes, Shelley & Schmidt, American Government & Politics Today, The Essentials: 2019-2020 Edition

Supplemental articles shall be assigned periodically throughout the course, and shall be testable material.

Course lecture notes for each topic can be accessed through the “files” section of the course Canvas website.

Mode of Instruction: This course instruction shall be asynchronous. In other words, there shall be no set day and time that we meet. Technology permitting, I shall record one 1 hour and 25 minute audio-visual module every Monday and Wednesday during each of the 16 weeks this semester (with the exception of exam days). This is the equivalent number of required hours for the course. The modules shall be a combination of lecture, the notes on Canvas/”Files” section and other visuals, as appropriate for the topic. I shall upload each module in the “Modules” section of Canvas, and post an announcement on Canvas to apprise you of its availability. You can listen/view the modules at whatever time that fits your schedule (it need not be necessarily on Mondays & Wednesdays; whatever works for your schedule). That said, you are strongly encouraged to find a set, consistent time to view the sessions, so as to establish a routine that will enable you to keep up with the course material. You are also strongly encouraged to view/listen to each module within the 24 hour period that it is made available so that you don’t get behind the pace of course instruction and suddenly find yourself backlogged with unviewed modules.

Course Description: This is the first half survey course recommended for those students who intend to transfer to a four year college or university. It is designed to acquaint students with selected concepts, theories and methods behind American government and the political processes. The course will address some of the major political institutions and their themes in a descriptive as well as conceptual and theoretic framework. Emphasis will be geared toward both Constitutional laws, American political thought and the real world of American politics and the nature of American democracy. By the end of the semester, students will be able to do the following:

1. Identify the origins and development of the US political system from its colonial beginnings to the writing of the US Constitution in Philadelphia.
2. Analyze the agenda and the compromises made at the Constitutional Convention.
3. Examine the institution of slavery and the failure to confront this moral issue at the Convention and during the early years of the Republic
4. Describe the balance of power between the national government and state governments as detailed in the Constitution and as it has evolved through two centuries.
5. Recognize the ways in which individual rights are protected by the Bill of Rights and how they are often threatened or challenged.

6. Identify the major perspectives used to interpret the Constitution and how Supreme Court decisions shape contemporary applications of constitutional principles.
7. Trace the development and path of the civil rights revolution with emphasis on the centrality of the 14th amendment in this process.
8. Analyze components of public opinion such as political socialization, current political ideologies, the US political culture, and the measurement techniques of polling.
9. Examine voting patterns in terms of history and demographics.
10. Explain the US presidential election process with its reliance on the Electoral College as prescribed in the Constitution.
11. Compare and contrast the Madisonian view of political parties and interest groups to contemporary theories.
12. Trace the development of US political parties and analyze the current coalitions that exist within each of the two major parties today.
13. Understand the political roles of reporters of mediated news and how their views affect public perceptions of government and its policy decisions.

This course, when completed, helps satisfy the college's / CSU American History & Constitution requirement as well as part of the CSU & IGETC social sciences requirement. The course also partially fulfills requirements for the Political Science AA-T transfer degree.

Course Requirements: Students are required to take three exams and write three short analytical papers. Students will also complete interactive online assignments using Canvas.

Exams: Exams: There will be three online exams given (two midterms and a non-cumulative final that will cover the final 1/3 of material). Each exam will consist of the student choosing and answering two (2) out of five (5) essay questions, along with fifteen (15) multiple choice questions. The material will be drawn from the readings, lecture notes and modules. A complete essay answer is one that expands discussion of a topic beyond mere description and shows me analysis and your understanding of the concept at hand. While the final exam is not cumulative, you will find that the material in this class builds. It, therefore, behooves you to retain what will have been covered in previous exams. A study guide (SG) consisting of a list of testable material (for possible multiple choice and essay questions) which is to be covered in each test shall be available by way of the course Canvas site. Each exam SG is located in the Canvas “announcements” page. In addition to the SG, the Canvas site shall also contain more specific and particular “hints” for the essay portion of each exam. Each exam essay hint section shall contain a series of essay questions eligible to appear on that respective exam (whether they be the exact wording, or a reasonable facsimile). The essay hints are also found in the “announcements” page of Canvas.

The dates of each exam are included in the class/topics schedule on the back of this syllabus. For each exam, you will have a 24 hour period, beginning at midnight, 12 AM, on the scheduled day and ending at 11:59 PM that same day to take the exam, so be sure you pick a time of day that will allow you a one hour and 20 minute window without interruption to complete the test. Obviously, the latest you could check in and start the test would be no later than 10:30 PM to be assured that you would have the necessary hour and 20 minutes without the window closing before you're able to finish. Go to the "Quizzes" link on the Canvas site, click the link for the appropriate exam and begin. Once you click the link, you are on the clock, so to speak, and have 80 minutes to complete the exam. The window will close off at that 80th minute, regardless of where you are on the exam.

I shall allow an open book and open note test. You must only use material from the readings, lecture notes on the "Files" section, and the material covered in the modules. Any student that provides exam answers drawn from material that did not originate from any of these said class sources is subject to any number of penalties, including, but not limited to, a zero for that exam question, a zero for the entire exam, an automatic "F" for the course and/or referral to the Office of Student Affairs for disciplinary action.

From previous experiences at giving open material exams in past years, I have found that students who were not prepared because they thought having open access to class materials would get them by, were scrambling through their notes to find the answers and ended up performing poorly because much of the limited time was wasted looking things up, instead of writing the kind of detailed analysis that the questions called for. Again, you have a limited window in which to complete this test, so please see to it that you have prepared thoroughly by applying the study techniques that the syllabus recommends below.

The following are study suggestions that will enhance your chances of success on the exams, and in the course: (1) **Re-write your notes.** Pedagogical (learning) studies show strong evidence for repetition as a key to retention. Choose an hour(s) of the day/day(s) of the week that fits your schedule. Allot that time for this class. Use that to not just go over the notes, but, again, to re-write and, thus, retain the class material that we will have gone over that day/week. Remember, **Repetition>Reinforcement>Retention!** (2) **Do the readings.** In particular, go to both the SG and essay hints that are drawn from the readings. Go to those readings. Read those sections. Take notes from those sections and then re-write those notes. Again, this is a form of repetition and reinforcement that has shown to be very effective. (3) **See me in virtual office hours.** With most of you, the challenge in this course will be retaining the substantial sum of material presented. If you do the above suggestions, comprehension of material will come most of the time for most of you. However, if the course, or any part of the course, proves a challenge to you from a comprehension standpoint, that's when you come see me in my office hours (or by e-mail, or by phone contact). Do not wait until half-way or later in the semester to do this.

Make up Exams: Make up exams will be given for those students who are unable to take the exam on the scheduled day due to extenuating circumstances beyond their control. It shall be the student's responsibility to contact me about a make-up exam. **A student shall only be allowed to take ONE (1) make-up exam out of the three exams given in the course. Any subsequent missed exams by a student after their one make-up option has been used, shall result in a score of zero.**

The instructor and student shall mutually agree to a day and time period when the make-up exam shall be completed.

Writing Assignments: Students will complete three writing assignments, integrating a minimum of two news sources. Students will select any current event of interest related to politics and government, along with the two sources, which may be any combination of newspaper/periodical/online media sources. The student is free to use more than the minimum two sources, if need be.

For those topics that are national or international in nature, you are required to select a publication of a national level circulation, such as the New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Christian Science Monitor, Wall Street Journal, Economist, Washington Post. NPR.org, BBC World News, CNNpolitics.com and Politico are good examples of reliable credible sources. These publications have their own staff-writers in various bureaus throughout the world. Thus, they will provide you with more a lot more primary source/detailed analysis, hard news and topic background than can newspapers with only a local/regional-level circulation. Topics of a state/local nature can be accessed using a local/regional circulation newspaper (San Diego Union-Tribune, Riverside Press-Enterprise, Los Angeles Times, etc.). For each source, please choose a hard news or feature article. Please do not use op-ed pieces (editorials, opinion columns, etc.). Also, do not use short news clips from wire reports. Do not use blogs or Wikipedia, or any other “publications” that are not considered legitimate & valid peer-reviewed journalistic sources (“Info Wars.com,” etc.). Please make sure your source/article is that of a substantive and detailed information provider.

The student will then write an approximate 3-4 page essay addressing the final criteria: (1) Give a complete and detailed background on the topic. What is the conflict(s)? What are the various perspectives and arguments of each of the parties involved? What are some of the origins of the problem? What are some possible solutions for conflict resolution, from the perspective of the political actors involved? (2) Give an analysis comparing the information offered from the minimum two sources. Which source gives more depth and detail? Is there a particular bias with one source? What are some of the contents and passages of each source to support your evaluation of the sources? These are the questions I want you to address when doing these assignments. Please attach a copy of all your sources, along with your paper. It is very important that you cite your sources. For every idea or words that are not your own, please cite the author and/or the source. You are free to use any of the major citation styles (MLA, APA, Turabian/Chicago style). Just be sure to be consistent and, again, cite sources. Any opinions, assertions or arguments that you might want to present, please do so by citing sources, as well as providing evidence and facts from these sources, which are more authoritative in expertise than you. Papers which include opinions or arguments that lack such evidence and sources, and are based on just anecdotal experiences, or your “gut” feeling shall be docked in points. Each assignment is worth five (5) points each.

You shall turn in each of the papers either through email or Canvas during any portion of the 24 hour period of the below listed due date for each respective paper. Late papers will be docked one (1) point for every additional day an assignment is not turned in after the due date. The due dates of the writing assignments are as follows: First assignment: **September 17**, Second assignment: **October 22**, Third assignment: **November 19**.

Weekly Discussion Questions: Every student enrolled in the class shall each have their own Canvas account. Once a week (**Starting September 9, every Wednesday through the following Wednesday, until 3 PM**), students shall be required to log on to the Canvas site for this class and respond to two questions on the discussion link. Each weekly topic(s) shall be given by the professor and will be related to course material and other relevant topics, mostly drawing from the readings. Student responses shall address each question in a way that uses relevant course materials, and that gives an analysis of the discussion topic. There is no required length for each student post. However, students who post responses that consist of such short, simple statements, such as “good point”, “I agree”, or other obviously non-substantive remarks that lack serious thought shall not be accepted for credit. While the professor shall have the discretion to determine whether or not posts meet these requirements, your common sense should be more than sufficient to distinguish between posts that are of substance and those that are not.

For every acceptable weekly post that a student completes on the discussion board, that student shall receive a check mark for credit. Missing check marks shall result in the student's Canvas discussion portion of their grade being affected. While students are required to post a minimum of one response per question, there certainly is no maximum limit on posts. If you want to respond to other students' posts on the weekly topic/question, please feel free to do so. Part of the purpose of this assignment is to interact with your fellow students and to further your familiarity with the course material.

Attendance: Please note that when you miss one class session, you've missed a half week's worth of material. Students are, therefore, strongly encouraged to attend every class session. If you must miss a class, you are encouraged to notify me the session before (if you know ahead of time of your impending absence). You will still be responsible for all material (reading, lecture, and handouts) that you miss. If you accumulate excessive absences you may be subject to being dropped from the course. Students are subject to earning either an "F", "W" or "FW".

Reflection Questions: During random times throughout the semester, I shall post the question on Canvas and establish a time window for you to complete it. I will ask you (usually) one question, drawn from the lecture material that day as a way to reflect on what you have learned from this material. So long as you answer with some thought and detail, you shall receive credit. I reserve the right to not assign you credit if I feel your response does not adequately address the material or question. Each question is worth one (1) percent of your grade. The questions, in total, shall make up five (5) percent of your grade. You must attend class on that day to answer any in-class question, as make-ups shall not be allowed. **NOTE: For all discussion entries (both weekly discussion questions and the reflection questions), all submissions must be turned in by way of the actual discussion forum on Canvas before the selected time expires and the window/forum, thus, closes. All posts that are submitted through email or any other way other than the Canvas discussion forum (regardless of the time that they were submitted) shall NOT be counted for discussion credit or reflection question credit.**

Adds and Withdrawals: If for some reason you decide to withdraw (drop) from this class, you must do so officially. **This will be your responsibility.** You are reminded that a "W" cannot be recorded for you after the last date to withdraw. If you physically stop attending class after this date, an "FW", or "F" will automatically be assessed on your transcript. An academic grade will be assigned by me if you do not attempt to administratively drop but stop physically showing up after the drop deadline. Please observe the appropriate "add" and "drop" deadlines on "My Class Schedule" online section.

Please note that the professor reserves at all times the right to drop students for reasons such as excessive absences, absence from class on the first day, excessive absences from class after the first day and failure to notify the professor about those absences and other reasons.

Grading: Your course grade will be broken down into the following assignments and percentages:

First Exam: 20%

Second Exam: 20%

Final Exam: 30%

Writing Assignments (total): 15%

Online Discussion Boards (total): 10%

Reflection Questions (total): 5%

The following grade scale will be used when determining final letter grades:

90 -100: A

89 -80: B

79 -70: C

69 -60: D

59 and below: F

A mark of "Incomplete" or F" may be given in the event of any missing work by a student.

Cheating / Plagiarism: Essentially, plagiarism is defined as any of the following:

- a. Verbatim copying without proper acknowledgement.
- b. Paraphrasing without proper acknowledgement
- c. Putting together a "patchwork" paper from diverse sources, without proper acknowledgement of those sources.
- d. Unacknowledged appropriation of information or of someone else's ideas.

Cheating on exams is defined as any of the following:

- a. Drawing answers from anyone other than yourself.
- b. Having access to both a copy of the exam and/ or its answers prior to it being administered. (cont.)
- c. Having access to exam answers during the exam via a "cheat sheet" or any other document that was created before the exam was administered.

Any student caught engaging in any of these acts will be subject to a grade of "F" for both that assignment and the course as well as being subject to referral to the Office of Student Affairs for disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion from the college. A fulfilling academic and learning experience helps to be ensured when students do their own work.

Disabilities: Students with disabilities who may need academic accommodations should discuss options with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) and/ or me during the first week of class.

Schedule of Topics & Reading Assignments

<u>Day (Denotes start of new topic/module)</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading Assignment</u>
August 24	Introduction and Overview	
August 26	American Political Ideologies	(B) 1
September 16	The U.S. Constitution	(B) 2
September 28	Federalism	(B) 3
October 7	Civil Liberties	(B) 4
October 14	First Mid-Term Exam	
October 19	Civil Rights	(B) 5
November 2	Public Opinion	(B) 6
November 18	Second Mid-Term Exam	

November 30	Interest Groups	(B) 7, 9
December 9	Party Politics & Election Campaigns	(B) 8
December 16	Final Exam	

Note: Grading percentage/weighting criteria, exam dates, reading/writing assignment dates & lecture topic dates are subject to change.