

Political Science 201

Introduction to United States Government and Politics

Fall 2017

Department of Political Science
Oregon State University

1 Instructor Information

Dr. Christopher Stout
Email: stoutch@oregonstate.edu
Office: Bexell 312

Office Hours: 9:00-10:00 2:00-3:00 M, W or by
Apt
Class Location: Gleason 200
4 Credits

2 Course Description

Alexis de Tocqueville described the American democracy as “The Great Experiment”. Over 200 years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the ratification of the US Constitution, the experiment to provide liberty, justice, and equality for all continues. The main objective of this course is to provide students with a better understanding of the principles and practices behind American democracy, the American political institutions, and the political processes which determine policy and the distribution of resources. Moreover, we will ask how the practice of American politics brings us closer to, or farther from, the political society that our founders envisioned.

Additionally, the course will focus on connecting the political processes and institutions to current events in American politics and the role that politics plays in students daily lives. By making these connections, the course will hopefully inspire students to become more involved and engaged with American politics.

Finally, this course seeks to train students to examine American politics as social scientists. Rather than making subjective assessments about politics in the U.S., by the end of the course the students should be able to objectively analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the current political system.

3 Course Readings

This course’s readings will be primarily drawn from *American Government: Openstax*. This is an open source American Politics textbook and is free (Posted on Canvas).

Students are required to complete all of the readings before each class.

4 Course Structure

Recent research has demonstrated both the strengths and limitations of a strict lecture format. While students learn a significant amount of information through hearing the analysis of professors, a combination of lecture, discussion, active learning exercises, videos and student participation

generally yields better learning outcomes for students. To ensure that students get the most out of this course, we will use a multi-faceted approach to learning.

Generally, each class will be centered around lecture and discussion. To spur discussion, students will be asked to complete several in-class writing exercises. Students will turn these writing assignments for credit (graded as Pass/Fail). In addition to these writing assignments students will engage in several active learning exercises (not graded) in class.

5 Assessment

In-Class Short Writing (10%)

To help students think critically about American Government and to improve their writing and communication skills, students will be asked to write down their answers (about a paragraph in length) to 2 to 4 question prompts given in each class. Students will be required to turn in 10 of their written responses and these will be graded simply as pass or fail. Each completed assignment is worth 1%. **For full credit, each question must be answered and they are due at the end of class. No late assignments will be accepted.**

Quizzes (20%)

To ensure that students are keeping up with the material, students will take 4 quizzes throughout the semester with the lowest quiz score being dropped. Each quiz will be worth 10% of your grade for a total of 20%. These quizzes will be multiple choice and will assess your knowledge of the lecture and the course readings.

Midterm (35%)

The midterm will test your knowledge of the first half of the course. The test will include a combination of multiple choice questions and short answer identifications.

Final (35%)

The final will test your knowledge of the first half of the course. The test will be multiple choice.

6 Course Policies

A Note on Academic Integrity

I find it unfortunate that instructors must include this section on the syllabus, but with a rise of electronic resources, academic dishonesty is a part of the reality in which we now function. Thus, I include a very short reminder here on the importance of maintaining academic integrity. Cheating in any form is prohibited and will result in an automatic fail for the course.

Statement Regarding Students with Disabilities

Accommodations are collaborative efforts between students, faculty, and Disability Access Services. (DAS) Students with accommodations approved through DAS are responsible for contacting the faculty member in charge of the course prior to or during the first week of the term to discuss

accommodations. Students who believe they are eligible for accommodations but who have not yet obtained approval through DAS should contact DAS immediately at 541-737-4098.

Accessibility of Course Materials

All materials used in this course are accessible. If you require accommodations please contact Disability Access Services (DAS).

Additionally, Canvas, the learning management system through which this course is offered, provides a vendor statement certifying how the platform is accessible to students with disabilities.

7 Course Schedule and Assigned Readings

Wednesday-September 20th-Introduction and Syllabus

- *NO READING*

Monday-September 25th-The Road to Independence

Required Readings

- Declaration of Independence
- American Politics pp 36-45
- Globalyceum Unit 1

Wednesday September 27th-Debating the Constitution and Federalism

Required Readings

- Declaration of Independence (POSTED ON CANVAS)
- American Government pp 41-53

Monday October 2nd- Civil Liberties

Required Readings

- American Government pp 108-115

Political Behavior and Elections

Wednesday-October 4th-Public Opinion and Polling

Required Readings

- American Government pp 200-209

Monday-October 9th-Political Participation and Voting

Required Readings

- American Government pp 248-256

Wednesday-October 11th-Campaigns and Elections*Required Readings*

- American Government pp 256-257

Monday-October 16th-Media and Politics*Required Readings*

- American Government pp 295-305

Wednesday-October 18th-Social Movement*Required Readings*

- None-Review Material

Monday-October 23rd-Political Parties*Required Readings*

- None-Review Material

Wednesday October 25th-Midterm*Required Readings*

- None

American Political Institutions**Monday-October 30th-Congress***Required Readings*

- American Government pp 428-438

Wednesday-November 1st-The Presidency*Required Readings*

- American Government pp 465-470

Monday-November 6th-Movie-The Supreme Court*Required Readings*

- American Government pp 465-470

Wednesday-November 8th-The Federal Courts*Required Readings*

- American Government pp 492-508

Special Topics in American Politics

Monday-November 13th-Political Polarization

Required Readings

- Layman, Geoffrey C., Thomas M. Carsey, and Juliana Menasce Horowitz. Party polarization in American politics: Characteristics, causes, and consequences. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.* 9(2006): 83-110 (Posted on Canvas)

Wednesday-November 15th-Economic Policy

Required Readings

- American Government pp 611-627

Monday-November 20th-Music and Politics

Required Readings

- None

Monday-November 22nd-No Class-Thanksgiving

Required Readings

- None

Monday-November 27th-Racial and Ethnic Politics in the US

Required Readings

- American Government pp 154-168

Wednesday-November 29th-Gender and Politics

Required Readings

- American Government pp 170-176

Final is Tentatively Schedule on Wednesday, December 6th at 6pm