

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**  
**POLS 1010**  
**Fall 2017**

Classroom: Science & Technology C-207  
Class time: Mon., Wed., & Fri., 12 to 12:50 p.m.  
Office hours: Mon. & Wed., 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.  
Tues. & Thurs., 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Peter L. Francia  
Morning Office: Brewster A-101  
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**COURSE OVERVIEW**

This course is an introduction to the institutions and processes of American national government. It covers the following major subject areas:

- (1) The foundations of American democracy. Topics include the causes of the American Revolution and the nation's founding, and an overview of the U.S. Constitution, federalism, civil liberties, and civil rights.
- (2) Politics. Topics include the role of public opinion, political participation, the media, political parties, campaigns and elections, and interest groups in shaping American politics.
- (3) Institutions. Topics include the functions and responsibilities of the Congress, the executive branch, and the Supreme Court.
- (4) Public policy: Topics include the basics of economic, social, and foreign policy.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

The general learning objective in this course is for you to gain a broad understanding of American national government. To complete this class successfully, you will need to demonstrate factual, applied, and conceptual knowledge of the subjects covered in the course. I will expect you to be able to identify and define terms; interpret the significance of important events; apply political principles to hypothetical scenarios; compare and contrast political ideas and concepts; construct solutions to political problems; and assess the strengths and weaknesses of various different political arguments and perspectives. In addition, this course is designated as a *Foundations Curriculum* course for the social sciences (FC:SO). Therefore, upon completion of this course, you also will be able to: identify core concepts and measures used to study politics; explain at least one approach to the study of politics; and identify the contribution of political science to our larger society. Please note that I will not share my partisan affiliation to anyone in the class and pledge to present both sides of every political argument as fairly as possible. My larger and ultimate learning objective in this course is to teach each of you not what to think, but rather how to think about politics and government.

**REQUIRED READING**

*We the People: An Introduction to American Politics*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, and Caroline J. Tolbert (W.W. Norton, 2017).

## TOP HAT REQUIREMENT

We will be using the Top Hat (<https://www.tophat.com>) classroom response system in class. You will be able to enter your attendance and submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smart-phones, tablets, laptops, or through text messaging. You can visit the Top Hat Overview (<https://success.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide>) within the Top Hat Success Center, which outlines how you register for a Top Hat account. The Top Hat website also provides a brief overview to get you started on the system. An e-mail invitation from Top Hat was sent to you earlier this month. If you received the e-mail, please follow the instructions. If you do not receive this email, you can register by simply visiting the course website at <https://app.tophat.com/e/870501>. The course Join Code is 870501. Top Hat requires a paid subscription. A full breakdown of all subscription options is available at <https://www.tophat.com/pricing>. Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, please contact their support team directly through email at [support@tophat.com](mailto:support@tophat.com), the in app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

## COURSE STRUCTURE

Classes begin with a lecture on the topic listed in the course outline. You should come to class prepared to ask questions and to participate in class discussions. Keeping up with the assigned weekly readings and attending class regularly throughout the semester will allow for more informed classroom dialogue and for more interesting debates, as well as improve your ability to contribute to and learn from the class interactions. I also encourage everyone to read a newspaper, watch the television news, and follow current events. Doing so will broaden your interest in this course and help you better understand the importance of the material we cover. To incorporate visual learning in the classroom, and to help generate additional thought on the subjects covered in the course, I often show video material in class. This includes televised news footage of various historical events, documentaries, and political films. On occasion, I may select documentaries and films that have an “R” rating. Please see me if you have any moral, religious, political, or other objections to viewing documentaries or films with an “R” rating.

## CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Class attendance is mandatory. Your attendance will be recorded through the Top Hat classroom response system (see above). Your class attendance grade will be based on the percentage of classes that you attend (e.g., a student who attends every class will earn a 100; a student who attends half of the classes will earn a 50, etc.). Students who are active participants during class discussions will receive a bonus point added to their overall course grade.

## EXAM RULES AND POLICIES

Failure to be present for any of the scheduled exams will result in an automatic “0.” On all exam dates, please come prepared with a bubble sheet and a pencil. If you cannot attend an exam, you must contact me at least 30 minutes before I have administered the test. I will grant a make-up exam only for circumstances that I deem extraordinary or for circumstances that meet university guidelines. If you miss an exam because of an illness, you are still required to contact me before the exam. You must also present me with proper verification (see next page).

## EXCUSED ABSENCES AND VERIFICATION

I will excuse absences, including those on exam dates, for the following reasons: (1) participation in an authorized activity as an official representative of the university (this includes athletic events, university-sponsored performances, or academic conferences); (2) participation in other activities deemed by the Dean of Students to warrant an excused absence; (3) an extreme personal emergency; (4) the death of an immediate family member; (5) participation in a religious holiday; and (6) health reasons such as an incapacitating or contagious illness or unavoidable surgery. DO NOT schedule non-emergency doctor's appointments (such as an annual check-up visit or a dental visit) or any other personal commitments during our class time. Serious students plan their personal schedules around their academic schedules, not the other way around. If your absence meets any of the criteria mentioned above, I will need you to present me with some form of verification no later than two weeks after the absence if you wish to have your absence excused. Some acceptable forms of verification include the following: a note from Student Health Services; a note from a doctor or medical office; an obituary; or official documentation from the athletic department indicating your travel schedule. In the event of severe weather, please call the University Emergency Telephone Number at 252-328-0062 or visit the ECU emergency alert website (<http://www.ecu.edu/alert>) to check on whether the university has canceled classes. If the university has not canceled classes, but you commute to campus from a considerable distance and believe driving conditions may be hazardous, I will consider excusing your absence.

## EVALUATION

Your final grade in the course will be based on class attendance and your performance on four exams. The weight assigned to each is:

- (1) Exam 1 on September 22 = 15% of your overall grade.
- (2) Exam 2 on October 20 = 20% of your overall grade.
- (3) Exam 3 on November 20 = 20% of your overall grade.
- (4) Exam 4 on December 13 = 25% of your overall grade.
- (5) Class attendance is worth the remaining 20% of your overall grade.

Course averages will be converted to letter grades using the scale below:

Course Average	Grade	Course Average	Grade
93 and above =	A	73 to 76 =	C
90 to 92 =	A-	70 to 72 =	C-
87 to 89 =	B+	67 to 69 =	D+
83 to 86 =	B	63 to 66 =	D
80 to 82 =	B-	60 to 62 =	D-
77 to 79 =	C+	Below 60 =	F

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education shared by all at East Carolina University. Consistent with this principle, I expect all students to complete their academic work honestly. I will not tolerate any student's involvement in *cheating, plagiarism, falsifying work, submitting the same assignment for more than one course, or other acts that would be in violation of the university's academic integrity standards*. If I become aware of or suspect a potential academic integrity violation, I will meet with the student under suspicion following the procedures outlined in the university's academic integrity policy. Should I determine that an academic integrity violation has occurred, I reserve the right to assign a grade penalty up to and including an "F" for the assignment or the course. If it also comes to my attention that the student involved in such an incident has had a prior academic integrity violation, or if there are other aggravating circumstances, I will refer the case directly to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Should the Academic Integrity Board determine that the accused student committed an academic integrity violation, the penalties, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct, may include a grade penalty and up to suspension from the university. For more information, please see: <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/part6section2.pdf>.

## CLASSROOM RULES

The classroom is a learning environment. I expect all students to observe some basic rules of courtesy and respect, which include the following: (1) please address me as "Dr. Francia" or "Professor Francia" (upon graduation, you are welcome to address me by my first name, "Peter"); (2) arrive to class on time and do not leave before class is dismissed; (3) do not pack up your things early; it is disruptive to others around you; (4) cell phones are permissible, but for Top Hat purposes only; (5) no laptop or cell phone use during video screenings; (6) no eating during class; (7) no reading the newspaper or listening to music through headphones during class; (8) no sleeping during class; (9) no carrying on private conversations with others in the classroom while someone else is speaking; and (10) please be courteous to your classmates and respectful of your fellow students' views, comments, and questions. Classroom discussion is meant to allow us to hear a variety of viewpoints, and this can only happen if we respect each other and our differences. Failure to follow these rules will negatively affect your class attendance grade. Repeated or extreme offenses could result in your expulsion from the class.

## E-MAIL

E-mail is a valuable tool for me to communicate announcements and information to the entire class. Please check your ECU e-mail at least once a day (weekends excluded). E-mail is also a good way for you to contact me. Please feel free to use e-mail to set up one-on-one meetings with me if my office hours conflict with your schedule. If you have specific questions about the course material, I am happy to answer them through e-mail; however, I would encourage you to set up a one-on-one meeting with me if you are having general difficulty with your understanding of the course material. I am also happy to answer any specific questions concerning academic or career advising through e-mail, but again I would encourage you to set up a one-on-one meeting with me if you need more general academic or career advice. Please do not use e-mail to request information already listed in the syllabus, such as an exam date or the weight assigned to a specific exam.

## APPOINTMENTS

My office hours are listed on the first page of this syllabus. If you cannot meet with me during my office hours, please see me after class or contact me by telephone or e-mail to schedule an appointment. Please note that I have two offices, Brewster A-101 and Brewster D-303. I work from my main office, Brewster A-101, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. After 2 p.m., I work from my office at the Center for Survey Research in Brewster D-303. Every Tuesday and Thursday at noon, I am also happy to have lunch with anyone who wishes to join me. If you wish to schedule a lunch, please contact me at least one day in advance.

## DISABILITY SERVICES

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a covered disability must go to the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 to verify the disability before any accommodations can occur. The telephone number is 252-737-1016.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### **Week 1. Basics of Government and the Origins of the Nation's Founding**

August 21, 2017. Overview of the course / Importance and basics of government

August 23, 2017. Types of government

August 25, 2017. Origins of the American Revolution

- Required reading for Week 1: *We the People*, Ch. 1 (sections, "What Americans Think about Government," "Citizenship: Knowledge and Participation," and "Government") and Ch. 2 (section, "The First Founding: Interests and Conflicts")
- Optional reading for Week 1: "The Rights of the Colonists" by Samuel Adams  
[http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/print\\_documents/amendIXs3.html](http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/print_documents/amendIXs3.html)

### **Week 2. After the Revolution: The Founding and the Constitution**

August 28, 2017. American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence

August 30, 2017. Articles of Confederation and Shays' Rebellion

September 1, 2017. The U.S. Constitution and the debate over its ratification\*

\* Note: On Sept. 1, I will be away in San Francisco, CA, attending the American Political Science Association's annual conference. My graduate assistant will serve in my place.

- Required reading for Week 2: *We the People*, remainder of Chapter 2
- Optional reading for Week 2: "The Declaration of Independence":  
[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html)

### **Week 3. Federalism**

September 4, 2017. **NO CLASS (Labor Day holiday)**

September 6, 2017. Roles and responsibilities of local, state, and national government

September 8, 2017. Evolution of federalism

- Required reading for the Week 3: *We the People*, Chapter 3

#### **Week 4. Civil Liberties**

September 11, 2017. Overview of the Bill of Rights

September 13, 2017. Freedom of religion, speech, and the press

September 15, 2017. Rights of the criminally accused

- Required reading for Week 4: *We the People*, Chapter 4

#### **Week 5. Civil Rights**

September 18, 2017. Overview of the history of civil rights

September 20, 2017. The 1960s and beyond

September 22, 2017. **EXAM 1** (covers *We the People*, Chapters 1-4)

- Required reading for Week 5: *We the People*, Chapter 5
- Optional reading for Week 5: “The Power of Non-violence” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1131>

#### **Week 6. Political Participation and Voting**

September 25, 2017. Struggles for the right to vote

September 27, 2017. Political participation and the paradox of voting

September 29, 2017. U.S. voting laws and voter turnout in comparison to other nations

- Required reading for Week 6: *We the People*, Chapter 8

#### **Week 7. Public Opinion**

October 2, 2017. Political values and ideology

October 4, 2017. Formation of political opinions

October 6, 2017. Measuring public opinion

- Required reading for Week 7: *We the People*, Chapter 6

#### **Week 8. The Media**

October 9, 2017. **NO CLASS (Fall break)**

October 11, 2017. Types of media, its regulation, and ownership

October 13, 2017. News coverage and the power of the media

- Required reading for Week 8: *We the People*, Chapter 7

#### **Week 9. Campaigns and Elections**

October 16, 2017. Election laws and the campaign finance system

October 18, 2017. Campaign activities and voting behavior

October 20, 2017. **EXAM 2** (covers *We the People*, Chapters 1-8)

- Required reading for Week 9: *We the People*, Chapter 10

#### **Week 10. Political Parties**

October 23, 2017. Two-party systems versus multi-party systems

October 25, 2017. Party organizations, parties and the electorate, and parties and government

October 27, 2017. History of party development and party systems

- Required reading for Week 10: *We the People*, Chapter 9

### **Week 11. Interest Groups, Lobbying, and Legislation**

October 30, 2017. Types of interest groups

November 1, 2017. Why people join groups and the growth of organized interests

November 3, 2017. Lobbyists and lobbying strategies

- Required reading for Week 11: *We the People*, Chapter 11

### **Week 12. Congress**

November 6, 2017. Differences between the House and Senate

November 8, 2017. How a bill becomes law

November 10, 2017. Congressional powers and oversight\*

\* Note: On Nov. 10, I will be away in Philadelphia, PA, attending the Northeastern Political Science Association's annual conference. My graduate assistant will serve in my place.

- Required reading for Week 12: *We the People*, Chapter 12

### **Week 13. Presidency**

November 13, 2017. Constitutional powers of the president

November 15, 2017. Key members of the executive branch

November 17, 2017. The president and the public

- Required reading for Week 13: *We the People*, Chapter 13

### **Week 14. Exam #3 and Thanksgiving Break**

November 20, 2017. **EXAM 3** (covers *We the People*, Chapters 1-13)

November 22, 2017. **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving holiday)**

November 24, 2017. **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving holiday)**

### **Week 15. The Courts and Economic Policy**

November 27, 2017. Overview of the legal system

November 29, 2017. Judicial review and the U.S. Supreme Court

December 1, 2017. Economic policymaking

- Required reading for Week 15: *We the People*, Chapters 15-16

### **Week 16. Social and Foreign Policy**

December 4, 2017. Basics of social and foreign policy

- Required reading for Week 16: *We the People*, Chapters 17-18

### **FINAL EXAM**

December 13, 2017. The final exam is cumulative, covering all of the material listed above. It is scheduled from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in Science & Technology C-207.