

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

POLS 1010

Spring 2023

Classroom: Brewster B-102

Class time: Tues. & Thurs., 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Office hours: Tues. & Thurs., 2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.,
or by appointment

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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. 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, 14th ed., Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, Andrea L. Campbell, and Megan Ming Francis (W.W. Norton, 2023).

* Note: If you need to save money, *We the People*, 13th ed., is an acceptable alternative. However, I wish to stress that I expect all students to purchase at least one of these two options.

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 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.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THIS COURSE

This course is designated as a *General Education* course for the social sciences (GE:SO). Courses in the Social Sciences introduce students to the study of the psychological, social, and cultural dimensions of individuals and groups. These courses provide students with the knowledge necessary to solve problems in the Social Sciences and in scholarly fields that apply the methods used in the Social Sciences. They introduce students to the theoretical, analytical, and methodological techniques and perspectives of Social Sciences that advance the understanding of individual and group behavior. Scholarly study in the Social Sciences provides students with the foundation for understanding real-world problems necessary for meaningful participation in society. Courses in the Social Sciences develop the intellectual abilities, knowledge, and skills that students need to become broadly informed, to participate in interdisciplinary scholarship, and to be successful in their professional specialization. *The following program learning outcomes define the Social Science Competency.*

Students who have completed the General Education Social Sciences requirements can:

- (1) Apply discipline specific knowledge in the social sciences to explain the key factors that shape social institutions, structures, and processes that shape human behavior and social interaction.
- (2) Explain how cultural and historical contexts influence individual behavior, society or culture.
- (3) Apply discipline specific theories and modes of inquiry in the social sciences to analyze social contemporary behavioral or cultural issues.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Class attendance is an essential part of success in this course. There will be exam questions based specifically on the material that I discuss in my lectures and on the video material that I show in class. Coming to class also exposes you to questions that other students ask. This often helps in clarifying any challenging concepts from the course material.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (continued)

There is an attendance grade as well. I will circulate an attendance sign-in sheet at the beginning of each lecture. It is your responsibility to make sure that you sign the attendance sheet if you are present in class. If you arrive excessively late to class or if you leave class early, you will receive only partial credit for attendance. 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 below).

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/or (6) health reasons such as an incapacitating or contagious illness or unavoidable surgery. 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 one week 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. I ask that you please 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.

EVALUATION

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

- (1) Exam 1 on January 31 = 20% of your overall grade.
- (2) Exam 2 on February 28 = 20% of your overall grade.
- (3) Exam 3 on April 4 = 20% of your overall grade.
- (4) Exam 4 on May 2 = 25% of your overall grade.
- (5) Class attendance is worth the remaining 15% of your overall grade.

EVALUATION (continued)

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

CLASSROOM RULES

I expect all students to observe some basic rules of courtesy and respect, which include the following: (1) arrive to class on time and do not leave before class is dismissed; (2) do not pack up your things early; (3) silence on your cell phones before class begins; (4) no laptop use during video screenings; (5) no ear-buds, air-pods, or other listening devices; and (6) 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. For more extreme violations of classroom behavior, the ECU Faculty Manual (Part 5) states that "students who do not follow reasonable standards of behavior in the classroom or other academic setting may be removed from the course by the instructor following appropriate notice."

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

East Carolina University is committed to fostering a vibrant community of scholars. Academic integrity is a fundamental component of achieving this goal. All ECU students are expected to complete their academic work honestly. I will not tolerate acts of cheating, plagiarism, falsification, multiple submissions, attempting or assisting with an academic integrity violation. If I become aware of a potential academic integrity violation, I will meet with you following the procedures outlined in the Academic Integrity policy. Should I determine that an academic integrity violation has taken place, I reserve the right to assign a grade penalty up to and including an F for the course. A student knowing of circumstances in which an Academic Integrity Violation (AIV) may have occurred (or is likely to occur) should bring this knowledge to my attention. An AIV is defined as any activity that exhibits dishonesty in the educational process or that compromises the academic honor of the university. Examples include, but are not limited, to the following:

Cheating: Unauthorized aid or assistance or the giving or receiving of unfair advantage on any form of academic work.

Plagiarism: Copying the language, structure, ideas, and/or thoughts of another and adopting the same as one's own original work.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY (continued)

Falsification/Fabrication: The statement of any untruth, either spoken or written, regarding any circumstances related to academic work. This includes any untrue statements made with regard to a suspected Academic Integrity Violation.

Multiple Submission: The submission of substantial portions of the same academic work for credit more than once without authorization from the faculty member who receives the later submission.

Violation Assistance: Knowingly helping or attempting to help someone else in an act that constitutes an Academic Integrity Violation.

Violation Attempts: Attempting any act that, if completed, would constitute an Academic Integrity Violation as defined herein.

Information about ECU's Academic Integrity Policy can be found at <http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/part6section2.pdf>.

CONTINUITY OF INSTRUCTION

In the event of a health-related crisis, weather-related disruption, or campus emergency that would prevent us from meeting face-to-face, class may be moved to an online format for up to two weeks. I will provide details via e-mail and Canvas on exactly how we will proceed if something like that occurs. All necessary course materials, including my lectures (in Power Point slides), will be made available on Canvas. If you have poor internet access, please contact me within 48 hours of the announcement of the online move to work out a plan for you to receive the material for the course.

INFORMATION ABOUT UNIVERSITY CLOSINGS

If you have questions about a possible school closing due to severe weather or other reasons, please call the University Emergency Telephone Number at 252-328-0062 or visit the ECU emergency alert website (<http://www.ecu.edu/alert>). In the event that the university has not canceled classes, but you commute to campus from a considerable distance and believe driving conditions may be hazardous, please contact me and I will consider excusing your absence.

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 regularly. 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 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. 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. I am also happy to have coffee with anyone after class who wishes to join me. Just ask.

DISABILITY SERVICES

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138. For additional information, please review ECU's policy on accommodation requests at <https://accessibility.ecu.edu/students/dss-guidelines/#AccommodationRequests> or call 252-737-1016. Additional DSS student resources can be found at <https://accessibility.ecu.edu/students>.

COURSE OUTLINE

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

January 10, 2023. Overview of the course / Importance of government and types of government

January 12, 2023. **No class.** There is an online video to watch on the American Revolution on Canvas. (Dr. Francia will be in Florida for the Southern Political Science Association's annual conference.)

- Required reading for Week 1: *We the People*, Chapter 1

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

January 17, 2023. American Revolution and the Declaration of Independence

January 19, 2023. Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution

- Required reading for Week 2: *We the People*, Chapter 2
- Optional reading for Week 2: "The Rights of the Colonists" by Samuel Adams
http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/print_documents/amendIXs3.html
- Optional reading for Week 2: "The Declaration of Independence":
<https://billofrightsinstitute.org/primary-sources/declaration-of-independence>

Week 3. Federalism

January 24, 2023. Roles and responsibilities of local, state, and national government

January 26, 2023. Evolution of federalism

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

Week 4. Exam #1 and Civil Liberties

*January 31, 2023. Exam #1

February 2, 2023. Freedom of religion, speech, and the press

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

Week 5. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

February 7, 2023. Rights of the criminally accused

February 9, 2023. Overview of civil rights and civil rights movements

- Required reading for Week 5: *We the People*, Chapter 5
- Optional reading for Week 5: “Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/nonviolence-the-only-road-to-freedom/>

Week 6. The American Voter: Public Opinion, Political Participation, and Voting

February 14, 2023. Formation of political opinions and the measurement of public opinion

February 16, 2023. Struggles for the right to vote, political participation, and the paradox of voting

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

Week 7. Campaigns and Elections

February 21, 2023. Election laws and the campaign finance system

February 23, 2023. Campaign activities and

- Required reading for Week 7: *We the People*, Chapter 10

Week 8. Exam #2 and Media

February 28, 2023. Exam #2

March 2, 2023. Types of media, news coverage, and the role of the press in a democracy

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

Week 9. * SPRING BREAK March 5-12 *****

Week 10. Congress

March 14, 2023. Overview of the House and Senate

March 16, 2023. How a bill becomes law

- Required reading for Week 10: *We the People*, Chapter 12

Week 11. Presidency and Executive Branch

March 21, 2023. Presidential powers

March 23, 2023. The executive branch and the bureaucracy

- Required reading for Week 11: *We the People*, Chapters 13 and 14

Week 12. The Courts

March 28, 2023. Overview of the legal system

March 30, 2023. Judicial review and the U.S. Supreme Court

- Required reading for Week 12: *We the People*, Chapter 15

Week 13. Exam #3 and Political Parties

April 4, 2023. Exam #3

April 6, 2023. Two-party systems versus multi-party systems, and party systems

- Required reading for Week 13: *We the People*, Chapter 9

Week 14. Interest Groups and Lobbying

April 11, 2023. Types of interest groups and the growth of interest groups

April 13, 2023. Lobbying and lobbying strategies

- Required reading for Week 14: *We the People*, Chapter 11

Week 15. Public Policy

April 18, 2023. Economic policy

April 20, 2023. Foreign policy

- Required reading for Week 15: *We the People*, Chapters 16 and 18

Week 16. Exam #4 (FINAL EXAM)

May 2, 2023. 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 Brewster B-102.