POLS 122: American Government and Politics
Online Course
Fall 2015

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Office: Morgan 430
Office Hours: T & TH 11 AM – 12 PM and W 9:30 – 11:30 AM Central Time

COURSE OVERVIEW

This online version of the American Government and Politics (POLS 122) class is an introduction to the study of the governmental and political system of the United States. It examines the institutions, processes, functions of, and actors in our political system. The course is divided into three main units:

Unit One surveys the historical and constitutional foundations of American government. We will explore the evolution of the Constitution along with key political developments in our history.

Unit Two analyzes the politics of ordinary citizens. We will assess how ordinary citizens form opinions about politics and participate in the political process.

Unit Three focuses on the major institutions of the U.S. national government. We will examine the structure and function of national political institutions.

As indicated in the undergraduate course catalog, “this course meets the state requirement that all candidates for graduation pass an examination on the Federal and Illinois State constitutions.” The course also is required for all students who seek a bachelor’s degree in political science, as well as for those who are getting a minor in political science, public administration, and/or international relations (students whose minor is in international relations have an option to take POLS 101: Introduction to Political Science class in lieu of POLS 122).

COURSE OBJECTIVES

The goal of this class is to help you better understand the forces that have shaped American government and politics so that you may become a more informed, sophisticated, and engaged participant in the American political system. More specifically, it aims to help you:
• Understand the origin and constitutional underpinnings of our form of government;
• Comprehend the process by which ordinary citizens learn about politics and public affairs, develop political attitudes and preferences, and arrive at political decisions;
• Identify the impetus behind the participation of ordinary citizens in the political process;
• Appreciate the multifaceted structures and roles of our national political institutions;
• Critically and independently evaluate a variety of political issues facing our nation and the world; and
• Develop the capacity and skill to better communicate and exchange ideas and opinions about the political world.

**COURSE MATERIALS**

A book required for the course is:


* Occasionally, *additional readings* may be assigned. Additional readings will be announced at least one week in advance and posted on the class website at Western Online.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING**

**Participation (140 points)**

Participation in class discussion is required and highly valued. The course includes 13 different topics, each of which will be covered in a week. Over the course of the semester, you will thus be given 13 different sets of discussion questions—a set of discussion questions on each of the 13 topics. You are expected to choose and respond in *a minimum of one paragraph* (ideally, two or more paragraphs) to *any one* of the discussion questions on the topic of the week no later than 11:59 PM on the Saturday of that week. Your response should draw in part on the text. You certainly are free to cite and draw on other materials (including published scholarly articles or books, newspaper articles, or posts on Internet sites). But you should NOT simply copy the text or any other sources, but make efforts to compose a response *in your own words*. 
You are certainly encouraged to react to another student’s post and add as many posts to the discussion board as possible throughout the term. You will be graded on the quantity and quality of your participation.

You will earn up to 10 points for your original post to one of the weekly discussion questions in the week (for a total of up to 130 points).

You will also receive 10 points for your introduction to the class (for a grand total of 140 points). Your introduction should be posted no later than 11:59 PM on Saturday, September 5th.

Weekly Quizzes (130 points)

After completing the required reading assignment for each week, you are expected to take a weekly quiz by 11:59 PM on Saturday in the week. The weekly quiz is intended to assess how well you have comprehended the readings for the week and will consist of 5 multiple choice questions, each of which will be worth 2 points for a total of 10 points. Each weekly quiz is to cover each of the 13 topics for the course. You will receive zero points on any weekly quizzes you miss.

Exams (300 points) — 100 points each for Exam 1, Exam 2, and Exam 3

Over the course of the term, there will be three (unit) exams. The exams will include multiple choice questions. Each unit exam will be worth a total of 100 points and should be taken no later than 11:59 PM on the Saturday of the exam week. Exam 3—a final—will not be cumulative. If you miss any of the exams, you will be allowed to make up the exam ONLY during the week of December 13 (between Sunday, Dec 13th, and Friday, Dec 18th).

You may consult the textbook or any course materials while taking the weekly quiz or the exam. But you should NOT work with another student in taking the test, nor should you share any of the quiz or exam questions with another student.

Grading Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>528 – 570</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>505 – 527</td>
<td>A'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>488 – 504</td>
<td>B'</td>
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<tr>
<td>471 – 487</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>448 – 470</td>
<td>B'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>431 – 447</td>
<td>C'</td>
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<tr>
<td>414 – 430</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>391 – 413</td>
<td>C</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
374 – 390 points (66-68%) = D+
357 – 373 points (63-65%) = D
334 – 356 points (59-62%) = D-
Below 334 points (Below 59%) = F

COURSE POLICIES

Guidelines for Class Communication

This course is delivered completely online. As such, all communications between you and the professor and among students enrolled in the course will be primarily done via WIU email (I can be best reached by email at J-Lee6@wiu.edu) and posting on the discussion board. I will make every effort to respond to your email within the 48 hours after I receive your message. That said, since all communications in our online classroom are not done in real-time, you should not expect instant responses from me and your fellow students.

Online communication can still be a very efficient and effective tool for exchanging and sharing facts, ideas, and opinions. As you probably are aware, however, it has downsides. It would not be very unusual to misunderstand the intent of what others write to you or post on the discussion board, since written words and expressions can be particularly ambiguous and seen as carrying multiple meanings at times, when they are presented without the help of non-verbal gestures and expressions. Thus, as a general rule, when you compose a message to share with members of the class, please do maintain a civil tone and do not use sarcastic and overly strong words. Please be sure to treat your fellow students with respect. **All of us share the responsibility to keep up decency in our classroom communications.**

Academic Honesty

Please refer to the WIU Student Academic Integrity Policy at [http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php](http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php). It is your responsibility to strictly follow this policy.

Students with Disabilities

“In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.”
## COURSE OUTLINE

**Ginsberg:** Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert’s *We the People—An Introduction to American Politics* (CORE 10th Edition)

### Unit 1: Foundations of Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>American Political Culture</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Constitution</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Federalism</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Civil Liberties</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Civil Rights</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 5</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Exam 1</td>
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</tbody>
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### Unit 2: Politics of Ordinary Citizens

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Public Opinion</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Political Participation &amp; Voting</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Parties &amp; Interest Groups</td>
<td>Ginsberg Chs 9 &amp; 11</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Campaigns &amp; Elections</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Exam 2</td>
<td></td>
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### Unit 3: Institutions of Government

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Presidency</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Break</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Federal Bureaucracy</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 14</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>Ginsberg Ch 15</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Exam 3 (with Make-up exams, if needed)</td>
<td></td>
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