



POLS 122: American Government and Politics

Online Course

Spring 2021

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Office Hours*: T & TH 12:30 – 1:30 PM *in person or via Google Meet*
W 1 – 3 PM Central Time *via Email or Google Meet*

* It would be best if you could let me know via email in advance whether you want to meet virtually or in person. The best way to reach me is via email.

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:

Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tobert, and Andrea Campbell. 2019. We the People—An Introduction to American Politics (12th CORE Edition). New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
ISBN: 978-0-393-66463-8

- * 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 required 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, **January 30th**.

Extra Credit

You may earn *up to* 30 extra credit points if you constructively react to other students' posts and/or respond to discussion questions other than the question you have chosen to answer for your weekly original discussion post. The amount of extra credit given to students will be determined at the discretion of the professor, but you will normally be able to earn 3 points per each additional post written with *a minimum of one paragraph*.

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 (and help you self-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 except for Exam 3 that should be completed by **Friday, the 7th of May**. Exam 3 will *not* be cumulative.

*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

528 – 570 points (93-100%)	=	A
505 – 527 points (89-92%)	=	A ⁻
488 – 504 points (86-88%)	=	B ⁺
471 – 487 points (83-85%)	=	B
448 – 470 points (79-82%)	=	B ⁻
431 – 447 points (76-78%)	=	C ⁺
414 – 430 points (73-75%)	=	C
391 – 413 points (69-72%)	=	C ⁻
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 36 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 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.***

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Please visit <http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php> for details.

Academic Honesty

Please visit <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php> for details.

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.”

Title IX Policy

“University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.”

COURSE OUTLINE

Ginsberg: Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert, & Campbell's "We the People—An Introduction to American Politics (12th CORE Edition)

Unit 1: Foundations of Government

Week	Topic	Reading Assignments
1 (01/19 – 01/23)	American Political Culture	Ginsberg Ch 1
2 (01/24 – 01/30)	Constitution	Ginsberg Ch 2
3 (01/31 – 02/06)	Federalism	Ginsberg Ch 3
4 (02/07 – 02/13)	Civil Liberties	Ginsberg Ch 4
5 (02/14 – 02/20)	Civil Rights	Ginsberg Ch 5
6 (02/21 – 02/27)	Exam 1	

Unit 2: Politics of Ordinary Citizens

Week	Topic	Reading Assignments
7 (02/28 – 03/06)	Public Opinion	Ginsberg Ch 6
8 (03/07 – 03/13)	Political Participation & Voting	Ginsberg Ch 8
9 (03/14 – 03/20)	Parties & Interest Groups	Ginsberg Chs 9 & 11
10 (03/21 – 03/27)	Campaigns & Elections	Ginsberg Ch 10
11 (03/28 – 04/03)	Exam 2	

Unit 3: Institutions of Government

Week	Topic	Reading Assignments
12 (04/04 – 04/10)	Congress	Ginsberg Ch 12
13 (04/11 – 04/17)	Presidency	Ginsberg Ch 13
14 (04/18 – 04/24)	Federal Bureaucracy	Ginsberg Ch 14
15 (04/25 – 05/01)	Judiciary	Ginsberg Ch 15
16 (05/02 – 05/07)	Exam 3	