



Instructor: Erin Taylor, Ph.D.

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Virtual Office Hours: T 11-12, W 1-3, TH 11-12 and by appointment

## **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 parts:

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

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

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 working toward a minor in political science.

## **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;
- Appreciate the multifaceted structures and roles of our national political institutions;
- 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;
- Critically and independently evaluate political issues facing our nation and the world;
- Develop the ability to communicate and exchange ideas and opinions about the political world.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

### **Required Text**

Lowi, Theodore J., Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. 2018. American Government: Power and Purpose (Core 15<sup>th</sup> Edition). New York, NY: W.W. Norton. ISBN 9780393675009

## Technology

Because this course takes place in the Western Online environment, you are responsible for ensuring that you have access to the necessary technology to complete the course requirements. To learn what software is required, please visit the following URL:

[http://www.wiu.edu/CITR/resources/wo\\_tech\\_requirements.php](http://www.wiu.edu/CITR/resources/wo_tech_requirements.php)

Technical questions may be directed to the University Computer Support Services ([ucss@wiu.edu](mailto:ucss@wiu.edu) or 309-298-2704). Technical difficulties will **not** be accepted as an excuse for late, incomplete, or poorly done work. I encourage you to complete all work in advance to avoid last-minute technical problems. **All times listed are Central Time.**

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

### Writing (140 points)

Writing as a form of class discussion is required and highly valued and will be worth 140 points. By Monday of each week (excluding exam weeks), I will create a discussion board and will post questions for that week. You are expected to choose a question and respond in **a minimum of 150 words** to one of the posted discussion questions no later than 11:59 PM on the **Saturday** of that week.

You will earn up to 10 points for each of your posts to the weekly discussion board, for a possible total of 130 points altogether. **No credit will be given to late posts.**

You will also earn 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 23.**

### 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 the **Saturday** of that 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. No late quizzes will be administered and there will be no make-up quizzes available. 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 semester, there will be three exams. Each exam will include 50 multiple-choice questions worth two points each (for a total of 100 points per exam). Each exam **must** be taken no later than 11:59 PM on the dates listed in the course schedule. Exam 3—a final—will *not* be cumulative. Missed exams may be made up **ONLY** during final exam week (from Sunday, May 2th, to Friday, May 7th).

You may consult the textbook or any notes while taking the exams. However, the exams will have a time limit of 75 minutes, which means that it will be impossible to look up every answer; you should study for the exams just as you would for exams in a traditional course environment. **You should NOT work with another student in taking the exam.**

### Grading

Final grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

A	528 points and above	C	414-430 points
A-	505-527 points	C-	391-413 points
B+	488-504 points	D+	374-390 points
B	471-487 points	D	357-373 points
B-	448-470 points	D-	334-356 points
C+	431-447 points	F	333 points and below

## COURSE POLICIES

### Guidelines for Class Communication

Because this course is delivered completely online, all communications between you and the instructor and among students enrolled in the course will be primarily done via email and by posting to the discussion board. I can be reached by email at [e-taylor@wiu.edu](mailto:e-taylor@wiu.edu). I will make every effort to respond to your email within 24 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 the instructor and your fellow students. For real-time questions or assistance, students may also make arrangements to meet with me via Zoom during my office hours or by appointment; please email me with a proposed time you would like to meet, and I will respond with a confirmation that I am available and a Zoom link for us to use to meet.

Online communication can be a very effective tool for sharing facts, ideas, and opinions. As you are aware, however, it also has downsides. It's quite easy to misunderstand the intent of what others write or post since written words can be particularly ambiguous in the absence of the non-verbal gestures and expressions that accompany face-to-face communication. Thus, as a general rule, when you compose a message to me or to share with members of the class, please take extra effort to maintain a civil tone and do not use sarcastic or overly strong words. Respectful disagreement is encouraged, but remember that all of us share the responsibility to maintain respect for each other and to keep up decency in our course communications. ***Any discussion board posts that I judge to display incivility or personal attacks against others will automatically earn a zero.***

### Student Rights and Responsibilities & Academic Integrity

You are required to familiarize yourself with the university's Student Rights and Responsibilities and Academic Integrity Policies, which are available at the following URLs:

<http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students>

<http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>

It is your responsibility to strictly follow these policies. Any and all violations of these policies will be punished according to the guidelines they describe.

### 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 Disability Resources at 309-298-1884, [sdsc@wiu.edu](mailto:sdsc@wiu.edu) or in 125 Memorial Hall. Please notify me as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.

### Sex Discrimination and Sexual Assault or Misconduct

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](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, no matter when or where the incident occurred. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings from American Government: Power and Purpose, Lowi et al., 15<sup>th</sup> CORE Edition, 2018, ISBN 9780393675009.

### Unit 1: Foundations of Government

Week	Topic	Reading Assignment
1 (1/19 - 1/23)	Five Principles of Politics	Chapter 1
2 (1/24 - 1/30)	Founding and Constitution	Chapter 2
3 (1/31 - 2/6)	Federalism and Separation of Powers	Chapter 3
4 (2/7 - 2/13)	Civil Liberties	Chapter 4
5 (2/14 - 2/20)	Civil Rights	Chapter 5
6 (2/21 - 2/27)	<b>Exam 1</b>	

### Unit 2: Institutions of Government

Week	Topic	Reading Assignment
7 (2/28 - 3/6)	Congress	Chapter 6
8 (3/7 - 3/13)	Presidency	Chapter 7
9 (3/14 - 3/20)	Executive Branch	Chapter 8
10 (3/21 - 3/27)	Federal Courts	Chapter 9
11 (3/28 - 4/3)	<b>Exam 2</b>	

### Unit 3: Politics of Ordinary Citizens

Week	Topic	Reading Assignment
12 (4/4 - 4/10)	Public Opinion	Chapter 10
13 (4/11 - 4/17)	Elections	Chapter 11
14 (4/18 - 4/24)	Political Parties	Chapter 12
15 (4/25 - 5/1)	Groups and Interests	Chapter 13
16 (5/2 - 5/7)	<b>Exam 3</b>	