

# POS 2041E-502 - American National Government (Online)

Syllabus

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM (via Zoom)

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## Course Overview

This course is designed to introduce students to American National Government, its historical foundations, institutions, and political processes. The course focuses on institutions, practices, and the history of politics and government in the United States. It covers a great deal of ground as we will discuss the Constitution, the three branches of the federal government, interest groups, public opinion, campaigns, elections, and political parties. For each subject, we will examine some of the leading perspectives in political science and incorporate current events and our personal experiences.

## Overarching Goals

- To examine the historical and philosophical foundations of the political systems of the U.S.
- To sharpen the students' ability to think critically about the American political system by reading contemporary and classic materials from various sources encompassing both objective and opinion-based points of view.
- To discuss the concepts of federalism and intergovernmental relations
- To examine constitutional principles, institutional structures, and political practices, including interest groups, political parties, voting, and elections.
- To discuss the functions and purposes of major governmental and non-governmental institutions.
- To examine how laws are made, enforced, and have changed
- To explore the role and impact of the media and other private sector participants on U.S. politics.

## Learning / Civic Literacy - Core Competencies and Outcomes

1. Identify and explain the basic principles and practices of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government
2. Outline and summarize the United States Constitution and its application
3. List and explain the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance
4. Identify and discuss landmark Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions and their impact on law and society

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<sup>1</sup> You can expect a response from the instructor within 24 hours through any of the aforementioned methods of communication. Please do not send multiple correspondences. You will be contacted as promptly as time allows.

5. Identify and describe the roles and responsibilities of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.
6. Identify and explain the various ways framers designed and placed limits on government
7. Describe the policy-making process
8. Identify the role(s) of interest groups
9. Identify the role(s) and responsibilities of the citizen in America's republican democracy

### Required Textbook<sup>2</sup>

*Bianco, William T., and David T. Canon. 2019. American politics today. Sixth Edition. W.W. Norton.*<sup>3</sup>

### Quizzes and Exams

Online quizzes and exams will test your mastery of the material covered in lectures, readings, and current events. The quizzes and exams will contain questions of fact, concepts, interpretation, and application.

**Quizzes:** 25 Percent of the final grade. A quiz will be available each Friday for each lesson. Each quiz will be timed and have ten questions.

**Midterm Examination:** 25 Percent of the final grade. The midterm examination will be cumulative – i.e., covering material from all the lessons throughout the first half of the course. The midterm exam will be multiple choice and true/false.

**Final Examination:** 25 Percent of the final grade. The final examination will be cumulative – i.e., covering material from all the lessons throughout the second half of the course. The final exam will be multiple choice and true/false.

Makeup presentations, quizzes, and exams are not permitted except in extenuating circumstances and may only be arranged by Dr. Armstrong prior to the presentation, quiz, or exam. An unexcused absence on a presentation, quiz, or exam result in a grade of 0%.

### Discussion Boards

To help students earn the highest points possible for discussion posts and responses, adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Make sure to answer all parts of the prompt in your initial discussion post. If you fail to address an aspect of the prompt in your initial post, but mention it in your response to a colleague, you will not earn the 2 possible points for an initial post. Be thorough.
2. If using a source in your initial post, students must cite the source appropriately. No exceptions will be made for students who use a source and fail to cite appropriately. Discussion boards are more casual than most other assignments in this course, but plagiarism is never permitted.

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<sup>2</sup> Please be sure to get the textbooks as soon as possible to improve the likelihood of you passing this course.

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3. Make certain that your responses to your colleagues are substantive. Praise for good work and sharing that you like/agree with/appreciate their perspective is always helpful, but there must be more. Engage your colleagues on the topic of the discussion for that week and make sure they come away with something.
4. It is highly discouraged to engage in a back-and-forth with your colleagues on the discussion board. If a colleague poses a question in their response, do not respond back to them in a subsequent post. Questions in responses are meant to stimulate further consideration. Back- and-forth conversations have the potential to get messy and the discussion board is not the place for these types of exchanges.
5. Stay within your response group (explained below). Please begin your response by referring to your colleague by name. This allows me to link your response to the correct colleague's initial post. Example: James, I agree with the second point you made in your post concerning how civil servants...

If you choose not to respond to two colleagues immediately after submitting your initial post, that is fine. The two responses to your colleagues are not due until the Friday of the same week. Make sure to come back before the weekly deadline to submit your responses. Many students forget to go back and respond and do not receive the possible points for this portion of the discussion board assignments. No consideration will be made for students who simply forget to go back and complete the assignment before the deadline.

### Distribution of Grade

**Quizzes:** 25 percent

**Discussion Board Assignments:** 25 percent

**Midterm Exam:** 25 percent

**Final Exam:** 25 percent

A: 90% & above

B: 89% - 80%

C: 79% - 70%

D: 69% - 60%

F: 59% & below

### Etiquette

1. **Respect others and their opinions.** In online learning, students from very different backgrounds come together to learn. It is important to respect their feelings and opinions even when they are quite different from your own.
2. **Watch your language and tone carefully.** When you are communicating online, you have to rely solely on words to get your point across. The other person cannot see your facial expression or hear your tone of voice, so things like sarcasm and humor often don't come across very well. That's why it's important to take your time, choose your words carefully, and be as straightforward as you can.
3. **Consider people's privacy.** Always ask for permission before you forward someone's email messages to somebody else, and if you do reuse somebody else's words (with their permission), make sure to acknowledge them appropriately. Keep in mind that all private email mail is considered copyrighted by the original author.

4. **Avoid inappropriate material.** It's tempting to forward messages you find clever or links to websites you find entertaining to classmates. If they are not directly relevant to the course, please don't do this, especially if the material is sexually suggestive, politically sensitive, or otherwise "edgy." Same goes for frivolous "joke" emails and chain messages. This is not the place for it.
5. **Be forgiving.** If someone writes something that you find offensive, mention it directly to the instructor. He or she is best equipped to address the situation. Remember that the person contributing to the discussion might be new to this form of communication. What you find offensive may have been unintended.
6. **Be concise.** When you are contributing to a discussion, be as brief as you can to get your point across. Adding a lot of unnecessary words just makes your message less clear. Try to stick to the point and not go off on irrelevant tangents.
7. **Read first, write later.** Don't add your comments to a discussion before reading the comments that are already there. And if you are responding to a previous comment, always make clear which comment you are responding to.
8. **DON'T TYPE IN ALL CAPS OR USE EXCESSIVE PUNCTUATION!!!!!!** Most people find this annoying and you may not be communicating your thoughts effectively.
9. **Think before you hit the send button.** Learning to be your own editor is a difficult and important skill. Think carefully about the content of your message before you send or post it. Once you push the button, there is no taking it back. Grammar and spelling errors reflect badly on you, and misspelled words or poorly constructed sentences can make it hard to decipher your meaning accurately.

### Incomplete Grade Policy

Due to **extenuating** circumstances beyond the control of the student, an incomplete grade may be assigned if the student was passing as determined by the instructor. A student **who is passing** a course but has not completed all of the required work due to extenuating circumstances by the end of the term may, **with the permission of the instructor**, be assigned a grade of "I." Grades of "I" are not assigned to any course that a student fails to attend.

### Academic Honesty / Plagiarism

Students will be expected to adhere to standards of academic honesty and integrity, as outlined in the Student Academic Honesty Policy. All assignments must be original work, clear and error-free. All ideas/material that is borrowed from other sources must have appropriate references to the original sources.

### FAMU's Academic Honesty Policy & Procedures

All members of, and participants in, the academic life of the University are to be governed by academic honesty in all of their endeavors. Students and faculty are expected to uphold academic integrity and combat academic dishonesty. "Read more about FAMU's [Academic Honesty Policy & Procedures](#)

### Accommodations

If you have a documented disability and verification from the [Center for Disability Access and Resources](#) (CEDAR) and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact your Instructor as soon as possible. It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation of

disability to CEDAR and meet with a CEDAR counselor to request special accommodation *before* classes start. CEDAR is located at 667 Ardelia Court, Tallahassee, FL 32307 and can be contacted by phone at 850.599-3180.

### Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance or to report a problem with Canvas you can:

- \*Visit the Office of Instructional Technology ([www.famu.edu/it](http://www.famu.edu/it)) page
- \*Contact the Office of Instructional Technology at 850-599-3460 or [oit@famu.edu](mailto:oit@famu.edu)
- \*View tutorials to learn more about using Canvas

### Course Outline

#### **Part I The Nationalization of Politics**

Week 1: The Constitution p33

Week 2: Federalism p89

Week 3: Civil Rights p131

Week 4: Civil Liberties p185

#### **Part II The Institutions of Government**

Week 5: Congress p231

Week 6: The Presidency p297

Week 7: The Bureaucracy p347

Week 8: Midterm Exam

Week 8: The Federal Judiciary p391

#### **Part III The Public's Influence on National Policy**

Week 9: Public Opinion p435

Week 10: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections p475

Week 11: Political Parties p507

Week 12: Interest Groups p549

Week 13: Media p593

#### **Part IV Conclusion**

Week 14: Is There a Logic to American Policy? p623

Week 15: Final Exam

### Disclaimer

Please be aware that this syllabus is subject to change. Students will be notified in class and via email when, and if, any changes are made.