

POS 1041: American National Government Summer C 2020

Professor Zachary Houser
Email: zbh18@fsu.edu
Office: 218 Bellamy
Office hours: by appointment via

OFFICE HOURS

I have set aside weekly office hours for this course. Please go to <https://houser-pos1041.youcanbook.me> to schedule an appointment with me. Appointments must be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance. If you cannot meet me during the available time slots, please contact me via email. As a general rule, I am unavailable for most morning appointments.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Government and politics touch every aspect of our lives. Yet many—indeed most—Americans lack even the most basic knowledge of how our national government operates. The goal of this course is to provide you with an understanding of the fundamentals of American government and politics as well as some of the analytical tools that you will need to acquire a more sophisticated understanding of political institutions and behavior. This course is designed to introduce the student to the contemporary study of the institutions and processes of American national government. Students will be expected to develop an understanding of American government and convey this understanding through answering discussion questions and three mini examinations.

COURSE READINGS & LECTURES

Since summer courses are so short, we have to pack a lot of information into only 6 weeks! However, this is an introductory course. Therefore, to make this course as manageable and informative as possible I am only requiring students to read two chapters a week. In addition to reading the assigned chapters, students are expected to watch and take notes on video lectures that I have created. There will be two types of lectures: 1) **Chapter overview lectures** which simply go over the assigned chapter, reinforcing the main points, and providing further explanation of difficult concepts; and, 2) **New material lectures** which are lectures on subjects that are not in the assigned chapters but will be on the exam. The purpose of the new material lectures is to cover the topics that you would have been assigned to read if you took POS 1041 in the fall or spring - where readings can be broken up over 15 weeks rather than the 6 weeks we have. Therefore, these lectures ensure you are learning everything you should be, while also making the weekly course readings manageable.

COURSE MATERIALS

There is one required textbook in the course:

Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2013. *The Logic of American Politics*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press. (KJKV)

You can find the schedule of required readings at the end of this syllabus. All readings are to be completed before the class meeting for which they are listed. The reading schedule is

subject to changes with advance notice; any changes will be announced in class and via email or Canvas.

We will be using Canvas extensively in this course. There you will find and complete your reading discussion questions, view grades, and receive announcements from your professor: <https://canvas.fsu.edu/>. It is your responsibility to have access to Canvas and to link it to your email address. Check your Canvas notification settings to avoid missing announcements.

In addition, you should make a habit of reading at least one reputable newspaper or periodical with substantial international coverage—such as the New York Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, Financial Times, or Economist. You can access these news sources free of charge through the library. Lectures will frequently reference current international events, and exams will reference current events. Being conversant with what is going on in the world will be important to contribute to discussions and do well on exams.

EARNING YOUR GRADE

Please read this section carefully. Registration in this course implies that you agree with all elements of evaluation herein described. Though I reserve the right to modify this syllabus with advance notice to students, I will not do so with respect to the parameters of student evaluation.

To accomplish the course goals and ensure your success in the course, I strongly encourage you to do the following (at a minimum):

Complete all reading in advance of the exam, complete reading/lecture discussion questions, and watch all lectures. These reading assignments are required, not optional. I will not necessarily cover all the reading in my lectures, so it is imperative that you complete the assigned readings in advance of the exams. Complete the online reading discussion questions and practice material for the exams; Contact your professor early and often if you have questions or concerns about course materials, course expectations, or your grade.

You will be evaluated based on your performance on the following assignments:

Mini Exams: There will be three mini exams each of which are worth 60 points, for a total of 180 points. The exams will test your recollection of facts from the reading and lecture materials. Each exam will consist of two parts: short answer identification questions and short essay response questions. Each exam will cover material since the last exam and **is not cumulative**.

All exams will take place online. Exams will be available for two days; however, once you start the exam you will only have 75 minutes (an hour and 15 minutes) to finish. No early examinations will be given. Please make note of the exam dates and plan accordingly. The final exam schedule is set in advance by the University and is therefore subject to change by university policy only. I will not change the date or time of the last exam, but in the event of a University-wide schedule change, it is your responsibility to check the University exam schedule at https://registrar.fsu.edu/registration_guide/fall/exam_schedule/.

Discussion Questions: You are responsible for answering **12** online reading discussion questions, each of which are worth 10 points, for a total of 120 points. Reading discussion questions will be made available Monday mornings on a weekly basis and will close down Sunday at midnight or midnight the night before an exam. You must attempt 12 of these discussion questions throughout the semester, though there are at least 16 discussion question

opportunities. It is up to you which 12 questions you would like to complete. The remaining discussion questions are essentially optional. Please note that when a discussion questions is closed - you cannot take it. That is, **you must complete discussion questions over the course of the semester** and will not be able to complete many discussion questions in one day at the end of the semester.

Extra Credit: Once you have completed 12 discussion questions, you can answer additional questions to earn extra credit points. Each extra-credit question will be worth half of the points, for a maximum total of 5 points for each question. It is up to you to check Canvas for the questions.

Additional discussion questions or extra credit opportunities may be made available to all students at the professor's discretion, but per University policy, will never be extended to an individual student. In light of the fact that a substantial amount of extra credit opportunities is already built into the course and equally available to all students, there will be no exceptions, nor is there room to negotiate.

Missed assignments: Make up exams will be considered for excused absences only. As per the Florida State University Attendance Policy, excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness. Make up exams will be administered during the university scheduled time frame.

Consideration will only be given when I am contacted prior to or within two days after a missed assignment with appropriate documentation from the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students' office, where these claims may be presented, is located at Suite 4100 University Center (Stadium A). Missed examinations for which no documentation is provided will receive a score of zero. Re-grading policy: I make every effort so that your assignments are graded in a fair, transparent, and timely manner. In the unlikely event that any errors are committed during the grading process, I expect that you approach grade appeals in a courteous and professional manner. You should address your concerns directly to me, within one week of receiving the grade. When making a petition about your grade, you should substantiate any claim you make, be respectful, and avoid the frivolous pursuit of extra points. If asked to reconsider a student's grade on an exam or quiz, I reserve the right to re-grade the entire exam or quiz. The more general rule also applies for overall course grade appeals.

Grades: The total number of points available in this class is 300, distributed as follows:

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS
Exam 1 (July 6th/ 7th)	60 Points
Exam 2 (July 16th/17th)	60 Points
Exam 3 (July 31)	60 Points
Discussion Questions	120 Points
TOTAL	300 POINTS

Final grades: Please note that the “Total” column that is automatically calculated on Canvas is NOT an accurate reflection of your grade. You will likely need to do some additional calculations to get a correctly weighted estimate of your grade. Finally, note that I adhere to the number-to-letter grade conversion chart below for your final grades. Final grades ending in .5 or higher are rounded up to the nearest whole percentage point.

93% and above: A*	86-83%: B	76-73%: C	66-63%: D
92-90%: A-	82-80%: B-	72-70%: C-	62-60%: D-
89-87%: B+	79-77%: C+	69-67%: D+	59% and below: F

*An A is the highest grade you can earn in this class.

EMAIL POLICY

Though I strive to give all students my personal attention, I am responsible for many of you each semester. As such, it is much easier for me to help you if you include the course number (POS 1041) and a short description of your question in the subject line of your email. When I receive your email, I will make every effort to respond in a timely manner, usually within 48 hours, except for weekends and holidays. Though you may receive a reply sooner than that, you should not expect an immediate response. Finally, I will contact you via your FSU email address via Canvas, so please see to it that your account is set up such that you are able to receive these communications.

COURSE PROTOCOL

I do not tolerate academic dishonesty in any form and will pursue the full penalties for violations thereof. For your reference, the University Academic Honor Policy is listed below. **All assignments will be run through Turnitin.com.** Do not copy your classmates’ answers or plagiarize online resources – it’s not worth it and you will be caught.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Honor Policy: The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “...be honest and truthful and...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” See <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodation to a student until appropriate verification from the Student Disability Resource Center has been provided. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the Student Disability Resource Center at 874 Traditions Way, 108 Student Services Building, (850) 644-9566, sdrc@admin.fsu.edu, <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>.

Syllabus Change Policy: Except for changes that substantially affect parameters of evaluation, including grading and the scheduling of the last exam, this syllabus is subject to change at discretion of the instructor. I will provide you with advance notice in class and via your university registered email contact.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Dates	Section	Reading, Lectures, & Exams
1	June 22 – June 28	Nationalization of Politics	Chapter 1, Chapter 2
2	June 29 – July 5	Nationalization of Politics	Chapter 3, Parts of Chapter 4 (Only pages _ - _), Parts of Chapter 5 (Only pages _ - _)
3	July 6 – July 12	Institutions and Government	EXAM 1 (July 6th and 7th), Chapter 6, Chapter 7
4	July 13 – July 19	Institutions and Government	Chapter 9, Lecture – “Myth of National Presidential Elections” Lecture – “Understanding Election Polls” EXAM 2 (July 16th and 17th)
5	July 20 – July 26	Public Influence on National Policy	Chapter 10, Chapter 11, Lecture – “Myth of Independent Voters”
6	July 27 – July 31	Public Influence on National Policy	Chapter 12, Lecture – “Misconception about Media Bias” Lecture – “Interests groups” EXAM 3 (July 31st)