

POS 1041: American National Government
Summer B 2023
MoTuWeThFr 11:35AM - 12:50PM

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Office hours: by appointment

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 how the national government is structured and how the American political system operates. This course covers the philosophical and constitutional foundations of American government, the branches of the national government, the mechanisms by which citizens are connected to their government, and the policy outputs of 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 OBJECTIVES

- To understand the structures and processes of American government and politics, the collective action challenges inherent in this system, and the practical implications of political structure and contestation in our lives.
- To sharpen our ability to think critically about the American political system by reading both contemporary and classic materials from a variety of sources that encompasses both objective and opinion-based points of view.
- To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contemporary political debates.

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. *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 — 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 United States and 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:

Participation: Active participation in our discussions is an important and required element of the course and will be critical to successfully learning the material. Hence, you should be prepared to answer questions that are posed, ask questions about concepts that are not clear, challenge viewpoints expressed in the reading or class discussion, and be involved in classroom conversations. These discussions must always be conducted with an air of respect for differing viewpoints and the people who present them and with an open mind (e.g., arguing for positions

even if you are not yet certain of them and being willing to consider new arguments or information). **Participation grades will be based not just on attendance but on the quality and quantity of your active involvement.** I reserve the right to deduct points for disrespectful behavior and to dismiss anyone from the classroom who continuously disrupts the learning environment.

Assignments: There will be periodic online quizzes and one in-class activity on **July 13th**. These assignments will make up 10% of your final grade. All assignments will be announced well in advance.

Exams: There will be two exams, each worth 25% of your final grade. The exams will test your recollection of facts from the reading and lecture materials. Each exam will consist of multiple-choice questions. **Each exam will cover material since the last exam and is not cumulative.** No early examinations will be given. Please make note of the exam dates and plan accordingly.

Policy Memorandum Presentation Assignment: The policy memorandum accounts for 25% of your final grade. You and your group will present a PowerPoint presentation at the end of the semester. Further instructions on the memorandum will be provided.

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

Assignment	Percentage
Participation	15%
Assignments	10%
Exam 1 (July 17 th)	25%
Exam 2 (August 3- 6 th)	25%
Policy Memorandum (August 3 rd and 4 th)	25%

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.

A 93-100	A- 90-92	
B+ 87-89	B 83-86	B- 80-82
C+ 77-79	C 73-76	C- 70-72
D+ 67-69	D 63-66	D- 60-62
F below 59		

*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 (INR 4102) 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>.

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 written excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Academic Success: Your academic success is a top priority for Florida State University. University resources to help you succeed include tutoring centers, computer labs, counseling and health services, and services for designated groups, such as veterans and students with disabilities. The following information is not exhaustive, so please check with your advisor or the Department of Student Support and Transitions to learn more.

Americans with Disabilities Act: Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services; and

(2) request a letter from the Office of Accessibility Services to be sent to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type; and (3) meet (in person, via phone, email, skype, zoom, etc...) with each instructor to whom a letter of accommodation was sent to review approved accommodations. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For the latest version of this statement and more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the: Office of Accessibility Services 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167 (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) oas@fsu.edu <https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas>

Confidential campus resources: Various centers and programs are available to assist students with navigating stressors that might impact academic success. These include the following:

- Victim Advocate Program University Center A, Room 4100, (850) 644-7161, Available 24/7/365, Office Hours: M-F 8-5 <https://dsst.fsu.edu/vap>
- Counseling & Psychological Services Askew Student Life Center, 2ndFloor, 942 Learning Way (850) 644-8255 <https://counseling.fsu.edu/> University
- Health Services Health and Wellness Center (850) 644-6230 <https://uhs.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 the discretion of the instructor. I will provide you with advance notice in class and via your university-registered email contact.

POS 1041: American National Government COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: The Nationalization of Politics

Monday, June 26th

- Syllabus Day

Tuesday, June 27th

- Chapter 1. The Logic of American Politics

Wednesday, June 28th

- Chapter 1. The Logic of American Politics

Thursday, June 29th

- Chapter 2. The Constitution

Friday, June 30th

- Chapter 2. The Constitution

Week 2: The Nationalization of Politics

Monday, July 3rd

- **NO CLASS**
- Online video lecture - "Federalism"

Tuesday, July 4th

- **NO CLASS – Fourth of July**

Wednesday, July 5th

- Chapter 4. Civil Rights

Thursday, July 6th

- Chapter 4. Civil Rights

Friday, July 7th

- Lecture - “Civil Liberties/ Bill of Rights”

Week 3: Institutions and Government

Monday, July 10th

- Chapter 6. Congress

Tuesday, July 11th

- Chapter 6. Congress

Wednesday, July 12th

- Chapter 7. The Presidency

Thursday, July 13th

- **In-Class Activity**

Friday, July 14th

- Chapter 7. The Presidency

Week 4: Institutions and Government

Monday, July 17th

- **Exam 1 (in-person)**

Tuesday, July 18th

- Lecture – “The Bureaucracy”

Wednesday, July 19th

- Chapter 9. The Federal Judiciary

Thursday, July 20th

- Chapter 10. Public Opinion

Friday, July 21st

- Chapter 10. Public Opinion

Week 5: Public Influence on National Policy

Monday, July 24th

- Chapter 11. Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Tuesday, July 25th

- Chapter 11. Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Wednesday, July 26th

- Chapter 12. Political Parties

Thursday, July 27th

- Chapter 12. Political Parties

Friday, July 28th

- Lecture – “Interests groups”

Week 6: Public Influence on National Policy

Monday, July 31st

- Lecture – “Media”

- **Policy memo workday**

Tuesday, August 1st

- **Policy memo presentations**

Wednesday, August 2nd

- **Policy memo presentations**

Thursday, August 3rd

- **Policy memo presentations**

Friday, August 4th

- **Final Exam**