
POLI 2051: Introduction to American Government

Instructor: Kirby Goidel
Time: 2:40 – 4:00 MW
Place: 229 Tureaud
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Course Description

This is an introductory level course intended to give students a comprehensive understanding of the institutions, processes, and actors which operate within the American political system. The class begins with an analysis of the founding fathers and their intentions in forming the American political system and continues through modern political institutions and policy making. An emphasis is placed on the role of the individual citizen and the citizenry as whole in the success or failure of democratic regimes. It is expected and hoped that the course will stimulate students to seek a further understanding of their political world through additional coursework and/or through a continued interest in political activities and events. Without an active, involved, and educated citizenry, democratic governments are destined to fail.

General Education Requirements:

This course fulfills general education requirements by addressing: (1) The nature of the political person; (2) Different levels of association, including individual social networks, political parties, interest groups and other political organizations; (3) Various approaches to social analysis, including historical inquiry and quantitative data analysis; and (4) Patterns of imagined best societies and the discoveries of unintended consequences - particularly within the context of democratic theory and democratic governance.

Required Texts

Greenberg, Edward S. and Benjamin I. Page. 2011. **America's Democratic Republic** (4th Edition). Penguin Academics.

All students are also required to purchase and register an I>Clicker. To register your I-Clicker, go to iclicker.com and find the registration button (near the bottom, left-hand side of the page). Your student ID number will be your email address (e.g., kgoidel@lsu.edu). Class participation grades will be based on responses.

Evaluation Criteria

Grades will be based on the following criteria:	Percent
Exams (3)	25% each (75% total)
In-Class Assignments/Participation	25%

Exams will be based on reading and lectures and are intended to tap the student's grasp of the key concepts, ideas, and theories of American government. Anything in the lecture or from the text is fair game. **Makeup exams will be allowed only in the case of a university excused absences and will be given during the second half of the final exam period.** It is expected that every student will attend class having read the assignments for that period. Ten percent of the grade will be awarded on the basis of in-class assignments and class participation. Most of these assignments will be based on I>Clicker questions and responses.

The grades will be based on the following scale:

90%-100%	A
80%-89%	B
70%-79%	C
60%-69%	D
59% and below	F

Tentative Reading Schedule

Section I: The Foundations of American Government

1. August 22 - 24: Course Introduction
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch. 1
2. August 29 – 31: The Constitution
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch. 2
3. September 7 - 12: Federalism
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch. 3
4. September 14 – 19: Civil Liberties
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch. 4
5. September 21 – 26: Civil Rights
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 5
6. ***First Exam: September 28***

Section II: Influencing American Government

7. October 3 - 5: Public Opinion
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 6
8. October 10: The News Media
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 7
9. October 12: Interest Groups
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 8
10. October 17-19: Political Parties
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 9
11. October 24-26: Participation
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 10
12. ***October 31: Second Exam***

Section III. American Political Institutions

13. November 7-9: Congress
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 11
14. November 14-16: The Presidency
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 12
15. November 21: The Federal Bureaucracy
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 13
16. November 23: Happy Thanksgiving!
17. November 28: The Courts
Read: Greenberg & Page, Ch 14
18. November 30: Course Conclusions
19. ***December 5: Final Examination (3:00 – 5:00)***