

**American Government  
Political Science 2051 Section 3  
Spring 2021**

100% Web Based

**Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday 1:30 – 2:50pm**

**Instructor:** Moriah Harman

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**Office Hours:** By appointment via Zoom

**Course Description**

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of American government and politics. Topics are divided into three broad categories. Part One of the class focuses on the origins of U.S. politics, the Constitution, and what it means to have a federal system of government. Part Two of the class is an overview of American political institutions (Congress, the presidency and federal bureaucracy, the judiciary), political parties and elections, public opinion, the mass media, and interest groups. Part Three of the class focuses on policymaking.

Course Goals: The course is designed to make you think critically about how U.S. politics works (or doesn't work). While we will start with a historical perspective, reflecting on the founding and the Constitution, we will spend time exploring and discussing how the course material relates to modern political events. It is my hope that throughout this class, and hereafter, you will become more politically informed and engaged citizens.

Our activities in class may take a variety of formats. Class meetings will be a combination of both lecture and discussions, which is why it is important you show up prepared to contribute to discussion. I want to know what you learn and what you think about the readings on a weekly basis. At times, we may watch videos and I may ask you to work together in small groups.

Political topics and concepts often reveal differences in opinion. While some of us may have strong opinions and/or disagree with others about topics and concepts that come up throughout the semester, I ask that we all listen to each other thoughtfully, with civility and respect. It is perfectly okay to disagree and feel differently about things, but there is a way of sharing opinions with others' in mind. I will not tolerate disrespectful remarks of any kind, regardless of the subject matter at hand. We are all adults, and it is important we all work toward maintaining an environment that is welcoming, inclusive, considerate, and civil. I want our class to be something each of you look forward to on a weekly basis, and we all have a role to play in making it so. Finally, especially given the current circumstances, I want to make it clear that I wish to extend grace, compassion, and support to each of you throughout the semester – and I ask that we all strive to extend the same to one another. Life is hard – let's work together to make this class a welcome, uplifting, enlightening, and special place.

### **LSU Integrative Learning Core**

Integrated learning allows students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of Social/Behavioral Sciences and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of Inquiry and Analysis.

### **Course Requirements**

The course requirements include reading the textbook, taking three multiple-choice exams, and attending the weekly class meetings on Tuesday and Thursday of each week. You should read the assigned textbook chapter(s) prior to class and be prepared to contribute to class discussions. This is very important. It is my hope that everyone will contribute to discussions on a regular basis. The course schedule for completing the three exams is listed below as well as on the course Moodle page. This is an online course that moves quickly throughout the semester, so it is imperative that you pay careful attention to the course schedule and check the Moodle site regularly. On Moodle, I have added the topic and assigned reading(s) for each week, along with any notes regarding drop dates, holidays (when class won't be meeting), reminders about the exams, and the links to the exam. You will also see the Zoom link on the introduction page, which you will use for each meeting, each week throughout the semester. It is your responsibility to keep up with the course schedule, readings, and deadlines.

### **Required Reading Materials**

In an effort to minimize financial burdens associated with coursework, I am only requiring one textbook for this course, listed below. The e-book version is available for purchase through the bookstore (and on the publisher's website), but the book may be purchased or rented through online vendors as well. We are using the 17<sup>th</sup> edition of this book, but the 16<sup>th</sup> edition is also acceptable and contains all the information you need.

*Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy, 2018 Election*, 17<sup>th</sup> Edition (by George C. Edwards, Martin P. Wattenberg, and William G. Howell, Pearson. ISBN: 9780135246498).

### **How to Contact Me**

The best way to contact me is by email. I will make every effort to respond in a timely manner (usually within 24-48 hours) to any questions received during the normal workweek (Monday-Friday, 8:00am-4:00pm). Emails received after 4:00pm on Friday and before 8:00am on Monday will be responded to during the normal workweek. I am happy to meet via Zoom should any questions arise, or if you would like to chat about the course material or school in general. Please do not hesitate to request a meeting. **NOTE:** If you have any questions as you prepare for the exams in particular, please do not wait until the last minute to reach out. Reaching out in advance will ensure any/all questions are answered well ahead of the deadlines.

## Student Evaluations and Policies

### Grading

The final grade for this course will be determined by a student's performance on the following:

Exam #1: **33.3**

Exam #2: **33.3**

Exam #3: **33.3**

**Total = 100%**

Letter grades are assigned as follows based on a student's final numerical average:

97-100 = **A+**

93-96 = **A**

90-92 = **A-**

87-89 = **B+**

83-86 = **B**

80-82 = **B-**

77-79 = **C+**

73-76 = **C**

70-72 = **C-**

67-69 = **D+**

63-66 = **D**

60-62 = **D-**

<60 = **F**

### Exams

Your final course grade is based on three exams. Each exam is worth one third of your final course grade. The course is designed in three parts, with an exam corresponding to the material covered in each part (i.e., exam 1 covers part 1 of the course, exam 2 covers part 2 of the course, and exam 3 covers part 3 of the course).

All three exams are multiple-choice (50 questions each) and timed (30 minutes), so students should prepare for the exams by attending and paying attention during class meetings, and by reading and taking thorough notes on each book chapter prior to taking the exam. While the exams are open book and open notes, you will not have adequate time to look up answers to each question, so it is imperative you study and prepare for the exams in advance. In addition, exams are to be your work, and your work alone – this means you should not seek assistance from others at any point while taking the exams.

Each exam will be opened on Moodle at 1:00pm on Monday and closed at 1:00pm on Friday of the same week, with the dates for each documented on the syllabus and on Moodle. You may take the exam at any point during the time in which it is available, but when the window closes at the end of that time period, the exam will no longer be available.

**NOTE:** You only have one attempt for each exam, which means you should allow for enough time to finish the exam once starting it. The exam cannot be paused and/or restarted at a later point, so a stable Internet connection is extremely important.

**Makeup exams will only be given if the instructor is notified in advance and the absence is a university-excused absence (PS-22). Makeup exams granted under these circumstances will only be made available for 48 hours.**

## General Policies

### Academic Honesty

Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the LSU Code of Student Conduct. Cheating, plagiarizing, collaborating with others without permission, and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated, and will be reported to the Dean of Students.

### Accommodations

If you require accommodations, it is your responsibility to register for those accommodations and obtain the appropriate documentation from the Office of Disability Services. Please inform me of your situation as soon as possible (ideally, in the first week or two of the semester) so arrangements can be made.

### Deadlines

As stated, deadlines for the exams are listed in the course schedule on this syllabus and on Moodle. We have deadlines for a reason, and I take them seriously. I have designed the exams in particular so that you have some flexibility in when you take them. It is my hope that providing the window of time outlined for the exams will make completing the exams easier and more convenient for those of you with busy schedules. Makeup exams will only be given to individuals who reach out to me with university-excused absences and will be open for a shorter window of time.

## Course Schedule

Please pay careful attention to the due dates for the three exams. Note that the schedule is subject to minor changes and any changes will be noted in the “Announcements” section on Moodle.

### Part One: The Origins of U.S. Politics

#### **Week #1: January 12th and 14th**

##### **Introduction to U.S. Government and Politics**

- Carefully read the course syllabus
- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 1

#### **Week #2: January 19th and 21st**

##### **U.S. Constitution**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 2 and Appendix (Declaration of Independence, Federalist No. 10 & No. 51, and U.S. Constitution with Amendments)
- ❖ January 20<sup>th</sup> marks the last day for dropping courses without receiving a “W” (deadline: 4:30pm)

#### **Week #3: January 26th and 28th**

##### **Federalism**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 3

**Week #4: February 2nd and 4th**

**Civil Liberties**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 4

**Week #5: February 9th and 11th**

**Civil Rights**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 5

**Exam #1: Will be opened at 1:00pm Monday, February 8th, and closed at 1:00pm Friday, February 12th.**

**Part Two: People, Parties, and Political Institutions**

**Week #6: February 16th and 18th**

**Public Opinion**

- Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup> = Mardi Gras Holiday (no class meeting on Tuesday)
- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 6

**Week #7: February 23rd and 25th**

**Mass Media and Interest Groups**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapters 7 and 10

**Week #8: March 2nd and 4th**

**Political Parties and Elections**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapters 8 and 9

**Week #9: March 9th and 11th**

**Congress**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 11

**Week #10: March 16th and 18th**

**The Presidency and the Federal Bureaucracy**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapters 12 and 14

**Exam #2: Will be opened at 1:00pm Monday, March 15th, and closed at 1:00pm Friday, March 19th.**

**Week #11: March 23rd and 25th**

**The Judicial Branch**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 15
- Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> = March Break (no class meeting on Thursday)
- ❖ March 26<sup>th</sup> marks the last day to drop courses or resign from the University (deadline: 4:30pm)

**Part Three: Policymaking**

**Week #12: March 30th and April 1st**

**Budget Policymaking**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 13

**Week #13: April 6th and 8th**

**Economic and Social Welfare Policymaking**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 16

**Week #14: April 13th and 15th**

**Health Care, Environment, and Energy Policymaking**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 17

**Week #15: April 20th and 22nd**

**National Security Policymaking**

- Read *Government in America*, Chapter 18
- Thursday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> = last day of class

**Week #16: April 26th-30th**

**Final exam week**

**Exam #3 (FINAL EXAM): Will be opened at 1:00pm Monday, April 26th, and closed at 1:00pm Friday, April 30th.**