

POL 101
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
MW 12:30-1:45

Instructor Information:

Dr. Gregory Gunderson
Room 313 North Hall (Wausau)
Phone: 715-573-0999
ggunders@uwsp.edu

If you have an emergency, questions, etc, the best way to contact me is through email.

Office Hours:

MW 3:30-4:30

Course Content: This course explores the structure and dynamics of American national government, providing a broad-based introduction to the ideas and institutions that shape politics in the contemporary United States. We will focus on the Constitution and the debates of the founding era, the institutions of modern American government, and the political behavior of the American public. We will study the strategies, roles, and limitations of both governmental elites and ordinary citizens, with particular emphasis on how they communicate and interact within the constitutional “rules of the game” to promote the achievement of public goods.

Please read the remainder of this syllabus carefully; it can be viewed as a contract of sorts (although I retain the right to make changes if necessary – they will be kept to a minimum and will be discussed in class), laying out what you can expect of me as well as what I will expect of you. I look forward to working with you this semester. Welcome.

Required Textbook:

Cal Jillson, *American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change*, 8th edition

Student Learning Outcomes: By the end of the semester each student should be able to...

- **Describe and discuss the foundations and bases of American government and democracy including the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Federalism.**
- **Describe the various aspects of political behavior of individuals and groups including political parties, public opinion, interest groups, media, nominations, campaigns, and elections.**
- **Describe the operations of the various governmental institutions including executive, legislative, judicial, and administrative functions.**
- **Evaluate recent global developments and their impact on public policy in the areas of domestic and foreign affairs.**
- **Analyze American politics and government in a global context.**

Attendance: I believe, in general, that attendance policies should not be necessary at the university-level. Unfortunately, experience has shown that many students will only attend class regularly if it directly affects their grade. Even though the course this semester is being delivered via Zoom, I will still take attendance. If you cannot make class on any particular day, the lecture will be recorded and uploaded into

Canvas. You are to watch the recording and send me a brief paragraph – by email – describing the lecture. That will count as your attendance on that particular day. During the course, your discussion will be worth 50 points. Obviously, you cannot discuss if you do not attend. I will take attendance every day.

Academic Honesty

Please do not cheat – cheating does nothing but rob you of the chance for an education. As a college student, you are part of an academic community and are expected to behave in a manner that is respectful of that community, in part by being academically honest. Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to “cheating on an examination,” “submitting a paper or assignment as one’s own work when a part or all of the paper or assignment is the work of another,” and “submitting a paper or assignment that contains ideas or research of others without appropriately identifying the sources of those ideas.”

Course Requirements:

1. Attendance is required. See the section above on attendance for a discussion of my policy.
2. Discussion is important. Don’t be afraid to speak up, ask questions, or challenge the information I give you. Education is not strictly a spectator sport -- you will find the class more interesting and informative if you participate. Because the course is being offered via Zoom, I will not be able to see you raising your hand or waving to participate. Just speak up and interrupt me... it will not be considered rude in these circumstances.
3. Be nice, be patient, be tolerant.
4. Exams and stuff like that –

- There will be three exams given in this class; two “midterm exams” and the final exam. Each midterm exam will be worth 120 points and the final will be worth 160 points.
- Regular class attendance and participation will be worth 50 points.
- Each student will be expected to write a short “position” paper addressing the rights of the first amendment to the Constitution. The paper will be 3-4 pages in length and will be worth 50 points. The assignment will be discussed in more detail (and you will be given a handout via Canvas) during the first two weeks of the course.
- To review, the distribution of points will be as follows:

Attendance and participation	- 50 points
Exams	- 400 points
<u>Position Paper</u>	- 50 points
Total	- 500 points

There will be no make-up exams or assignments except in the case of a bona fide (and verified) emergency! All make-up exams will consist of essay questions only.

Grades will be assigned as follows:

A = 93-100%

A- = 90-92 %

B+=87-89%

B = 83-86%

B-= 80-83%

C+ = 77-79%

C = 73-76%

C-= 70-72%

D+= 67-69%

D = 60-66%

F = 59% or below

Extra Credit: NO! Sorry, I simply do not believe in extra credit.

Course Schedule: Subject to change. I will try to keep changes to a minimum and will announce them in class. All readings are from Jillson.

Day	Date	Subject	Reading, Assignment, Etc.
Wed	9/2	Course Introduction	Chapter 1
Mon	9/7	NO CLASS Labor Day	
Wed	9/8	Foundations	Chapter 2 and Appendix C
Mon	9/14	Federalism	Chapter 3
Wed	9/16	Civil Liberties	Chapter 13
Mon	9/21	Civil Liberties	
Wed	9/23	Civil Rights	Chapter 14
Mon	9/28	Civil Rights	
Wed	9/30	EXAM 1	
Mon	10/5	Public Opinion and Socialization	Chapter 4
Wed	10/7	Public Opinion and Socialization	
Mon	10/12	Political Participation	Chapter 8
Wed	10/14	Political Participation	
Mon	10/19	Parties and Elections	Chapter 7
Wed	10/21	Parties and Elections	
Mon	10/26	Interest Groups	Chapter 6
Wed	10/28	Interest Groups	
Mon	11/2	EXAM 2	
Wed	11/4	News Media	Chapter 5
Mon	11/9	Congress	Chapter 9
Wed	11/11	Congress	
Mon	11/16	The President	Chapter 10
Wed	11/18	The President	Position Paper due by 10pm
Mon	11/23	The Bureaucracy	
Wed	11/25	The Bureaucracy	Chapter 11
Mon	11/30	The Judiciary	Chapter 12
Wed	12/2	The Judiciary	
Mon	12/7	Foreign Policy	Chapter 16
Wed	12/9	Foreign Policy	

FINAL EXAM: Due on December 18, 3pm