

# INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Political Science 2051  
Louisiana State University  
Spring 2018

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## COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this course is to achieve a higher understanding of the political landscape in America. As part of the social sciences LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference. This course will provide a brief summary of American political institutions such as the legislative, judicial, and presidential branches of government. We will also survey other integral parts that make up the American political fabric such as voting and elections, interest groups, and the media at both the federal and state level. However, most of the emphasis in this course will be placed on American politics at the federal level. This is an introductory course that will provide students with an initial review of basic theories, concepts, and analyses in American government. There are many other topics and literature to consider beyond what is covered in this course.

## PARTICIPATION

Your success in this course is dependent upon your participation and attendance. You are expected to have read the required materials *before* each class period and you are expected to be prepared to discuss them in a thoughtful and critical manner. Please bring a copy of the required text to each class meeting for reference during discussions. Failure to participate and be prepared will result in grade reductions.

## CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

It is required that all students respect one another while in class. This does not mean we have to agree with what each other has to say or think, but all discussions are to remain civil and polite. Students must also respect the use of technology in the classroom. All cellphone devices are to remain on silent during the entire class. The use of laptops, tablets, and other electronic devices are to be used for the sole purpose of note-taking or class discussion.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Please review the university policies concerning plagiarism and cheating from the Code of Student Conduct handbook: [http://students.lsu.edu/saa/code\\_10\\_1](http://students.lsu.edu/saa/code_10_1)

## **MOODLE**

Login to Moodle through your myLSU account to access readings, other course materials, and grades.

## **REQUIRED TEXTS**

*Congress: The Electoral Connection*, **second edition** by Mayhew

*We the People*, **Twelfth Essentials Edition** by Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert, and Spitzer

*Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*, by Chong

## **EXAM SCHEDULE**

The course will consist of 4 exams including 2 Quizzes, a Midterm, and a Final. Quiz 1 will be on February 7<sup>th</sup> and cover the material from Week 4. The Midterm is February 28<sup>th</sup> and will include all material from Week 1-7. Quiz 2 will be on April 18<sup>th</sup> and cover the material from Week 14. The Final Exam is May 2<sup>nd</sup> and will include all material from Week 10-16.

## **GRADING SCALE**

A+ = 97-100  
A = 93-96  
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 = <60

## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Attendance and participation = 20%  
Quizzes = 30% (15% each)  
Midterm Exam = 20%  
Final Exam = 30%

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Week 1</b> January 10	<b>Introduction to American Politics: Part 1</b> Read Syllabus: Introduction, Class Format, Expectations, and Exams
<b>Week 2</b> January 17	<b>Introduction to American Politics: Part 2</b> Chapter 1: Political Thinking and Political Culture Chapter 2: Constitutional Democracy Chapter 3: Federalism
<b>Week 3</b> January 24	<b>Rights and Liberties</b> Chapter 4: Civil Liberties and Chapter 5: Equal Rights
<b>Week 4</b> January 31	<b>Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement - Chong</b> Chapter 1: Public-Spirited Collective Action Chapter 2: All-Or-Nothing Public Goods Chapter 3: Selective Social Incentives and Reputational Concerns Chapter 4: Narrowly Rational Expressive Benefits
<b>Week 5</b> February 7	<b><u>Quiz 1</u></b>
<b>Week 6</b> February 14	<b>Public Opinion, Participation, and Parties</b> Chapter 6: Public Opinion and Political Socialization Chapter 7: Political Participation Chapter 8: Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns
<b>Week 7</b> February 21	<b>Interest Groups and Media</b> Chapter 9: Interest Groups Chapter 10: The New Media
<b>Week 8</b> February 28	<b><u>Midterm Exam</u></b>
<b>Week 9</b> March 7	<b>Congress and Term Limits</b> Chapter 11: Congress Carey et al. (2006) The Effects of Term Limits on State Legislatures: A New Survey of the 50 States - Moodle
<b>Week 10</b> March 14	<b>The Electoral Connection - Mayhew</b> Part 1: The Electoral Incentive p. 1-77
<b>Week 11</b> March 21	<b>The Electoral Connection – Mayhew</b> Part 2: Processes and Policies p.81-180

**Week 12**  
March 28

**NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK**

**Week 13**  
April 4

**The Presidency and Executive Orders**

Chapter 12: The Presidency

Mayer (1999) Executive Orders and Presidential Power - Moodle

**Week 14**  
April 11

**The Judicial System and Accountability**

Chapter 14: The Federal Judicial System

Huber and Gordon (2004) Accountability and Coercion: Is Justice Blind  
When It Runs for Office? -Moodle

**Week 15**  
April 18

**Quiz 2 and Bureaucracy**

Chapter 13: The Federal Bureaucracy

**Week 16**  
April 25

**Economic, Environmental, and Foreign Policy**

Chapter 15: Economic and Environmental Policy

Chapter 16: Income, Welfare, and Education Policy

Chapter 17: Foreign Policy

**Week 17**  
May 2

**Finals Week**

Final Exam: 8:00-10:00pm