

**American Government**  
Political Science 2051(Section 2)  
Fall 2020

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**Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of American government and politics. The first part of the course examines the ideological, historical, socioeconomic, and constitutional contexts of politics in the United States. The second part explores components of the political process including interest groups, political parties, and elections. The third part focuses on the institutions of government (executive, legislative, and judicial branches) that create and implement public policies. Most of our focus will be on national level politics, although at points we will cover some aspects of state and local governments as well.

**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, watching video presentations, reading the Power Point slides, taking practice quizzes, writing reports, and taking three multiple-choice exams (the final is not cumulative). The course schedule for completing practice quizzes, writing assignments and exams is listed below as well as on the course Moodle page. This is an on-line course that moves very quickly with assignments due throughout the semester, so it is very important that you pay close attention to the course schedule and check the Moodle site regularly. I provide updates and reminders on the Moodle page under "Announcements." Occasionally I will send emails, but do not expect email reminders of upcoming deadlines. Again, it is imperative that you check the Moodle site regularly.

**Required Reading Materials**

The textbook for the course is listed below. The e-book version is available for purchase in the bookstore. You may prefer to rent or purchase a physical copy of the book and these are available from on-line vendors. Note that we are using the 17th edition, however, using the 16th edition is acceptable and contains all the information you need.

*Government in America: People, Politics, and Policy, 2018 Election*, 17th 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 e-mail. I will make every effort to answer your questions in a timely manner (usually within 24 hours during the normal work week). If you would like to set up a specific time to talk with me directly, e-mail me and we can schedule a time that is mutually convenient to speak by telephone or through Zoom.

### **Student Evaluations and Policies**

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

Practice Chapter Quizzes (18 @ 0.5% each): **9%**

Reports (7 @ 3% each) #1: **21%**

Exam #1: **20%**

Exam #2: **23%**

Exam #3 (Final Exam): **27%**

**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**

Note: I generally round final averages. In other words, if your final average is an 89.5 you will receive an A-. If your final average is 89.4 your letter grade is a B+.

### Video Presentations

For each chapter of the text, I provide a series of video slide presentations (usually 4-7 videos for each chapter with a combined run time of anywhere from 30-40 minutes). The videos for each week along with the slides are provided on the course Moodle page. These presentations are intended to highlight aspects of the reading that will assist you in grasping the central concepts. My goal is to provide illustrative examples where needed while demonstrating how the various concepts are interrelated and significant. Please recognize that the video presentations should not be viewed as a substitute for carefully reading and taking thorough notes on the text. I cover many of the main points in each chapter, but I do not cover every definition and concept. Note that I have adopted a minimalist approach with the slide presentation videos. In other words, I do not include extraneous photos or graphs other than what I believe to be necessary for conveying the central ideas and concepts. By avoiding a "dazzling" power point presentation, I hope to focus your attention squarely on the material you need to know while allowing you to preserve your printer's ink supply (I highly recommend printing the slides so that you may take notes on them as you listen). I strongly suggest reading and taking notes on the chapter prior to watching the video presentations. Once you are familiar with the concepts covered in the book, you will find the presentations more useful.

### Practice Quizzes

A practice quiz on Moodle has been designed to accompany each chapter of the text. Each quiz contains approximately 12 multiple-choice questions on concepts covered in the text. While these quizzes are not comprehensive in their coverage, they should help you assess your grasp of some key concepts and hopefully help you learn more of the material in preparation for the exams. Occasionally, some of the quiz questions appear on the exams. NOTE: You may take each quiz as many times as you want to improve your score up until the time when the quiz is closed (note the times listed on the syllabus). Each quiz is worth 0.5 percent of your course grade (for a total of 9 percent of your course grade). Note that the practice quizzes are due at 6:00 p.m. on the dates listed on the syllabus (usually on Fridays). Because you may encounter technical difficulties, I urge you to begin these quizzes well in advance of the closing time. Again, you may take these as many times as you like to improve your grade up to the closing time listed on the syllabus. Note for all quizzes there is a 3-day grace period. This means that if you do not complete the quiz by the 6:00 p.m. Friday deadline, you have 3 additional days to complete it without penalty. Please note, I will not accept quizzes past the grace period unless a documented excuse is provided demonstrating why you were prevented from finishing the quiz prior to the original deadline. What this means is that you should make your best effort to complete the quizzes prior to the deadlines and rely on the grace period only when an unexpected problem arises.

### Exams

There are three exams and scores on these comprise the largest portion of your course grade. Note the final exam is not cumulative. You have a 48-hour window in which to take each exam (see schedule below). This means you may select any 30-minute period within this window to take your exam. Note that you will only have one attempt and only 30 minutes to take the exam. It is therefore imperative that you have a reliable internet connection. Should you lose internet access while taking your exam, you will not be allowed to repeat it. These are multiple-choice exams (50 questions) and you are free to use your textbook and your notes. However, recognize that you will only have 30 minutes, so it is imperative that you study in advance in order to do well. Given the time constraint (50 questions in 30 minutes), it will not be possible to look up answers to each question. While you may use your book and notes, you may not rely on the assistance of others. Makeup exams will not be given unless the instructor is notified in advance and agrees that the absence is a university-excused absence (Note PS-22). Makeups are all essay exams. **There are no grace periods for the exams.**

### Writing Assignments

There are seven reports that in combination count for 21% of the course grade. The due dates for uploading these reports through the Moodle site are listed on the schedule. Remember that these are individual assignments that you must complete without the assistance of others. The due dates for the assignments vary throughout the semester. It is your responsibility to keep track of the deadlines and complete the assignments on time. **There are no grace periods for these assignments and submitting them after the deadline will result in a substantial reduction of points (usually 5 points for each day that it is late).** I recognize, however, there are legitimate reasons for missing a deadline. If you experience a significant problem that prevents you from submitting a report, it is your responsibility to let me know about it in a timely manner and to provide appropriate documentation (e.g., doctor's note).

## **General Policies**

### Academic Honesty

Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the LSU Code of Student Conduct. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to cheating on exams, plagiarizing (from published sources or from fellow students), buying or selling assignments, altering grades, intentional deception, and collaborating with others without permission. Be very careful with the writing assignments. Use of another person's words without proper citation or copying from another person's work is considered

plagiarism. I reserve the right to investigate when I suspect a violation of any of these policies. All violations of the university's academic conduct policies are turned over to the Dean of Students.

#### Computer Problems

If you experience a computer difficulty in submitting a report or in taking a quiz or exam, it is your responsibility to email me about this when it occurs and to document the problem. Quizzes and exams are graded automatically so check to see that your grade appears soon after you submit them.

#### Policy on Deadlines

To provide a level playing field, I take deadlines very seriously and hold everyone to an identical standard. If you encounter a problem that prevents you from meeting a deadline, please contact me. I understand that problems can arise, and I will accommodate difficulties that you may encounter. But please be prepared to provide documentation. **Finally, please note that that all listed times on the schedule are calibrated to the Central Time Zone.**

#### Adding the Course Late

If you add the course after the first day of the semester, it is your responsibility to make up any work that you missed. Assignments that are past due must be completed within one week of your adding the course. If quizzes have closed or if submissions are no longer accepted through Moodle, you must contact me for instructions on how to complete this work. Requests made more than one week after adding the course are usually not granted.

#### Special Needs

For students who have special needs or who require accommodations through Disability Services, please advise me of your situation so arrangements can be made. If you are a student registered through Disabilities Services and you are seeking a "Note Taker" to assist you in assembling notes and other review materials for this course, please email me the appropriate form at the beginning of the semester. I will then post the code listed on the form to the course Moodle page to enable volunteers to contact you through Disabilities Services. If you are a student interested in volunteering to serve as a "Note Taker" please read the instructions indicated on the course Moodle page.

## Course Schedule

Please pay careful attention to the due dates for the various practice quizzes, assignments, and exams. Note that the schedule is subject to minor changes and any changes will be noted under “Announcements” at the top of the course Moodle page.

### Week #1: August 24-29

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

- Carefully read the course syllabus.
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 1.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 1.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 1 to be completed by Friday, August 28 at 6:00 p.m.

### Week #2: August 30 - September 5

#### 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).
- Video Presentations: Chapter 2.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 2 to be completed by Friday, September 4 at 6:00 p.m.
- Work on Report #1 (due on Tuesday, September 8).
- ❖ **September 1: Final date for dropping course without receiving a “W” (4:30 p.m.).**

### Week #3: September 6-12

#### Federalism

- Submit Report #1 by Tuesday, September 8 at 6:00 p.m.
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 3.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 3.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 3 to be completed by Friday, September 11 at 6:00 p.m.

### Week #4: September 13-19

#### Civil Liberties

- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 4.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 4.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 4 to be completed by Friday, September 18 at 6:00 p.m.
- Work on Report #2 (due on Tuesday, September 22).

### Week #5: September 20-26

#### Civil Rights

- Submit Report #2 by Tuesday, September 22 at 6:00 p.m.
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 5.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 5.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 5 to be completed by Friday, September 25 at 6:00 p.m.

**EXAM #1 (Covering Chapters 1-5) May be taken anytime from 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 27 through 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 29.**

### Week #6: September 27 - October 3

#### Public Opinion

- Make certain you take Exam #1 anytime from 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, September 27 through 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 29.
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 6.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 6.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 6 to be completed by Friday, October 2 at 6:00 p.m.
- Work on Report #3 (due on Tuesday, October 6).

### **Week #7: October 4-10**

#### **Mass Media and Interest Groups**

- Submit Report #3 by **Tuesday, October 6 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapters 7 and 10.
- Video Presentations: Chapters 7 and 10.
- Practice Quizzes: Chapters 7 and 10 to be completed by **Friday, October 9 at 6:00 p.m.**

### **Week #8: October 11-17**

#### **Congress**

- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 11.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 11.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 11 to be completed by **Friday, October 16 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Work on Report #4 (due on Tuesday, October 20).

### **Week #9: October 18-24**

#### **Political Parties and Elections**

- Submit Report #4 by **Tuesday, October 20 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapters 8 and 9.
- Video Presentations: Chapters 8 and 9.
- Practice Quizzes: Chapters 8 and 9 to be completed by **Friday, October 23 at 6:00 p.m.**

**EXAM #2 (Coving Chapters 6-11): May be taken anytime from 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 25 through 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, October 27.**

### **Week #10: October 25-31**

#### **The Presidency and the Federal Bureaucracy**

- Make certain you take Exam #2 anytime from 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, October 25 through 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, October 27.
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapters 12 and 14.
- Video Presentations: Chapters 12 and 14.
- Practice Quizzes: Chapter 12 and 14 to be completed by **Friday, October 30 at 6:00 p.m.**

### **Week #11: November 1-7**

#### **The Judicial Branch**

- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 15
- Video Presentations: Chapter 15.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 15 to be completed by **Friday, November 6 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Work on Report #5 (due on Tuesday, November 10).
- **November 6: Final date for dropping course (4:30 p.m.).**

### **Week #12: November 8-14**

#### **Budget Policymaking**

- Submit Report #5 by **Tuesday, November 10 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 13.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 13.
- Practice Quiz: Chapter 13 to be completed by **Friday, November 13 at 6:00 p.m.**

### **Week #13: November 15-21**

#### **Economic and Social Welfare Policymaking**

- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 16.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 16.
- Practice Quiz for Chapter 16 to be completed by **Friday, November 20 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Work on Report #6 (due on Tuesday, November 24).

**Week #14: November 22-28**

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

- Submit Report #6 by **Tuesday, November 24 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 17.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 17.
- Practice Quiz for Chapter 17 to be completed by **Monday, November 30 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Work on Report #7 (due on Tuesday, December 1).

**Week #15: November 29 - December 5**

**National Security Policymaking**

- Submit Report #7 by **Tuesday, December 1 at 6:00 p.m.**
- Read: *Government in America*, Chapter 18.
- Video Presentations: Chapter 18.
- Practice Quiz for Chapters 18 to be completed by **Friday, December 4 at 6:00 p.m.**

**Exam #3 (Covering Chapters 12-18): May be taken anytime from 6:00 p.m. Tuesday, December 8 through 6:00 p.m. Thursday, December 10.**