

POLI 201: American National Government (J10)

Online course, Fall 2020

Instructor: Professor Matthew Wilson

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Virtual Office Hours: Mondays at 10 am
or *as requested*



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Politics concerns the ways in which individuals and groups affect policies and the creation of laws. It involves the use of power and influence, reliance upon authority and legitimacy, and it often requires resolving coordination problems to find compromises and enforce compliance. In this course, we will explore these concepts in the American context and overview the major actors and institutions that characterize American politics. Some of the topics that we will address include the foundations of American government, the relationship between the national, state, and local governments, the roles of parties and elections, and the branches of government. The goal of this course is to provide students with a fundamental understanding of the institutions and processes of American national government.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe common dilemmas involved in politics;
- Differentiate between types of government;
- Outline the ideas and principles that characterize the U.S. Constitution;
- Identify the major branches of the U.S. government and their functions;
- Define federalism and differentiate between federal, state, and local authority;
- Explain the roles of political parties, interest groups, and the media; and
- Use evidence to support a policy position.

This course satisfies the Carolina Core components GSS (Global Citizenship and Multicultural Understanding - Social Sciences/Cultural Identities) and VSR (Values, Ethics, and Social Responsibility).

COURSE MATERIALS

This course uses an interactive textbook created by Top Hat as the primary course material. Students are required to purchase a subscription to Top Hat, which can be done through the University Bookstore (the same process as purchasing a hard-copy book for a course). The materials include a Top Hat subscription, access to the online textbook, and a required fee for secure testing. Students may purchase the materials directly through Top Hat (www.tophat.com) for a cheaper price (\$55), but the materials could end up being more expensive if they are purchased separately and not as a bundled package. The unique course ID associated with this course on Top Hat is: **516760**. Please let the instructor know if any issues arise when purchasing the materials or accessing the course online.

COURSE FORMAT AND REQUIREMENTS

- This course is an *asynchronous* online course. This means that students will work at different times from different locations and are not required to attend face-to-face or synchronous meetings as a whole class. However, all students are expected to check in each Monday on Blackboard sometime between 10 am and 11 am (except for Labor Day, 07 September) to ensure that students are not having any issues.
- For each weekly module, students must 1) read the online text and answer accompanying questions; and 2) respond to the discussion question(s) by the given deadline. Tasks must be completed by 11:59 pm Eastern Standard Time on the date that they are due.
- Students are required to write an expanded opinion piece (op-ed) on a policy topic of their choice and to act as an 'editor' for one of their peers. Both of these assignments will have separate prompts that are posted on Blackboard and must also be submitted through Blackboard by the given due date.
- Online activities that require instructor review (discussion posts and submitted assignments) will be graded within 48 to 72 hours.
- The instructor will communicate with students regularly through Blackboard and students' USC email accounts. Be sure to monitor emails regularly and to check for messages on Blackboard. The instructor will aim to respond the same day to emails that arrive before 5:00 PM on weekdays. Responses to emails that arrive after 5:00 PM or on weekends may take longer, but every attempt will be made to respond within 24 hours.
- Given that this is an online course, students are strongly recommended to communicate with the instructor through email. The instructor is also available for face-to-face meetings by Skype or by phone. To schedule a meeting, students should email the instructor a request to meet, the preferred format in which they would like to meet, and at least two dates and times that the student is available.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

All work in this course must be completed and submitted online, for which students must have:

- regular access to a computer with an up-to-date operating system;
- internet access and a browser that is compatible with Blackboard and Top Hat;
- word-processing software* and reliable data storage; and
- The technical skills necessary to complete an online course, which include the ability to use an internet browser to access and search the Internet, access and use USC email, Blackboard, and Top Hat, communicate by email, create electronic documents, and download and upload files.

*Office 365 Pro Plus is available to students free of charge and allows students to install Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, and Access on up to five devices. Office 365 includes unlimited cloud storage on OneDrive. To download Office 365 Pro Plus, visit <https://my.sc.edu/software/> and log in with your student email. If you have questions or need help downloading and installing software, please contact the University Technology Services Help Desk at (803) 777-1800 or helpdesk@sc.edu.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

If you have problems with your computer, please contact the University Technology Services Help Desk at (803) 777-1800 or helpdesk@sc.edu.

The UTS Help Desk is open Monday-Friday from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM EST.

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Assignments and weighting scheme:

Assignment	Weight	Points possible
Check-in	5%	5
Textbook engagement	10%	10
Midterm exam	15%	15
Final exam	15%	15
Opinion piece	20%	20
Peer review	10%	10
Discussion questions	25%	25
Total	100%	100

Assignment descriptions:

Textbook engagement

Each weekly module contains an interactive chapter that prompts the student to answer questions as they read through the material. Students will receive credit based on the proportion of in-text questions that they answer correctly or satisfactorily. The final grade for the questions in the textbook will be an average across all of the questions, with incomplete questions receiving a zero.

Discussion questions

In addition to each weekly module, students are required to respond to discussion questions on Blackboard. These are listed in the folder “Weekly Discussion Questions” and cross-listed on the Discussion Board. For each question, students must post an original response and respond to a peer’s post—each student must create a ‘thread’ and post a response to someone else’s thread in the forum by the given due date. Discussion questions will be graded based on the length and breadth of the responses and the extent to which students engage one another on the question. The final grade for discussions will be an average across all of the responses, with incomplete questions receiving a zero. A separate prompt that provides additional information will be posted on Blackboard.

Exams (Midterm and Final)

Exams will be administered online through Top Hat on the dates shown in the syllabus (below). More information on the exams (specific time, format, and procedures) will be provided separately.

Submitted assignments (Opinion piece and peer review)

Students are required to write an expanded opinion piece (op-ed) on a policy topic of their choice and to act as an ‘editor’ for one of their peers. Both of these assignments will have separate prompts that will be posted on Blackboard and must also be submitted through Blackboard by the given due date.

Final grading scheme:

Percentage	Points	Letter grade
90-100%	90 – 100	A
85-89.9%	85 – 89.9	B+
80-84.9%	80 – 84.9	B
75-79.9%	75 – 79.9	C+
70-74.9%	70 – 74.9	C
65-69.9%	65 – 69.9	D+
60-64.9%	60 – 64.9	D
Below 60%	0 – 59.9	F

COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Academic Integrity

The first tenet of the Carolinian Creed is, "I will practice personal and academic integrity." You are expected to practice the highest possible standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in a minimum academic penalty of your failing the assignment and will result in additional disciplinary measures. This includes improper citation of sources, plagiarism, and any other form of academic misrepresentation. To learn more about University policies, visit the website for the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity: <https://www.sa.sc.edu/academicintegrity/>

Class Conduct/Netiquette

Professionalism is expected at all times. Because the university classroom is a place designed for the free exchange of ideas, we must show respect for one another in all circumstances. Appropriate language and restraint from verbal attacks upon those whose perspectives differ from your own is a minimum requirement.

Some Netiquette Rules:

- Treat one another with respect. No one may attack one another personally for holding different opinions.
- Do not use all CAPITAL LETTERS in emails or discussion posts, as it is seen as impolite or aggressive.
- Use good taste when communicating and stay on topic. Profanity should be avoided.
- Always begin emails with a proper salutation (E.g.: Hello Professor Name; Good afternoon Dr. Name).
- When sending an email, include a detailed subject line and be sure to conclude the message with your name.
- Use proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Text messaging language is not acceptable.

Late Work/Make-up Policy

All submissions and exams are due by the deadline; user error does not qualify for an opportunity to make up or retake assignments. However, students may complete many assignments *before* the deadline. Late or make-up work will not be accepted, but accommodation may be given to students who notify the instructor in advance.

Incomplete Grades

Incompletes will be granted only in accordance with university policy.

Diversity and Inclusion

The university is committed to a campus environment that is inclusive, safe, and respectful for all persons, and one that fully embraces the Carolinian Creed. To that end, all course activities will be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly participation and interaction among colleagues, recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, background, and point of view each student brings. You are expected at all times to apply the highest academic standards to this course and to treat others with dignity and respect.

Expectations of the Instructor

The instructor is expected to facilitate learning, answer questions appropriately, be fair and objective in grading, provide timely and useful feedback on assignments, and treat students with respect. The instructor will make every effort to be available to students and to respond to their needs in this course.

Copyright/Fair Use Statement

Students should not distribute any of the materials, resources, or exams used in this course without permission.

ACADEMIC SERVICES

Disability Services

The Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC, <http://www.sa.sc.edu/sds/>) empowers students to manage challenges and limitations imposed by disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me to discuss the logistics of any accommodations needed to fulfill course requirements (within the first week of the semester). In order to receive reasonable accommodations from me, you must be registered with the Student Disability Resource Center (1523 Greene Street, LeConte Room 112A, Columbia, SC 29208, 803-777-6142). Any student with a documented disability should contact the SDRC to arrange accommodations.

Student Success Center

In partnership with USC faculty, the Student Success Center (SSC) offers a number of programs to assist you in better understanding your course material and to aid you on your path to success. SSC programs are facilitated by professional staff, graduate students, and trained undergraduate peer leaders who have previously excelled in their courses. SSC services are offered to all USC undergraduates at no additional cost. You are invited to call the Student Success Hotline at (803) 777-1000, visit the SSC website (www.sc.edu/success), or stop by the SSC in the Thomas Cooper Library on the Mezzanine Level to check schedules and make appointments.

Writing Center

The University Writing Center is available to help any USC student needing assistance with a writing project at any stage of development (<http://artsandsciences.sc.edu/write/university-writing-center>).

Library Resources

The university library (<http://library.sc.edu>) has great resources for finding out how to cite materials in your projects. Remember that if you use anything that is not your own writing or media (quotes from books, articles, interviews, websites, movies – everything) you must cite the source in MLA format.

Blackboard and Technology

The Division of Information Technology (DoIT) is available to help with problems with Blackboard and other computer issues (http://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/).

Counseling Services

The University offers counseling and crisis services as well as outreach services, and self-help solutions. For more information, see https://sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_health_services/medical-services/counseling-and-psychiatry/index.php.

COURSE SCHEDULE

An online version of this calendar is available at: <https://tinyurl.com/POLI201>.

Module	Topic	Tasks	Deadline
	Introduction	Read <i>Introduction: Welcome to POLI 201</i>	
Practice Exam		Any time between 12pm and 1pm	26 August 2020
1	What is Politics?	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	28 August 2020
2	Types of Governments	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	04 September 2020
3	The Foundations of American Government	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	11 September 2020
4	Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	18 September 2020
5	Federalism	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	25 September 2020
6	State and Local Government	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	02 October 2020
First draft of opinion piece due on Blackboard			02 October 2020
Midterm Exam		<i>Students will receive additional information from the instructor by email</i>	07 October 2020
7	The Presidency	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	16 October 2020
8	Congress	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	23 October 2020
9	Courts	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	30 October 2020
Peer review due on Blackboard			30 October 2020
10	Elections	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	06 November 2020
11	Political Parties and Interest Groups	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	13 November 2020
12	The Media	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	20 November 2020
13	Foreign Policy and International Relations	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	02 December 2020
Final draft of opinion piece due on Blackboard			04 December 2020
Final Exam		<i>Students will receive additional information from the instructor by email</i>	09 December 2020