

POLI 201: American National Government

Online course, Fall 2021

Web asynchronous

Instructor: Professor Matthew Wilson

Email: wilso929@mailbox.sc.edu

Virtual Office Hours: Fridays 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 branches of government, and the roles of parties and elections. 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;
- Outline the ideas and principles that characterize the U.S. Constitution;
- Differentiate between federal-, state-, and local-level authority;
- Identify the major branches of the U.S. government and their functions;
- 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 and access to the online textbook. Students may purchase the materials directly through Top Hat (www.tophat.com) for a cheaper price, but the materials could end up being more expensive if they are not purchased together. The unique course ID associated with this course on Top Hat is: **498650**. 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, the instructor will be available every Friday at 10 am to discuss the material and talk with students. This period (10-11am) serves as both optional class time and virtual office hours.
- For each weekly module, students must 1) read the online text and answer accompanying questions; and 2) respond to the discussion question(s) on Blackboard 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 online 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
Textbook engagement	7%	7
Discussion questions	48%	48
Midterm exam	10%	10
Final exam	10%	10
Opinion piece (first draft and final draft)	15%	15
Peer review	10%	10
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. 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

As part of each weekly module, students are required to respond to discussion questions on Blackboard. They are posted in the Discussion Board and cross-listed under “Course Content”. All required readings are also posted under “Course Content” (“Discussion Readings”). For each question, students must post an original response—each student must create a ‘thread’ by the given due date. Discussion questions will be graded based on the thoroughness and thoughtfulness of the responses. The final grade for discussions will be an average across all of the responses, with incomplete questions receiving a zero. A prompt that provides additional information and examples of strong responses will be posted on Blackboard.

Exams (Midterm and Final)

Exams will be administered online through Blackboard 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. A completed first draft is due on 01 October, and the final draft is due on 03 December, both of which must be submitted through Blackboard by the given due date. The opinion piece and peer review will have separate prompts that will be posted on Blackboard. Examples of strong submissions will be provided on Blackboard.

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: tinyurl.com/POLI201Fall2021

Module	Topic	Tasks	Deadline
	Introduction	Read <i>Introduction: Welcome to POLI 201</i>	
Practice Exam (Blackboard)			27 August 2021
1	What is Politics?	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	27 August 2021
2	The Foundations of American Government	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	03 September 2021
3	Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	10 September 2021
4	Federalism	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	17 September 2021
5	State and Local Government	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	24 September 2021
6	Bureaucracy	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	01 October 2021
First draft of opinion piece due on Blackboard			01 October 2021
Midterm Exam (Blackboard)		<i>Students will receive additional information from the instructor by email</i>	Between 04 and 06 October 2021
7	The Presidency	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	15 October 2021
8	Congress	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	22 October 2021
9	Courts	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	29 October 2021
Peer review due on Blackboard			29 October 2021
10	The Media	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	05 November 2021
11	Polling and Public Opinion	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	12 November 2021
12	Political Parties and Interest Groups	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	19 November 2021
13	Elections	Read chapter and answer questions Respond to discussion question online	03 December 2021
Final draft of opinion piece due on Blackboard			03 December 2021
Final Exam (Blackboard)		<i>Students will receive additional information from the instructor by email</i>	Between 06 and 08 December 2021