

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH

POLITICAL SCIENCE 105Q2 (001C)
A USP QUEST II COURSE | 3 CREDITS

SPRING 2021 | T/TH 11:30–1:00 | SAGE 3232
POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT



PROFESSOR

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines the organization, principles, and actual workings of the American national government in all its branches. The centerpiece of the course is institutions—congress, presidency, courts, and agencies. The course examines the Constitutional framework within which the system operates, including federalism, civil rights, and civil liberties. Considerable attention is given to social and political elements that influence institutions, such as voting and citizen participation, interest groups, media, and political parties. The course also examines institutional outputs (policies), especially social policies related to race, gender, socio-economic status, and sexuality. There are no prerequisites for his course. This is a Quest II course in the University Studies Program. The signature question is “*How do people understand and engage in community life?*”

OFFICE HOURS

My office is Sage 4619, but because of the pandemic, I will hold “student drop-in hours” in Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) MW, 9:00-10:00 or by appointment.

The Political Science Department uses Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) for holding office hours. This system is available to all UWO students. When logging into MS Teams, look closely at the status symbols for your instructor. A green dot by the professor’s icon (which may be their picture or their initials) means they are available. A red dot means they are busy. Generally, you are able to join office-hour meetings and talk openly in the forum or use the chat function freely. At times, I may be in a private meeting with a student during office hours, and I will mark my availability as “busy” (a red dot). We hope that using MS Teams for office hours for all of our courses will help students become more accustomed to virtual office hours during the pandemic. The main point to remember is that we are available to you. Please use our office hours freely and often. We are here to help. Many faculty are also happy to set up meetings outside of office hours if students have conflicts with the posted times.

TEXT AND READINGS

We the People: An Introduction to American Government, 13th Edition (Thomas E. Patterson)
ISBN: 9781260525373.

The loose-leaf textbook includes a Connect access code, an online supplement for weekly quizzes. Additional readings are provided to students at no additional cost.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Course-Specific Learning Goals

Describe major components of the American political system, emphasizing institutions

Discuss with classmates issues related to civil rights

Evaluate policy outcomes using a constitutional framework

Critically evaluate political ideologies and apply ideological frameworks to students’ political and policy views.

Political Science Department Learning Goals

Understand and apply theory frameworks

Apply theoretical arguments and to explain or predict political phenomena

Understand and explain contemporary politics

Connect theory and history to answer “big questions” facing contemporary polities

Analyze and explain political behavior, patterns, & events

Use evidence in a variety of forms to construct arguments

Communicate effectively

Express information in ways accessible and appropriate to different audiences

USP Learning Outcomes

As a Quest II course in the University Studies program, this course has an ethical reasoning component and a signature question. This course reinforces several UWO Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) for students. Students will:

1. Reason ethically and put personal ethics into action. More specifically, students will:
 - a. Synthesize personal values in context of political ideology (promoting public good)
 - b. Identify and discuss examples of how knowledge is socially constructed and implicated with power
 - c. Describe democratic aspirations of equality, opportunity, liberty, and justice
2. Understand civic learning. Specifically, students will:

- a. Analyze and apply principles of civic knowledge and engagement to write an essay answering, “How do I understand and engage in community life?”
- b. Evaluate civic engagement by attending two co-curricular activities or events and writing a reflection on the experiences
- c. Demonstrate understanding of principles of American government and politics

INCLUSION

Law and politics affect all people irrespective of political affiliation, socio-economic status, gender, sex, race, sexuality, national origin, ethnicity, veteran status, religion, physical or learning ability, and other characteristics with which students commonly identify. So, I use inclusive pedagogies to foster input from everyone. *Input from all students is valued and expected.*

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

My classes are free speech zones. Say anything you want to say. No topic or viewpoint is off limits. Use any words or symbols you want to express yourself. Exercising freedom of speech carries the burden of being *responsible* for your speech. Similarly, exercising silence carries the burden of being responsible for your silence.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is expected and required. I take attendance at the beginning of class, mainly to learn student names. Because participation in discussions and activities is required, you should remember that you cannot participate if you are absent. Absences are sometimes necessary, but it is unnecessary to contact me about absences unless it is an extended absence.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

I use the 93/90/87 grading scale for this course.

A 93–100 B 83–86 C 73–76 D 63–66
A- 90–92 B- 80–82 C- 70–72 D- 60–62
B+ 87–89 C+ 77–79 D+ 67–69 F 0–59

Participation (20%)

Good participation means students read and prepare before class and actively participate in discussions. Participation comfort levels vary substantially. At one end of the spectrum, students fear public speaking (more than death) and prefer to remain anonymous in class. These students should work actively to overcome this fear. On the other end of the spectrum are gunners. Gunners are eager to speak and tend to dominate conversation. These students should be mindful that learning involves active listening and should provide others an opportunity to speak. Quality of participation is as important as quantity. Students receive the best participation grades when they demonstrate critical thinking and assimilate complex ideas, including classmates’ ideas, across a range of topics. These participators contribute meaningfully to the learning of others, including the professor. There are formal participation opportunities, including group presentations.

Exams (2 exams x 25% each = 50%)

Exams will be a combination of objective, short answer, and essay questions.

Connect Quizzes (20%)

Students take regular quizzes in *Connect*. In *Connect*, there is a folder for each chapter. In each folder there is a quiz and several review exercises. Review exercises are optional; quizzes are required.

First Year Experience Assignments (10%)

Students participate in a number of first-year activities as part of the University Studies Program. In the past, these activities have included the following items, but because of the pandemic, we may need to adjust expectations for in-person activities. Where we are able to complete these safely in person (or online), we will. Otherwise, I will develop similar activities aimed at enriching students' first year experiences, which have already been curtailed during the pandemic.

- Visit three departments during Academic Open House Week to discuss majors, minors, and certificates
- Participate in a Career Services Activity
- Attend Celebration of Scholarship and Creative Activity
- Participate in one additional campus activity of your choice

EARLY ALERT

During the fifth week of classes, you will receive by e-mail notice about your progress in this course. This is called *Early Alert*. Early Alert helps you evaluate your study skills and class attendance so you know if you are on the right track. If you need to make changes, there are tons of resources available. Early Alert grades are not permanent and do not appear on your transcript.

DEADLINES AND MISSED ASSIGNMENTS

Turn in assignments on the due dates. Students who miss assignments will be excused only for university-approved reasons (e.g., documented illness, family death, university-sponsored activity).

CONNECT

To access Connect, you need the *Connect Access Code* that comes with your textbook if you purchased it at the campus bookstore. You can also purchase an access code online when you register. Register with Connect [here](#). You can get *temporary access* at no charge for fourteen days. Just be sure to register with an access code sometime within the 14-day period to keep your files. Further questions about Connect? Start [here](#).

QUIZ GUIDELINES

1. All quizzes are posted and taken in *Connect*.
2. You may use textbooks for quizzes. Quiz questions are based on textbook material.
3. Quizzes are automatically graded. As soon as you finish each quiz, you receive your grade.
4. You may take each quiz *up to three times* before the deadline. I record the grade from your *highest* attempt. Questions are pulled randomly from a pool. If you take a quiz more than once, some questions differ.
5. Quizzes are *due at 11:00 AM before the class when we discuss that chapter*. Quizzes are available well ahead of due dates.
6. I drop the lowest quiz grade at the end of the course.

UNIVERSITY STUDIES PROGRAM

The University Studies Program (USP) is your gateway to a 21st century college education at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. This Quest II course is the second in a series of USP courses. This course reinforces many aspects of your Quest I experience, such as continuing to introduce you to campus and all it has to offer, the vibrant Oshkosh community, and the challenges and opportunities of academic life as you pursue a liberal education. Quest II courses are an integral part of the First Year Experience (FYE). As you continue your USP studies, you will have a chance to deepen your civic learning in your Quest II course, which has a civic engagement) community involvement) component.

Already, you are familiar with the three “Signature Questions” central to a UWO education: (1) How do people understand and engage in community life? (2) How do people understand and create a more sustainable world? and (3) How do people understand and bridge cultural differences? The signature question for this course asks, “*How do people understand and engage in community life?*” We examine this question in the context of American government and politics.

ETHICAL REASONING

One of the main themes for this course is *ethical reasoning*. Ethical reasoning is concerned about right and wrong human conduct. Ethical reasoning is what we do when we ask questions such as “Should I do this?” “Is this policy a good policy?” “Is it right to do this?” Ethical reasoning is a central component of a liberal studies education. In order to develop a sense of social responsibility, you will be asked to consider and assess your own ethical values in the context of American government and politics. Further, ethical reasoning will become a lens through which you will be asked to critically analyze and evaluate governmental, political, and social issues. The most successful students will solve real-world problems applying ethical reasoning alongside other skills developed in a liberal education.

LIBERAL EDUCATION

Liberal education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

CIVIC KNOWLEDGE, LEARNING & ENGAGEMENT

Civic knowledge consists of an awareness and understanding of the various political and social processes that impact the nature and quality of life in local, state, national, or global communities. It also encompasses the cultivation of skills which may be useful in public life, like effective communication and ethical reasoning. Civic engagement means having an appreciation for and applying the values gained from civic knowledge in real world settings, directed at improving the quality of life in the communities of which one is a part. Civic knowledge and civic engagement emphasize learning, reflection, and action in order to create better communities.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Expectations for Academic Honesty: A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Graded assignments are designed to work on these items. Thus, to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence of a college-educated person all graded work is to be your own. When you are directed to work alone, an assignment or test must be done by you, its primary ideas are to be your own, and any outside materials should be dealt with properly (quoted when using someone’s words, and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When your teacher directs you to work in teams, the work is to be done by the team. More information can be found [here](#).

UWO is committed to academic integrity for all students. System guidelines state, “Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors.” We expect students to review and adhere to procedures related to academic honesty as outlined in Chapter UWS 14, Wisconsin Administrative Code, available on the Dean of Students website [here](#). Students should direct specific questions regarding the code (and institutional procedures approved to implement the code) to the Dean of Students Office.

STUDENT CONSUMER INFORMATION

Students should see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990 available [here](#).

GRIEVANCES

The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom experience, and we take your feedback seriously. If you have concerns about anything related to this course, assignments, or teaching method, you are encouraged to first speak with your instructor directly. If you are not comfortable speaking with the instructor, you are invited to speak with the Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dr. James Krueger. He can be reached at kruegerj@uwosh.edu. Should he be unable to resolve your concerns, he will guide you to appropriate resources within the College of Letters and Science.

NOTE TO POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJORS

Political Science majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore or first semester of their junior year. PS245 is a prerequisite for the senior capstone, Political Analysis (401), and cannot be taken concurrently.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES

UWO provides reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or meet course requirements. We accommodate *flexibly* and *individually*. Register with *Accessibility Services* or Project Success to get an accommodation recommendation form.

Accessibility Services

125 Dempsey Hall
(920) 424-3100
dean1@uwosh.edu

[Accessibility Services Website](#)

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Changes to the schedule are inevitable, especially in a course on American government and politics where current events drive our focus and discussions. Changes to the schedule will be communicated in class or through e-mail. If substantive changes are made, notification will be provided in a timely manner and a revised syllabus made available.

Week 1 (Feb 1): Introductions and Course Overview

- Syllabus Review, Using Connect and Canvas
- Pre-Assessment (What do you already know about American government and politics?)

Week 2 (Feb 8): Political Thinking and Political Culture

- Political Thinking and Culture (chapter 1)
- Model of American Political System
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 1

Week 3 (Feb 15): Constitutional Democracy and Federalism

- Constitutional Democracy (chapter 2)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 2

- Federalism (chapter 3)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 3

Week 4 (Feb 22): Civil Liberties

- Civil Liberties (chapter 4)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 4
- Thursday, Feb 25: Alumni Speaker

Week 5 (March 1): Civil Rights

- Equal Rights (chapter 5)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 5

Week 6 (March 8): Student Projects and Presentations

Week 7 (March 15): Wrap-up, Review and Midterm Exam

Week 8 (March 22): Spring Break

Week 9 (March 29): Public Opinion and Political Participation

- Public Opinion/Political Socialization (chapter 6)
- Political Participation (chapter 7)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 6 and Ch. 7

Week 10 (April 5): Political Parties, Campaigns & Elections

- Parties, Candidates, & Campaigns (chapter 8)
- Discussion: Political parties and small town gas stations (rational choice model)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 8
- Video Lecture: [Campaigns & Elections](#) (Patterson)

Week 11 (April 12): Congress

- Congress (chapter 11)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 11

Week 12 (April 19): Presidency & Agencies

- The Presidency (chapter 12)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 12
- Video Lectures
[Presidents & Domestic Policy](#) and [Presidents & Foreign Policy](#) (Patterson)
- The Federal Bureaucracy (chapter 13)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 13

Week 13 (April 26): Courts

- The Federal Judicial System (chapter 14)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 14

Week 14 (May 3): Policy and Current Events

- Readings TBD

Week 15 (May 10): Wrap-up, Review, and Final Exam