

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN OSHKOSH

POLITICAL SCIENCE 105 (001C)

A USP EXPLORE COURSE | 3 CREDITS

FALL 2022 | T/TH 9:40–11:10 | SAGE 3232

POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT



Above: U.S. President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris

PROFESSOR

Jerry D. Thomas

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J.D., Chicago-Kent College of Law, IIT

Ph.D., University of Kentucky

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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 an Explore course in the University Studies Program with the XS (Society) designation.

OFFICE HOURS

My office is Sage 4628. I am available during office hours MWF 11:30–12:30 or by appointment.

TEXT AND READINGS

We the People: An Introduction to American Government, 14th Edition (Thomas E. Patterson)
ISBN: 9781264085668.

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

LEARNING GOALS

Course-Specific Learning Goals

Describe the major components of the US government, including the Constitution and its interpretation, federalism, and the branches of government.

Examine key public policies and learn the roles of citizens, groups, and elections in the making of policy.

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

Engage the political system through media, community involvement, voting, and self-reflection

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 politics

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, both orally and in writing

INCLUSION

Politics and government affect all people irrespective of political affiliation, socio-economic status, sex, gender, race, sexuality, national origin, ethnicity, veteran status, religion, physical or learning ability, and many 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. 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%)

Participation is based on student preparation for and contributions to class. Minimally, students must attend class and must read and prepare course materials before coming to class. Participation comfort levels vary substantially. At one end of the spectrum are *deathers*—students who 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. Students write a reflection at the end of the term assessing their own participation, both strengths and challenges.

Connect Quizzes (20%)

Students take regular quizzes in *Connect*. In *Connect*, there is a quiz and a review exercise for each chapter. Review exercises are optional; quizzes are required. See *Quiz Guidelines* below.

Assignments, Activities, and Events (20%)

There are many graded class activities and homework assignments throughout the term. Students also attend two civic engagement events on campus, after which they write a one-page reflection paper (12-point type, double-spaced) based on the event. I drop the lowest grade in this category at the end of the term.

Exams (2 exams x 20% each = 40%)

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

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](#).

EXPLORE COURSES, LIBERAL EDUCATION, AND SOCIETY

This course is an Explore course for the University Studies Program. The Explore classes are designed to provide a solid foundation for the rest of your education here, no matter which major you choose. For further information about the unique general education at UW Oshkosh and the other USP courses that are available, visit the University Studies Program website at uwosh.edu/usp.

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.

This course supports the foundation of a liberal education. Namely, it provides students with a framework for social responsibilities connected with participating in a democratic society. As such this explore course fits the XS category (Society) for USP requirements.

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 9:30 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.

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](#)

REGISTER TO VOTE (AND VOTE)

This is a political science class, and I encourage everyone to participate in our democracy. Minimally, voting is a great start. *National Election Day this year is Tuesday, November 8.*

Wisconsin Registration Methods & Deadlines

- *In Person:* The Friday before Election Day
- *By Mail:* Postmarked at least 20 days before Election Day
- *Online:* 20 days before Election Day (<https://myvote.wi.gov/en-us/>)
- *At the Polls:* Individuals may register to vote in person at your polling place on Election Day. You must provide documents for proof of residency and proof of identification.

Twenty days before Election Day this year is October 19. Other Wisconsin voting information can be found at [MyVoteWisconsin](#).

Other States

Students who live in other states can easily find out how to vote with a little bit of online research. Every state has an option for submitting an absentee ballot, and many states have early, in-person voting if you make a trip home. A great starting place for your research is [Vote.org](#).

Assistance

There are many “voter drives” occurring on campus this semester. If you need help, ask a volunteer during one of these events. Or, ask me. I am happy, happy, happy to help.

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 (Sept 5): Introductions and Course Overview

- Introductions, Syllabus, Connect and Canvas
- Model of American Political System

Week 2 (Sept 12): Political Thinking and Political Culture

- Pre-Assessment: *What do you already know about American government and politics?*
- Political Thinking and Culture (chapter 1)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 1

Week 3 (Sept 19): Constitutional Democracy and Federalism

- Constitutional Democracy (chapter 2)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 2
- Federalism (chapter 3)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 3

Week 4 (Sept 26): Civil Liberties

- Civil Liberties (chapter 4)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 4
- Current Events

Week 5 (Oct 3): Civil Rights & Group Projects

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

Week 6 (Oct 10): Student Projects and Presentations

Week 7 (Oct 17): Wrap-up, Review and Midterm Exam

Week 8 (Oct 24): Public Opinion and Political Participation

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

Week 9 (Oct 31): Political Parties, Campaigns & Elections

- Parties, Candidates, & Campaigns (chapter 8)
- Video Lecture: [Campaigns & Elections](#) (Patterson)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 8
- Current Events

Week 10 (Nov 7): Congress

- *Election Day*: Tuesday, November 8
- Congress (chapter 11)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 11

Week 11 (Nov 14): Presidency

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

Week 12 (Nov 21): Agencies and Thanksgiving Break

- The Federal Bureaucracy (chapter 13)
- Connect Quiz for Ch. 13
- Thanksgiving Break: Nov 23–27

Week 13 (Nov 28): Courts

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

Week 14 (Dec 5): Current Events**Week 15 (May 9): Wrap-up, Review, and Final Assessments**

- Review, Exam, Course Evaluations, and Participation Reflections