

Political Science 105  
Spring 2023  
Office Hours: M 1:50-2:50; W 10:15-12:15  
or by appointment

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# American Government and Politics

(3 credit in-person Quest 2 class, Sage Hall 1239, 9:10-10:10 MWF)

**Course Description:** The official course description for this class says simply that you will learn the “organization, principles, and actual working of the American national government in all its branches.”



Politics all too often seems bitter, divisive, selfish, and idiotic. What is the remedy to these disappointments? The best answer is to develop civic knowledge—having informed, engaged, and well-meaning citizens. We need citizens who understand American history and political practices, who think actively about what kind of community they want to live in, and engage in civil, productive dialogue with their fellow citizens to help bring those visions about. An engaged populace can prompt government to do positive things, and hold politicians accountable. This course helps students improve their political knowledge and hone citizenship skills by studying institutions, elections, policies, and more informal arrangements like political parties and interest groups. The course features an ongoing civic engagement project. There is no prerequisite.

This course’s signature question: How do people understand and engage in community life?

## Student Learning Outcomes

- Civic learning: be conversant in the institutions of the national government, like the Constitution (week 2), Congress (week 9), the presidency (week 10), and the federal courts (week 12).
- Civic learning: possess an understanding of how politics works in the US based on its policies (weeks 13 & 14) and elections (week 8), less formal practices and circumstances, like public opinion (week 6) and non-governmental structures like political parties & interest groups (week 7).
- Ethical reasoning: carefully consider your own place in American government, and promote discussion and consideration of citizenship with your peers (Friday exercises and class discussion).
- Civic engagement: apply what you have learned in conjunction with your values to develop well-reasoned stances on contemporary political issues (Friday exercises and class discussion).

## How this Course fits into your College Education

**Quest II:** Quest II continues your orientation to the University and what a college degree provides. It does so by introducing you to a variety of majors and how they might contribute to your personal and career development. Quest II is typically taken with either a Speech course (Comm. 111) or a Writing course (WBIS), whichever you did not take last semester. It includes an ethical reasoning component that prompts you to think analytically and with care about others and the world. Passing this course qualifies you to take Quest III in your second year at UW Oshkosh.

Additionally, you are expected to submit a polished resume, attend a career/job preparedness fair, get tutored on job preparedness by the Career Center and participate in an academic open house. I have scheduled you for participation in the **April 19<sup>th</sup> summer job and internship fair**, but you could attend one of these prior if more relevant to you:

- March 1 internship and career fair
- March 16 Education Career Fair
- April 5 Creating Connections
- April 18 Health Care Career Fair

**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 (in areas of 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. We work on these things in this class by learning about politics, policies, and reflecting on how the public interest may be served by citizen action (AAC&U, <http://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education>)

## Grading

10 chapter worksheets, due end of Thurs. week by week, 10 pts. ea. low score drops	90 points
3 exams	60, 60, 50 points
Friday class exercises (including resume submission)	60 points
Attendance and Participation	<u>40 points each</u>
	400 points

I use a standard scale 93% and above = A, 90-92.9% = A-, 88-89.9 = B+, etc.

**Textbook:** You are expected to purchase *We the People* 13<sup>th</sup> Essentials edition by Ginsberg and coauthors. The book is available either new or used in the University Bookstore. You are encouraged to share the book with another member of the class to defer costs. There are many different editions of this book, but to all be on the same page, you should have this specific edition.

### How Your Week is Structured in this Class:

M	Tu	W	Th	F
	read textbook assignment & news article (Canvas)		topic worksheet due by end of day Thurs.	
lecture— intro to topic (9:10-10:10)		finish topic lecture; topic in text & news (9:10-10:10)		worksheet rvw. & topic activity (9:10-10:10)
	topic worksheet available by Tues. evening in Canvas			

### Graded Course Components

**Topic Worksheets:** After completing your reading of the textbook chapter and listening to lecture, you will complete a worksheet every week, except the first week and the weeks of our tests. These worksheets will be posted in Canvas under the Quiz function by Tuesday evening. Worksheets will be timed, but you may use your book and your notes for the exercise. You have until the end of the day Thursday to complete a worksheet. Talking about chapters and concepts with other students or me can be helpful and is encouraged, but don't copy your answers from someone else, because then you don't gain knowledge on the subject.

**Exams:** Exams will consist of a variety of assessment mechanisms, multiple choice, identification of terms, and essay questions. They will be taken in class, and they are closed book and closed note. Work on tests is required to be your own. Exams will be held on Fridays: March 3<sup>rd</sup>, April 14<sup>th</sup> and May 12<sup>th</sup>. Any missed exam requires documentation of illness or University-sponsored event.

**Attendance/Participation:** I expect you to attend class and I take attendance. I won't worry about one or two unexcused absences, but if you have more than that, I will deduct 4 points from your 40 total for each absence that is unexcused. If you do have a University-recognized excused absence (illness, University event, family emergency, religious holiday etc.), let me know so I can mark you excused. I will ask for documentation with repeated absences.

I expect you to listen intently, and hope that you make comments and ask questions, which help make this a better class. I reward active participation. Please note that you never "lose points" for participating in any meaningful way. You gain points by participating.

**Friday Class Activities:** Each Friday when we don't have a test, we will engage in a structured activity designed to get deeper into a topic and develop your analytical skills. Typically, there will be points attached to these exercises each week; the purpose is to do them and learn in a low stakes environment, so long as you participate and hand in what is required you will do fine.

## Course Calendar: Topics, Activities, Readings, and Assignments

Week of January 30<sup>th</sup> through February 3

topic: course introduction; the citizen and government

reading assignment: *We the People*, chapter 1

week 1 class activity: political perceptions versus reality

Week of February 6<sup>th</sup> through February 10<sup>th</sup>

topics: the US Constitution (and other constitutions)

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 28-30; 39-56

topic worksheet #1 due by the end of the day February 9<sup>th</sup>

week 2 class activity: what is in the Constitution and why?

what is not in the Constitution that might be?

Week of February 13<sup>th</sup> through February 17<sup>th</sup>

topics: federalism

reading assignment: *We the People*, chapter 3

topic worksheet #2 due February 16<sup>th</sup>

**attend academic open houses – meet with representatives of at least three departments**

class activity: what are my own politics like?

February 20<sup>th</sup> through February 24<sup>th</sup>

topics: civil liberties

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 88-98; 104-115

topic worksheet #3 due February 23<sup>rd</sup>

class activity: how free are countries around the world, including the US?

Week of February 27<sup>th</sup> through March 3<sup>rd</sup> (March 1 is an optional review)

topic: civil rights

reading assignment: *We the People*, chapter 5

**Feb 27<sup>th</sup> Jessica King delivers Brandon Colligan Memorial Lecture on Civic Engagement**

**7:00-8:15 PM Reeve 227** (counts as alumni visit for Quest 2)

**first midterm exam March 3<sup>rd</sup> (in class)**

Week of March 6<sup>th</sup> through March 10<sup>th</sup>

topic: public opinion

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 148-168

topic worksheet #4 due March 9<sup>th</sup>

class activity: confirmation bias and fact-checking

Week of March 13<sup>th</sup> through March 17<sup>th</sup>

topic: political parties and interest groups

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 212-224; 232-5; 239-46

topic worksheet #5 due March 16<sup>th</sup>

Career and Professional Development office presents on March 17th

Week of March 20<sup>th</sup> through March 24<sup>th</sup> **Spring Break!**

Week of March 27<sup>th</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>

topic: political participation and elections

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 250-56; 262-9; 277-87

topic worksheet #6 due March 30<sup>th</sup>

**submit final revised resume March 31<sup>st</sup> – up to 10 points possible**

class activity: campaign financing and possible reforms

Week of April 3<sup>rd</sup> through April 7<sup>th</sup>

topic: Congress

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 290-305; 313-317

topic worksheet #7 due April 6<sup>th</sup>

class activity: the 2020 and 2022 elections, weighing evidence against claims

Week of April 10<sup>th</sup> through April 14<sup>th</sup>

topic: presidency

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 332-346; 352-361

**second midterm exam April 14<sup>th</sup> (in class)**

Week of April 17<sup>th</sup> through April 21<sup>st</sup>

topic: the bureaucracy

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 364-371; 379-389

topic worksheet #8 due April 20<sup>th</sup>

class activity: desirable character traits in politicians;

what actions yield authoritarian outcomes and undermine democracy

no class April 19<sup>th</sup> to attend Summer job and Internship fair, between 11 and 1

Week of April 24<sup>th</sup> through April 28<sup>th</sup>

topic: federal courts

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 394-411; 417-424

topic worksheet #9 due April 27<sup>th</sup>

class activity: you be the judge—decide a federal case

Week of May 1<sup>st</sup> through May 5<sup>th</sup>

topic: domestic policy #1-fiscal and monetary policies

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 428-441

topic worksheet #10 due May 4<sup>th</sup>

class activity: reducing the budget deficit—why and how?

Week of May 8<sup>th</sup> through May 12<sup>th</sup>

topic: domestic policy #2—social and health policies

reading assignment: *We the People*, pp. 441-458

**final exam May 12<sup>th</sup> (in class)**

**Supplemental Instruction:** The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides Supplemental Instruction (SI) sessions for this course. SI sessions are content review sessions designed to help you actively engage with the material and your peers. The sessions are facilitated by a peer (SI Leader) who has earned a high grade in the course and has been recommended by the instructor. Sessions are not required, but they are highly recommended. The SI Leader for Political Science 105 Q2 (001C and 003C) is Hector Ortega (ortegh56@uwosh.edu), and sessions will take place in Sage 2218 on Tuesday nights from 6:30 pm - 8:00 pm, beginning the week of Feb. 6.

### **Course and University Policies-The Fine Print!**

**Early Alert** takes place in the fourth or fifth week of the semester. We do this to make students in danger of performing poorly in a class aware of their status and to suggest that you take advantage of additional resources offered to boost your grade.

**Expectations:** Barring a documented medical necessity or a pre-approved University-sanctioned event, tests must be taken on time. All tests must be taken to pass the course. All written work is to be your own, unless you are explicitly instructed to work together. If you are ill or have a University-recognized event, please let me know as soon as possible and I will excuse you from attendance for the relevant date(s), understanding that it is your responsibility to get information from class and do any make-up work. If you would have repeated or prolonged illness, I will ask you for documentation.

**Academic Honesty:** A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Assignments are designed to work on these very things. Taking others' work as your own, having others do work for you or copying their answers, quoting or paraphrasing without attribution, and other forms of academic dishonesty short-circuit the learning process and are not acceptable. Plagiarism is using others' ideas without giving them credit. Most of it is inadvertent; some is intentional; some covers a small amount of text, others involve a whole paper. If you have plagiarized, University rules require me to meet with you, to show you what I believe has occurred and ask you for your explanation. Examples of academic dishonesty and possible sanctions are here (see UWS 14.03 and 14.04): <https://www.uwosh.edu/stuaff/images/Chapter%20UWS%2014.pdf>

**Office Hours:** If you want to meet remotely we can do so on the digital platform Microsoft Teams. Teams is available to all UWO students. Find Teams by clicking on the 3 by 3 set of dots to the immediate left of the UWO banner toward the top left of your Outlook email. When logging into Teams, look closely at the status symbol. *The main point to remember is that I am available to you. Please use the office hours that professors provide. We are here to help.* If you have a schedule conflict with my office hours send me a message and we can work out an alternative time.

**Class Quality and Feedback:** The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom experience, and we take your feedback very 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.

**Disability Accommodations:** It is the policy and practice of UW Oshkosh to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion, please notify me as soon as possible. You are also welcome to contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 920-424-3100 or dean1@uwosh.edu. For more information, visit the Services for Students with Disabilities website at: <http://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/disability-services>.

**Note:** If any major changes are made to this schedule and these policies, I will announce them in a timely manner via your UW Oshkosh email account and make a revised syllabus available.

The following URL contains a description of students' consumer protection rights required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>

**Note to Political Science Majors:** Political Science majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. If you have questions about this requirement, your course schedule, possible internships, or career preparation please reach out to your faculty adviser. Students are encouraged to meet with their faculty advisers at least once per year. If you are unsure who your adviser is, you can check Titanweb or email Ms. Angelee Hammond at [hammond@uwosh.edu](mailto:hammond@uwosh.edu).

**Electronics Policy:** Given that many studies show that those who take notes by hand do better than those who take notes on a computer, you are strongly encouraged to take notes in a notebook by hand. If your computer use seems to be a distraction, I will note it to you, first in a private email and then, if necessary, in class itself. Electronics can be useful devices, but the temptation to use them for distracting things is great, and it is best not to put yourself (and others) in that position.