

## PS 105: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

Fall Semester 2023

Class meets 9:40-11:10, T/TH, Sage 3239

3 CREDITS

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**Course Description:** This course examines the organization, principles and actual working of the American National Government in all its branches.

Through this class we will ask: What are the underlying values, theories of government, and compromises which comprise our public institutions? How do these institutions and the perspectives of those who engage them combine to produce our public policy? How can you, as a citizen-activist, participate effectively in our democracy? To begin answering these questions, we will examine the relationship between citizens and their government in the United States, with an emphasis on the many ways in which individuals participate in the political process. The product of our class will be a deeper understanding of the issues, institutions, and inputs to government, and how we can influence them. As members of a democratic society, we cannot escape the influence of government on our lives, but we can affect how it does so.

Since this is a Quest III course, there is also an experiential component, in which students will attend events hosted by the UW Oshkosh Center for Civic and Community Engagement.

This course has no prerequisites.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

- 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.
- Learn how to effectively influence local, state, national, and international public policy processes
- Improve written and oral communication skills
- Participate in community life through co-curricular activities with a community partner

**Course Readings:** Ginsberg, et al. We The People ESSENTIALS 14th Edition, Norton. Students do NOT need access to Inquisitive for this course.

Additional required readings will be available on Canvas.

**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. (AAC&U;

[http://www.aacu.org/leap/What\\_is\\_liberal\\_education.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/leap/What_is_liberal_education.cfm)) Our approach to liberal education is articulated through the University Studies Program, but is similar to the general education programs of all other four year universities.

**The 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 III course is the last in a series of courses you will take to introduce you to the 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. *This USP course counts in the explore category society as well as your Quest III experience. The course also counts as the introductory course for the Political Science major and minor and the Civic Engagement minor.*

In this course, you are addressing your third Signature Question: **How do people understand and engage in community life?**

Upon completion of Quest III, you will be ready to enroll in Connect, in which you will synthesize the three Signature Questions.

**What is Civic Learning?** 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.

### **Grading Scale and Assignments**

I use a **93/90/87** grading scale in this course (which means that 93 is the cut-point for an A, 90 for an A-, 87 for a B+, etc.). Your grade will be determined by several assignments and exams, detailed as follows:

**Exams: (45%)** Students will have two exams, each worth 22.5% of their course grade. Exams will occur at midsemester and on the last day of class, and will consist of multiple choice, matching, and essay questions. The exam dates will be **October 12-13** and **December 13-15** (both online).

### **Events and Reflections: (20%)**

These are our service learning activities with our community partner: the UWO Center for Civic and Community Engagement. Visit their website or social media for up to date information.

<https://uwosh.edu/community-engagement/> or Facebook/Instagram

*Constitution Day or Film Event Attendance: (2.5%):* Students must attend either the Constitution Day talk (Sept. 27) or the Film (Nov. 8). Details for events are:

Wednesday, September 27, 6:00 pm, Reeve Union Ballroom - Constitution Day Talk

Wednesday, November 8, time and location TBD – Movie and Talkback about: “The Invisible Class.”

Details on topic and speakers on the Center for Civic and Community Engagement page.

*A conversation with former U.S. ambassador Marie Yovanovitch (5%):* Students will attend this speaker. More details on the Ambassador's career:

<https://isd.georgetown.edu/profile/amb-marie-l-yovanovitch/>

Event Details: Thursday, October 19, 6:15 pm, Reeve Union Ballroom

*Fireside Chat: Conversations with Civically Engaged Community Members (5%):* Students will attend **at least two** of these hour-long events. There will be four opportunities to attend these talks, approximately one a month. Events will be advertised on the Center for Community Engagement's social media, on Canvas, and in the course calendar below.

Thursday, September 14, 5:00 pm, Pollock House – Paul Feider

Wednesday, October 4, 5:00 pm, Pollock House – Julie Dumke

Thursday, November 2, 5:00 pm, Pollock House – Angie Lee

Wednesday, November 15, 5:00 pm, Pollock House – speaker TBD

**Please speak with the instructor as soon as possible if you have a conflict with these events—they are required for course completion!**

*Political Partisanship and Ideology Reflection (7.5%):*

-Begin by learning about yourself: complete the following two quizzes, record their results, and comment on how well your beliefs fit with your party identification.

<https://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/?groupID=MXZRM>

<https://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-party-quiz/>

-Then write a paper that answers these questions: You should address your ideology and partisanship in one paragraph and then evaluate how well they connect with one another. Is there a specific area where your ideology and partisanship diverge? How well does your ideology match what you heard during the lecture? How well do their policy goals align with yours? In which areas do you find agreement? Disagreement?

-Your paper should be 2-3 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Grades are determined not by what you believe, but by your ability to answer all questions and make connections between your quiz results and the talk. This paper is due on Canvas on September 29 by midnight.

### **Group project: Increasing student engagement in elections (25%)**

Students will work in groups of 4-5 to produce three deliverables: a background paper on the problem and proposed solution, a fact sheet for use by canvassers to persuade the public, and then present their work to the class and other stakeholders from the Center for Civic and Community Engagement. A brief introduction to each assignment follows. More details will be provided in class.

*Problem identification paper (10%):* This is an 8-10 page paper detailing all the elements an organization would need to understand the problem, proposed solutions, why your solution is the best, and how to overcome resistance to implementing the proposal. Due November 13 by midnight.

*Fact Sheet (10%):* This is a two-sided handout that distills your pitch effectively and persuasively for the public. It should be factually accurate, concise, and visually appealing. Due December 1 by midnight.

*Presentation (5%):* Students will present their solution to the class and stakeholders in 5-10 minutes. Due December 12 in class.

**Attendance and participation: (10%)** The final portion of your grade in this class is your attendance and participation. Attendance is required for all classes. For each class that you miss, you will lose one percent of your total course grade. You are considered absent to class if you show up after I have finished taking the attendance for the day.

Students with documentation are excused from class for all-campus events, other university events for which they are a team member, and medical emergencies. Students with documentation are also excused for jury duty, required military leave, or other activities as mentioned in the Registrar's Office's "Class Attendance Policy", found here:

<https://uwosh.edu/registrar/academic-policies/#:~:text=Class%20Attendance%20Policy,for%20each%20scheduled%20class%20session>

All documentation must be provided within 2 weeks in order for students to be eligible to make up late work.

For participation, I expect you to come to class having completed all assigned readings, prepared to speak up and answer questions, and contribute substantively to class discussions. There is no specific number of times you should talk, but you should make a concerted effort to be active and involved in the class.

**Early Alert:** Early Alert is a program that provides you with an Early Grade Report from faculty. Early Grade Reports will indicate if you have academic performance or attendance issues and specific steps you can take and resources available to help you improve. It is common for students to be unaware of or over-estimate their academic performance in classes so this will help you be aware early on of your progress and provide strategies for success in the classroom. You will receive an email during the 5th week of classes. It is important to read the entire email carefully. Your early alert assignment for this class will be your Vision Wall reflection essay.

**CommunityBased Learning:** "In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life." (High-Impact Practice, AACU, 2011)

The **UW Oshkosh Center for Civic and Community Engagement** is located in Pollock House (across from Albee Hall on Algoma) at 765 Algoma Boulevard. The University Studies Program is located in the same space. Our class will help create programming for the Center and attend their events. In doing so we will work with the Center's Director, Mike Lueder, and student Civic Influencers and Civic Engagement Interns. More information about the Center is available here: <https://uwosh.edu/community-engagement/students-community/>.

**Campus Resources:** In the University Studies Program, we want you to be successful. Below is a list of campus services available to support your success. More information about these resources is available at: <http://www.uwosh.edu/home/resources>

**Center for Academic Resources:** The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free, confidential tutoring for students in most undergraduate classes on campus. CAR is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 102. Check the Tutor List page on CAR's website ([www.uwosh.edu/car](http://www.uwosh.edu/car)) for a list of tutors. If your course is not listed, click on a link to request one, stop by SSC 102 or call 424-2290. To schedule a tutoring session, simply email the tutor, let him/her know what class you are seeking assistance in, and schedule a time to meet.

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help writers understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available. For more information, view their website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter>), call 920-424-1152, email [wcenter@uwosh.edu](mailto:wcenter@uwosh.edu), or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.

**Reading Study Center:** The Reading Study Center is an all-university service whose mission is to facilitate the development of efficient college-level learning strategies in students of all abilities. The center offers strategies for improved textbook study, time management, note-taking, test preparation, and test-taking. For more information, email [readingstudy@uwosh.edu](mailto:readingstudy@uwosh.edu), view the website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter>), visit them in Nursing Ed Room 201, or call 424-1031.

**Polk Library/Information Literacy:** You have been introduced to Information Literacy in your Quest Speaking and Writing courses. As a reminder, Polk Library offers many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Specifically, Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information in University Studies Program classes. Phone: 920-424-7329; email: [mulveyt@uwosh.edu](mailto:mulveyt@uwosh.edu). You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at: [rap@uwosh.edu](mailto:rap@uwosh.edu).

**Late Papers and Make-Up Exams:** You have several papers due in this class. No extensions will be given on this assignment unless you are subject to one of the three excused absence instances above (hospitalization, death in the family, and required school activities) and can give me proof of this absence. All papers are subject to a penalty of one letter grade for each day they are late. You are welcome to turn the project in early if you are unable to on the day the assignment is due.

Please note that computer problems and printer problems are not accepted excuses for late papers. You should always, always, always back up your work and allow plenty of time for printing, and so computer problems and printer problems should not be an issue in handing in your project on time.

I will give a make-up exam in one of the excused absence circumstances above, but also with good reason if you know beforehand, provided you tell me you need a make-up exam *at least one week* in advance of the test. For instance, if you know at the beginning of class you must be out of town for a family event, I will give you a make-up if you tell me a week or more before the test date. The make-up test will contain different questions than the test given in class.

**Office Hours:** Some of my office hours are held on Microsoft Teams (MS Teams). This system is available to all UWO students. Faculty will be available during the hours noted on your syllabus. 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, your instructor may be in a private meeting with a student during office hours, and will mark 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.

**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:

<https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Academic-Honesty.pdf>

*Use of ChatGPT or other AI services:* Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not permitted for any stage or phase of work in this class. All written work submitted for this course must be completed by you, personally. You may not use AI tools to draft your work, even if you edit, revise, or paraphrase it. Use of artificial intelligence (AI) to generate text is strictly prohibited but you may use simple word processing tools to update spelling and grammar in your assignments. Submission of any content generated by AI will be considered a violation of academic integrity, including any AI-generated work that you have summarized or edited. The use of AI tools will be considered cheating and will be subject to the Academic Misconduct policy.

*From USP:* Students are expected to abide by the UW Oshkosh Student Academic and Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures during their Quest III Community Experience. All students will be asked to acknowledge in writing that they have been made aware of these policies. Other policies that may be relevant to the Community Experience in this course are described in the online Quest III Handbook available on the course Canvas site and may include criminal background checks, travel arrangements, and/or expectations for research with human subjects.

**Regrading:** I will be glad to take another look at a paper or test you feel is not graded fairly, with the following conditions: you must speak to me about it during my office hours or by appointment, you must wait 24 hours after the paper or exam is handed back, and you must tell me in writing why you think you deserved more points. The reason for this is that I would like for you to take the paper/exam home and carefully read and think over comments before we talk. If I feel your paper was graded unfairly, I’ll change the grade in your favor, but I also reserve the right to lower your grade upon rereading the paper if, after reevaluation, I think you received too high a grade.

**Reading Assignments:** Reading assignments are given in the course calendar in this syllabus (below). Assigned reading for a class day is given as the “Reading Assignment” below each entry. I expect you to have done the reading for each class ahead of time, and I reserve the right to quiz you

if I feel you are not doing the reading ahead of time. Reading assignments are subject to change, and any change will be announced in class.

**Other policies:** Please turn your cell phone off or onto silent mode before you enter the classroom. If I see you using your cell phone during class time I will warn you the first time, and mark you as absent after that.

Laptops are welcome for note taking in the classroom. However, I expect that if your laptop is out during class, you will be taking notes rather than checking your email, etc. These activities are distracting to those around you and can interfere with the learning of other students. If I notice that things other than note-taking are going on, you will be marked absent. Tests and other in-class assignments will be written in longhand.

Please do not pack up before I say that class is over. If this becomes a problem, pop quizzes or similar will be your new end of class activity.

I check my email often, and I am happy to answer questions via email. However, please use proper grammar, punctuation, and communication when emailing your professor. If you fail to do so, I will ask you to try again. Also, I am not able to answer questions about grades unless you are using your Oshkosh email address. All class announcements will be sent to your Oshkosh address.

*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).

**Accommodations Policy:** It is university policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students who have documented disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Please contact your instructor as soon as possible to discuss any accommodations you might need and provide appropriate documentation.

**Grievance Statement:** 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](mailto: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.

**Disclosure statement:** “Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>.”

**Note:** If substantive changes are made in course syllabus, such as changes in schedule or assignments, notification will be provided in a timely manner and a revised syllabus made available.

## Course Calendar:

- Week 1: TH, Sept 7: Class introduction and syllabus
- Reading assignment: course syllabus
  - **Campus Partner Visit: Mike Lueder**
- Week 2: T, Sept 12: Defining politics and influencing government
- Reading assignment: Libby, Introduction and U.S. Constitution
- TH, Sept 14: Politics, Americans, and Values
- Reading assignment: *We the People*, 1
  - **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend two this semester)**
- Week 3: T, Sept 19: The Founding and Constitution
- Reading assignment: *We the People*, 2
- TH, Sept 21: Federalism
- Reading Assignment: *We the People*, 3
- Week 4: T, Sept 26: Applying federalism: how does activism fit?
- Reading assignment: Libby, 2
- W, Sept 27: Constitution Day Speaker – 6pm Reeve Ballroom (this or film Nov 8)**
- TH, Sept 28: Civil Liberties
- Reading assignment: *We the People*, 4
- F, Sept 29: Ideology Papers due by midnight**
- Week 5: T, Oct 3: Finding our issue
- Reading assignment: Libby, 3
- W, Oct 4: Fireside Chat 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend two this semester)**
- TH, Oct 5: Civil Rights
- Reading Assignment: *We the People*, 5
- Week 6: T, Oct 10: Congress
- Reading Assignment: *We the People*, 10
- TH, Oct 12: A quick look at lawmaking (in the states)
- Reading assignment: Libby, 1
  - **Exam One: Online 12:01am Oct 12 - 11:59pm Oct 13**
- Week 7: T, Oct 17: Researching your issue
- Reading assignment: Libby, 4
- TH, Oct 19: Public Opinion
- Reading assignment: *We the People*, 6
  - **Ambassador Yovanovitch Talk: 6:15pm, Reeve Ballroom (attendance required)**
- Week 8: T, Oct 24: The Presidency
- Reading assignment: *We the People*, 11
- TH, Oct 26: The Bureaucracy
- Reading assignment: *We the People*, 12
- Week 9: T, Oct 31: Federal Courts
- Reading assignment: *We the People*, 13
- TH, Nov 2: Educational materials
- Reading assignment: Libby, 9



- **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend two this semester)**

Week 10: T, Nov 7: Media and Political Information  
 ▪ Reading assignment: *We the People*, 7  
**W, Nov 8: Movie and Talkback: The Invisible Class (attend this or Con. Day)**  
 TH, Nov 9: Media campaigns  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Libby, 10

Week 11: **M, Nov 13: Problem identification Papers due (by midnight)**  
 T, Nov 14: Creating your fact sheet  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Libby, 5  
**W, Nov 15: Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend two this semester)**  
 TH, Nov 16: Branding your issue  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Libby, 6  
 ▪ **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend one this semester)**

Week 12: T, Nov 21: Domestic policy  
 ▪ Reading assignment: *We the People*, 14  
**TH, Nov 23: Thanksgiving Break**

Week 13: T, Nov 28: Parties and Interest Groups  
 ▪ Reading assignment: *We the People*, 8  
 TH, Nov 30: Cyberspace and tech advocacy  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Libby, 12  
 ▪ **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend one this semester)**  
**F, Dec 1: Fact Sheet due by midnight**

Week 14: T, Dec 5: Campaigns and Elections  
 ▪ Reading assignment: *We the People*, 9  
 TH, Dec 7: Effective Presentations  
 ▪ Reading assignment: your background paper and fact sheet

Week 15: T, Dec 12: Presentations and Test Review  
 ▪ Reading assignment: Bring questions to the review session!  
 TH, Dec 14: No Class – take second exam online  
**Exam Period Wednesday, Dec 13 12pm - Friday, Dec 15 12pm**