

**American Federal Government (POS 2041)
Fall 2017**

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Office hours: Monday 10:45-11:45am, 1:00-2:00pm, Thursday 10:40-11:40am

Course Description

This course provides an overview of American politics: its political culture, the attitudes and political behavior of its citizens, the operation of its key institutions, and its enduring debates. We will cover the three main branches of government — executive, legislative, and judicial — and other important political actors. We will be concerned with several themes, especially the nature and distribution of political power and the role of elections.

Among the questions we will address are: Who has power in American politics and how is that power used? We will consider this question with reference to citizens, elected officials, appointed officials in the bureaucracy, and unelected power-holders outside the government such as journalists and lobbyists. What political beliefs shape citizens' participation in the political process? Do "special interest" groups wield too much power? What informal and formal powers do the three branches have? What factors limit their ability to achieve their goals? How do the three branches work together or against each other? To what extent do electoral concerns motivate elected officials?

The course will provide students with a basic understanding of the main institutions and actors in American politics. The course offers a foundation and preparation for upper-level courses in the sub-field of American politics.

Although this is a large lecture course, students are still encouraged to participate by asking questions. Talking to your neighbor during the lecture does not count as participation, however. Attendance is mandatory. Material will be covered in the lectures that is not in the course readings. Material in the films that will be shown will also be fair game for the exams.

Textbooks and Readings

There are three required books for the course. The first two are available at the University

of Florida Bookstore (at the Hub). The third is a Kindle book available on Amazon.

1. Edwards, Wattenberg, and Howell, Government in America 2016 Election Update Revel Edition (Pearson, 2016, 17th edition). This book is a digital edition (e-book), for which you buy an access code. You can buy the access code at the UF Bookstore or else by following this link:

<https://console.pearson.com/enrollment/ocqvjg>

When you register using the access code, you can also purchase a hard copy of the book.

2. Richard Ellis, Debating Reform (CQ Press, 2016, 3rd edition) (available at UF Bookstore)

3. Kindle book that costs \$4.99 on Amazon (you need an Amazon account to use the Kindle app)

John Sides and Henry Farrell, eds., The Science of Trump: Explaining the Rise of An Unlikely Candidate.

The link to the book is https://www.amazon.com/Science-Trump-Explaining-Unlikely-Candidate-ebook/dp/B01IL9DTG8/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1469140835&sr=8-1&keywords=monkey+cage+trump#nav-subnav

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Download Kindle for iPhone, iPad, or iPod Touch:

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=201244840>

Grades/Assignments

There will be three exams, which will be multiple choice tests. On exam day, students will be asked to remove hats, caps, and sunglasses and turn off their cell phones. Initiating or receiving outside communication using a phone or other device during an exam constitutes receipt of outside information and will result in failure on the exam. Absences from exams will be excused only with written and verifiable documentation of illness, death of an IMMEDIATE family member, or a conflicting University or legal obligation. Study guides will go out to the list serve 2 weeks before each exam.

You must also complete three short (2 to 3 page) papers. Information on how to do this is included at the end of this syllabus. Papers are to be handed in to your discussion section

leader.

I assume that all students have access to a computer that meets the UF minimum standards for students. When writing papers, make sure to use the spell-check function on your computer and PROOFREAD the entire document. Numerous sources on grammar are available, e.g. Turabian's A Manual for Writers of Term Papers or Student's Guide for Writing College Papers. Papers that contain numerous spelling or grammatical errors will receive a lower grade than they would have otherwise. Late papers will be penalized unless the student has a valid reason for handing a given paper in after the deadline.

Plagiarism (using someone else's ideas without assigning credit to the source) is a serious offense. Students must abide by the University of Florida's Student Code of Conduct. Cheating on exams and plagiarism violate the standards of the university and will be addressed seriously.

Canvas

This course is NOT on Canvas. You should follow the syllabus for assignments. Grades on tests will be sent out in a manner to be explained later, one which preserves student privacy. Grades on papers will be communicated to you by your discussion section leader who is responsible for grading the papers. I will communicate through the class list serve regarding grades, class cancellations, changes in the syllabus, and other issues. Once you register for the class you will automatically be on the list serve.

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

First Exam: 34 points

Second Exam: 47 points

Third Exam: 43 points

Short Papers (3): 12 points each, 36 points total

Attendance – Discussion Section: 5 points total

165 points total possible

A	148	A-	143-147	B+	139-142	B	132-138
B-	127-131	C+	122-126	C	115-121	C-	110-114
D+	106-109	D	99-105	D-	94-98	E	93 and below

August 21: First Day of Class/Introduction

August 23 and 28: Introducing Government in America

Assignment: Edwards textbook (Government in America), Chapter 1

August 30, September 6: The Constitution

Assignment: Edwards text, Chapter 2

September 18: Federalism

Assignment: Edwards text, Chapter 3

September 20: Civil Liberties

Assignment: Edwards text, Chapter 4

September 25: Civil Rights

Assignment: Edwards text, Chapter 5

SEPTEMBER 27: FIRST EXAM (In regular classroom): on Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Edwards only. Nothing from Ellis debate reader.

October 2: Public Opinion and Political Action

Assignment: Edwards text, Chapter 6

October 9: Campaigns and Voting Behavior

Assignment:

1. Edwards text, chapter 9
2. Sides and Farrell Science of Trump text, chapters 4, 5, 6, 15, 24 (“Riding the Anti-Immigrant Wave,” “Authoritarians, or Populists?,” “Gambling on Trump,” “Who Speaks for Republicans?” and “Pining for a Whiter America”)

October 11 and 16: Political Parties and Interest Groups

Assignment:

1. Edwards chapters 8 and 10
2. Sides and Farrell Science of Trump text, chapter 12 (“The Republican Party Loses Control”)

October 18, 23: Congress

Assignment: Edwards chapter 11

OCTOBER 25: SECOND EXAM (In regular classroom): All assigned material since first exam (Edwards and Sides and Farrell texts, but nothing from Ellis debate reader).

October 30, November 1 and 6: Presidency

Assignment: Edwards, chapter 12

November 8, 13: Federal Courts

Assignment: Edwards, chapter 15

November 15: Bureaucracy:

Assignment: Edwards, Chapter 14

November 20, 27: Media

Assignment:

1. Edwards, Chapter 7
2. Sides and Farrell Science of Trump text, chapter 17 (“The Media Giveth and the Media Taketh Away”)

November 29, December 4: Public Policy

Assignment: Edwards Chapters 16 and Chapter 17

THIRD EXAM: December 6 in classroom during regular class time: All assigned material since second exam. Nothing from Ellis debate reader.

YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION:

Discussion sections will meet 10 times over the course of the semester, during the block for which you signed up. All readings come from the Ellis text. Below are the assigned readings for each discussion section.

August 31/September 1: Constitution, Chapter 1

September 7/8: Federalism, Chapter 4

September 21/22: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Chapters 5 and 6

September 28/29: Participation, Chapters 7 and 8

NO SECTION October 5/6: HOMECOMING

October 12/13: Political Parties, Chapter 10

October 19/20: NO SECTION (Richard Spencer visit)

October 26/27: Congress, Chapters 12 and 15

November 2/3: President, Chapter 16 and 17

November 9/10: NO SECTION, VETERANS DAY HOLIDAY ON THE 10th

November 16/17: Court, Chapter 19 and Bureaucracy, Chapter 18

On the next page is information about your discussion sections (section leaders and their email addresses, etc.). Check your course registration to make sure I have listed the correct room.

Section 1F30, Thursday Period 4 (meets in LEI 0104): TA is Alex Smith
(alexpsmith@ufl.edu)

Section 1F17, Thursday, Period 5 (meets in MAT 0105): TA is Alex Smith
(alexpsmith@ufl.edu)

Section 15GE, Thursday, Period 6 (meets in LEI 0104): TA is Stephen Phillips
(scphillips@ufl.edu)

Section 0184, Thursday, Period 7 (meets in MAT 0151): TA is Stephen Phillips
(scphillips@ufl.edu)

Section 15GD, Friday, Period 3 (meets in MAT 0102): TA is Katie Widner
(kwidner2013@ufl.edu)

Section 0187, Friday, Period 3 (meets in MAT 0151): TA is James Fahey
(jamesfahey@ufl.edu)

Section 4251, Friday, Period 4 (meets in MAT 0151): TA is James Fahey
(jamesfahey@ufl.edu)

Section 7863, Friday, Period 5 (meets in MAT 0151): TA is Katie Widner
(kwidner2013@ufl.edu)

INFORMATION ON SHORT PAPERS FOR POS 2041

You must write a paper on the three paper topics listed on the next page. Please hand the papers in at the beginning of discussion section to your TA. Note the due dates for each paper, although you are welcome to hand each paper in earlier than the posted due date. If for some reason you must email the paper, email it to your TA and ask for confirmation that it was indeed received.

Each paper should be 2-3 pages long DOUBLE SPACED. Papers should not be shorter than 2 pages and not longer than 3 pages. You should have margins of 1.25 inches on each side (left, right, top and bottom). There should be a separate cover page with your name, UF email address, UF ID number, and TA's name. (The cover page does not count toward the page limit).

The topics come from the assigned readings in the Ellis debate reader. Each chapter is a debate between two authors (these can be scholars, or public interest groups, etc.). No additional reading is necessary and for these papers, it is not desirable to bring in outside readings. Keep it simple and just focus on the assigned reading.

The papers are intended to be critical essays. This means that you should evaluate the evidence and arguments provided by each author. Make sure to address the arguments of BOTH authors for each topic. YOU MUST TAKE A SIDE IN YOUR PAPER, stating and explaining which author you believe has the better arguments and why.

If you quote directly from the reading, just note which of the two authors in the reading the quote comes from and cite after the quotation as (Ellis, p. ---).

The next page lists the paper topics. You can hand in papers BEFORE the due date listed if you want.

1. Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Chapter 5

Should Congress pass the Democracy Restoration Act restoring the right to vote in federal elections for people with criminal records? Due October 12/13 at beginning of discussion section.

2. Congress, Chapter 15

Should Senate Rule XXII be amended so that filibusters can be ended by a majority vote? Due November 2/3 at the beginning of discussion section.

3. Presidency, Chapter 16 or 17

You can write on EITHER of the following two questions:

Should the Electoral College be abolished or preserved? OR

Should the Twenty-Second Amendment be repealed?

Due November 16/17 at the beginning of discussion section.