

POLA 2100-05: American Government

Instructor

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Office Location

Norman Mayer 302

Office Hours

Tue & Thur 11:00-12:00,
and by appointment

Course Information for Fall 2023

CRN: 36645

Date & Time: Tuesday & Thursday 9:30 AM – 10:45 PM

Classroom: Newcomb Hall 115

Course Overview

Harold Lasswell, a prominent American political scientist, defined politics as “who gets what, when, and how.” The structure of the American political system, as well as the participants who operate in that system and the values those participants hold, have a large impact on how that definition takes shape. Particularly important in the case of the United States is the prominent role elections play in helping to decide “who gets what, when, and how.”

This course will introduce students to American government, the structures and participants that make it work, and the role of elections in binding citizens to their government and in controlling the behavior of elected (and un-elected) officials. Students will leave this course with not only an understanding of American government but also with an understanding of the tools necessary for them to be responsible citizens, informed voters, and critical consumers of political information.

Learning Outcomes

This course will help students to acquire a basic knowledge of the political institutions and processes of the government of the United States, including knowledge of the forces that drive political movements, public policy, and public law in the United States. Upon completion of this course, students will have demonstrated the following learning outcomes: 1) demonstrate substantive knowledge about the institutions and processes of American government; 2) articulate and evaluate theories of behavior among actors in the American political system; and 3) understand the means by which ordinary citizens can come to know about and to influence the American government.

Required Text

- Matthew R. Kerbel. 2024. *American Government: Your Voice, Your Future*. Seventh edition. St. Paul, MN: Academic Media Solutions.
 - Available in the Tulane Bookstore
 - Print ISBN: 978-1-9555543-79-8
 - Purchase online here: <https://www.textbookmedia.com/social-sciences-humanities/political-science/american-government-7e/>

Assignments

There will be five components to the grade in this course. Students will complete weekly quizzes to provide continuous assessment; the top eight grades will be counted toward the quiz grade. There will be three non-cumulative exams throughout the semester and a cumulative final exam at the end of the term. The format of the exams will be discussed shortly before the first one. These components will contribute to the final course grade as follows:

Assignment	Date Due	Points
Quizzes	Weekly	80 Points
Exam 1	September 14	100 Points
Exam 2	October 17	100 Points
Exam 3	November 14	100 Points
Final Exam	December 13	120 Points
TOTAL		500 TOTAL POINTS

Course Policies

- **Format:** Classes will primarily consist of lecture. However, I will frequently interrupt lecture to call on students to answer questions and give opinions. Students are also encouraged to stop me for questions or comments or to discuss current events that relate to the day's topic.
- **Grading:** This course will be graded according to Tulane's plus/minus grading system. Grades will be available by seeing me before or after class or during office hours. I will not provide grades over email or by phone.

A	93-100	A-	90-92.99	B+	87-89.99
B	83-86.99	B-	80-82.99	C+	77-79.99
C	73-76.99	C-	70-72.99	D+	67-69.99
D	63-66.99	D-	60-62.99	F	59.99 and below

- **Expectations:** Students are expected to attend each class, to be on time, and to have all course materials read prior to the first class in each unit. Please turn off all electronic devices during class. Laptop computers are not permitted in class; please turn them off and put them away before class starts. All assignments must be completed for a student to pass the course. Requests for regrading any exam or assignment must be made no later than one week after it has been returned. No make-ups will be allowed except in very serious circumstances (I reserve the right to determine what is "very serious"). Course incompletes will only be allowed for circumstances in which the student is physically unable to complete the course; the student must otherwise be passing the course in order to be granted an incomplete.
- **Accommodations:** If you have any kind of special circumstances, such as a disability, illness, or handicap, or if you are involved with a university activity that requires you to miss class, let me know as soon as possible. This information is confidential. All students attending Tulane University with documented disabilities are eligible and encouraged to apply for services with the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility. Please see me or go to <https://accessibility.tulane.edu> for more information. Students needing accommodations must provide me a copy of the accommodation granted by the GCSA as soon as possible.

- **Academic Integrity:** As described in the Tulane University Code of Academic Conduct, students are expected to uphold the honor and integrity of the academic process. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating on an exam (including providing answers to or receiving answers from another student), plagiarism (the use of another author's words or arguments without attribution), and unauthorized collaboration (working with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of any course requirement). If a student commits any violation of academic integrity, I will pursue disciplinary action as outlined in the Code of Academic Conduct.
- **Academic Freedom:** In any classroom situation that includes discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may disagree with each other at times, or with me. These differences can help enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where students (and I) will be encouraged to think and learn. In any event, grades will not be adversely affected by any beliefs expressed in class or in assignments.
- **Note regarding syllabus dates:** Please take into consideration the dates of exams and quizzes when scheduling other activities, travel, etc. This applies especially to course requirements that occur immediately before or after holidays. Note also that the final exam date is set by the registrar. Students must take the exam on this date; exceptions can only be granted by the Dean of Newcomb Tulane College. Finally, please note the university-designated makeup dates: October 14, 15 and November 11, 12. These dates will be used for makeup classes in the event of a university closure.
- **Religious Accommodation Policy:** https://registrar.tulane.edu/Academic_Calendar (bottom of the page)
- **Title IX Policy / Support:** <https://allin.tulane.edu/>
- **Code of Student Conduct:** <https://conduct.tulane.edu/code-conduct>
- **Compliance with COVID-19 Regulations:** <https://tulane.edu/covid-19/health-strategies>

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
	August 22	Introduction to the class / distribute syllabus	
1	August 24, 29	Constitution	Chapter 2
2	Aug. 31, Sept. 5	Federalism	Chapter 2 cont.
3	September 7	Public Opinion	Chapter 3, Sect. 4.3
4	September 12	Media	Chapter 5
	September 14	EXAM 1	
5	September 19, 21	Political Parties	Chapter 6
6	September 26, 28	Interest Groups	Chapter 8
7	October 3	Participation	Sect. 4.4, 4.8
	<i>October 5</i>	<i>No class - Fall Break</i>	
8	October 10, 12	Campaigns & Elections	Chapter 7, Sect 4.9
	October 17	EXAM 2	
9	October 19, 24	Congress	Chapter 9
10	October 26, 31	Presidency	Chapter 10
11	November 2	Bureaucracy	Chapter 11
12	November 7, 9	Judiciary	Chapter 12
	November 14	EXAM 3	
13	November 16, 28	Civil Rights	Chapter 13
	<i>November 21, 23</i>	<i>No class - Thanksgiving</i>	
14	Nov. 30, Dec. 5	Civil Liberties	Chapter 14
15	December 7	Public Policy	Chapter 15, 16
	December 13	FINAL EXAM: 4:00-7:00 PM	

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Quiz Instructions

Weekly quizzes will be administered through Canvas and must be taken using the LockDown Browser. They will become available at the times listed below ('Take After') and then become inaccessible at the beginning of the following week ('Take Before'). Please take the quiz sometime during this window – you will not be allowed to make up missed quizzes. You can take the quiz at any time during this window, but once you begin the quiz you will have **8 minutes** to complete the quiz and you will only be allowed one attempt.

Please take the practice quiz as soon as possible and contact me if you have any trouble accessing the quizzes on Canvas or downloading/using the LockDown Browser.

Quiz	Unit	Take after	Take Before
	<i>Practice Quiz</i>	Tuesday, August 22, 10:45 AM	
1	Constitution	Tuesday, August 29, 10:45 AM	Tuesday, August 31, 9:30 AM
2	Federalism	Tuesday, September 5, 10:45 AM	Thursday, September 7, 9:30 AM
3	Public Opinion	Thursday, September 7, 10:45 AM	Tuesday, September 12, 9:30 AM
5	Political Parties	Thursday, September 21, 10:45 AM	Tuesday, September 26, 9:30 AM
6	Interest Groups	Thursday, September 28, 10:45 AM	Tuesday, October 3, 9:30 AM
7	Participation	Tuesday, October 3, 10:45 AM	Tuesday, October 10, 9:30 AM
9	Congress	Tuesday, October 24, 10:45 AM	Thursday, October 26, 9:30 AM
10	Presidency	Tuesday, October 31, 10:45 AM	Thursday, November 2, 9:30 AM
11	Bureaucracy	Thursday, November 2, 10:45 AM	Tuesday, November 7, 9:30 AM
13	Civil Rights	Tuesday, November 28, 10:45 AM	Thursday, November 30, 9:30 AM
14	Civil Liberties	Tuesday, December 5, 10:45 AM	Thursday, December 7, 9:30 AM