

American Federal Government

POS 2041, UF Online Program

Spring 2025

January 13, 2025 – April 23, 2025

Instructor: Juliana Mucci

Office Hours: T/R 2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M. (or by appt.)

[Calendly Link](#) (Also available on Canvas Homepage)

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Course Description:

In this course, students will investigate how the national government is structured and how the American constitutional republic operates. It covers the philosophical and historical foundations of American government, including but not limited to the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and all its Amendments, and the Federalist Papers. The course examines the branches of government and the government's laws, policies, and programs. It also examines the ways in which citizens participate in their government and the ways their government responds to citizens.

The course will address questions such as: How does government work in the United States? How do the three branches of government interact with the public and each other? What is a democracy, and how does the United States fit into this framework? What are some suggestions for how to better our institutions? Students will engage in thinking through these questions through a combination of lectures, civic discussions, and readings. Ultimately, students should leave with a better understanding of how to think critically about politics and government, how to understand our political institutions, and how to engage in civic life.

Note: Students are required to check Canvas Announcements and their UF email regularly to ensure they maintain the most current version of the syllabus and assignment deadlines.

Required Texts

- *The Struggle for Democracy: 2020 Presidential Election Edition* by Greenberg et al.
 - Available via UF All Access (ISBN-13: 9780136901051)
 - In the course schedule below, this book will be referred to as “TSD”
- All other readings will be distributed through Canvas.

Course Objectives & Civic Literacy Requirement:

By the end of the course, students will be able to do the following, per the state's Civic Literacy Competencies (as required by [Florida Statute 1007.25](#)):

- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and practices of the U.S.'s constitutional republic.

- Demonstrate knowledge of the nation’s founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and its Amendments, and the Federalist Papers.
- Demonstrate knowledge of landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the American Federal Government and its impact on law and society.
- Demonstrate an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates.
- Demonstrate the ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

General Education

This course fulfills a Social and Behavioral Sciences (S) General Education requirement. Please note that a minimum grade of C (73%) is required to obtain the general education credit. More information on general education requirements can be found [here](#).

How the Class Works

Modules:

This course is organized into modules, with each week containing one module. Modules contain lecture videos, readings, and assignments. Each module contains one weekly assignment. Some modules throughout the semester will also be discussion weeks (please see the course schedule below for which weeks these are). During the weeks in which discussions are held, students should familiarize themselves with the course material for that week *before* attending a discussion. Lastly, as this course is asynchronous, students are free to complete the assigned readings, watch the lecture videos, and do their assignments whenever and at whatever pace suits them, but all assignments for each week are due on **Sunday by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time**.

Assignment Due Dates:

As noted above, all weekly assignments are due by 11:59 P.M. Eastern Time on Sunday at the conclusion of each module. Exams are different. Each exam is only offered for one day (Exam 1: February 7, Exam 2: March 14, Exam 3: April 23), and the entire exam must be taken at once, in a single sitting. If you are not available on the day of the exam due to an excused absence, you will be given a retake in the same format (see make-up policy directly below). Please communicate with me in advance if you know that you will be unavailable on an exam day.

Make-Up Policy

Makeup exams will be given in the same format as the original exam for students with excused absences. **There will be no makeup exams for unexcused absences.** Excused absences require documentation from a physician, government agency, court, university, or other documentation on a case-by-case basis.

If a student is seeking an excused absence for a missed assignment or discussion, the documentation must indicate that the student is unable to perform their coursework **for the**

entire week. Students with unexcused absences from discussion will receive a zero for that week. Late work without an excused absence will not be accepted.

Grades

- Attendance in discussion sections: 5%
- Participation in discussion sections: 10%
- Quizzes: 10%
- Writing Assignments: 15%
- Current Event Reactions: 15%
- Exam 1: 15%
- Exam 2: 15%
- Exam 3: 15%

Attendance and Participation in Discussion Sections:

Discussion sections will be held both as part of this course and in conjunction with the Department of History through the Bob Graham Center, hosted by Dr. Teresa Cornacchione. **Students must attend 7 (seven) discussions via Zoom throughout the semester. Students may choose to attend the course discussion sections, the discussion sections with the Bob Graham Center, or a combination thereof, to meet the required amount.**

Please be aware that **this course's synchronous discussion component is a requirement of the state of Florida as per section 1007.25(4)(b), Florida Statutes.** The addition of synchronous discussions into this asynchronous course is a requirement of the state and university. More information on Civic Literacy Requirements can be found here: <https://undergrad.aa.ufl.edu/for-students/civic-literacy-requirement/faq/>.

The schedule for these discussions can be found in this syllabus in the schedule below, in the Canvas calendar, and in the Modules that coincide with a discussion week. For each discussion week that I host, there will be an option to attend on Tuesday at 7:00 P.M. Eastern Time and on Thursday at 10:00 A.M. Eastern Time. These two discussions will be identical (that is, students will not receive credit for attending both in one week). The reason I hold two per discussion week is to ensure that students have a choice over when to attend. Once scheduled, Dr. Cornacchione's discussion options will be added to the Canvas page. As a reminder, students may attend a combination of my discussions and Dr. Cornacchione's discussions to reach their required 7 for the semester. For more information on discussion options, please be sure to regularly check the Canvas Announcements!

Students are required to actively use their audio or chat feature in each discussion section and are required to stay on Zoom for the duration of the discussion. Video is welcomed, but not required. Student comments during discussions must be respectful and stay relevant to the topic, based on readings and other materials.

Quizzes

Timed quizzes will be assigned throughout the semester. Quizzes will cover assigned readings and lectures. There are currently 5 (five) quizzes, but the total number of quizzes is subject to change at any time.

Writing Assignments:

There will be 2 (two) essays throughout the semester. Each writing assignment will require that students respond to a prompt in that week's module. Essays must be between 1.5 to 2 pages (450 – 600 words) double-spaced in length and submitted as a Microsoft Word or PDF document in 12-point font, Times New Roman (or another comparable font) with 1-inch margins. UF students can download the entire Microsoft Office suite, including Microsoft Word, free of charge at this link: <https://it.ufl.edu/services/gatorcloud-microsoftoffice-online>.

In addition to these essays, there will be 4 (four) current event reactions. These are short (150 – 300 words) analyses of current events through the lens of the course. Here is a helpful guide on how to select reputable news sources: <https://libguides.ucmerced.edu/news/reputable>.

Also worth noting is that UF students can get free online *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Economist* subscriptions at this link: <https://businesslibrary.uflib.ufl.edu/wsj-nyt-economist>.

Exams

There will be 3 (three) equally weighted exams throughout the course. The exams will consist of multiple-choice questions. The exams are *not* cumulative. A schedule of the exams and what content they will cover can be found below:

- Exam 1 (February 7): Weeks 1 – 4
- Exam 2 (March 14): Weeks 5 – 9
- Exam 3 (April 23): Weeks 11 – 14

UF's Grading Policy

This course will follow UF's grading policy, which can be found [here](#). The following cutoffs will be used for grades:

93.0 – 100% (A)	83.0 – 86.9% (B)	73.0 – 76.9% (C)	63.0 – 66.9% (D)
90.0 – 92.9% (A-)	80.0 – 82.9% (B-)	70.0 – 72.9% (C-)	60.0 – 62.9% (D+)
87.0 – 89.9% (B+)	77.0 – 79.9% (C+)	67.0 – 69.9% (D+)	<60% (F)

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback professionally and respectfully is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email that they will receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Resources

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to share with me. If you need accommodation, please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Health & Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know is struggling with any crisis including, but not limited to, gender, sexual, racial, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Florida resources available. Some of these include:

- U Matter, We Care: 352-392-1575, umatter@ufl.edu
- RESPECT – UF Division of Student Affairs: respect.ufsa@ufl.edu
- Counseling and Wellness Center: 352-392-1575, counseling@ufl.edu (available 24/7)
- Alachua County Crisis Center's Crisis Line: 352-264-6789
- Student Health Care Center: 352-392-1161, shcc@ufl.edu
- Multicultural & Diversity Affairs: 352-392-1217, multicultural@ufl.edu
- UFPD Office of Victim Services: 352-392-1111, police@ufl.edu
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: 352-733-0111

Academic Resources

The resources listed below are not exhaustive of all the academic resources that are available to students, but these encapsulate those that are helpful for students taking courses online, those seeking library support, or those looking for help with writing, tutoring, and general study skills:

- E-Learning Technical Support: 352-392-4357 (select option 2), learning-support@ufl.edu
- Library Support: <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>.
- Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138, <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>.
- Academic Resources: provides services like tutoring, <https://academicresources.clas.ufl.edu>.

Academic Integrity

Every University of Florida student is subject to the following Honor Pledge:

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

Most obviously, this means cheating on exams and plagiarism on written work is unacceptable. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to submitting entire posts or portions of posts written by others and/or artificial intelligence (e.g. Bing, Bard, Llama, ChatGPT, etc.), copying text without quotations and proper citation, or paraphrasing text without proper citation. In

addition to harming your professional career, and especially your grade, academic dishonesty will ultimately destroy your ability to learn from this class.

In other words, *you* must be the one producing all written assignments (not AI), and you must appropriately reference all source material, including the assigned texts. If you do not do this, you are committing academic dishonesty, which is the grounds for a failing grade. Honor code violations often occur when students feel rushed and overwhelmed. If this happens, do not panic, and instead reach out to me so we can address the situation together. Please note, however, that you are more than welcome to use spelling and grammar aids such as Grammarly!

Class Recordings

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures; however, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Please note that this means that any in-class discussions cannot be recorded. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. More information about in-class recording can be found [here](#).

Schedule

Week	Module Topic	Readings	Weekly Assignment
Week 1: January 13 – 18	Welcome to POS2041! Syllabus Overview & Democracy and American Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus • “Welcome to the Course” Canvas Page • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 1 • <i>The Declaration of Independence</i> 	<u>Quiz 1</u>
Week 2: January 21 – 24	The Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 2 • <i>Federalist 10 & 51</i> • Scalia Reading • Marshall Reading 	<u>Quiz 2</u> <u>Discussion Week #1</u>
Week 3: January 27 – 31	Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 3 • Introduction of <i>Marijuana Federalism</i>, Adler 	<u>Current Event Reaction 1</u>
Week 4: February 3 – 7	The Structural Foundations of American Government & Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 4 	<u>Exam 1:</u> February 7
Week 5: February 10 – 14	Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 11 • <i>Article I of the Constitution</i> • Gallagher Reading • Cillizza Reading 	<u>Essay 1</u> <u>Discussion Week #2</u>
Week 6: February 17 – 21	The Presidency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 12 • <i>Article II of the Constitution</i> • Klein Reading 	<u>Quiz 3</u>

Week 7: February 24 – 28	The Executive Branch (the Bureaucracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 13 • Schulman Reading 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Quiz 4</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discussion Week #3</u></p>
Week 8: March 3 – 7	The Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 14 • <i>Article III of the Constitution</i> • Bazelon, et al. Reading 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Current Event</u> <u>Reaction 2</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discussion Week #4</u></p>
Week 9: March 10 – 14	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapters 15 & 16 • <i>The Bill of Rights (Amendments 1 – 10 of Constitution)</i> 	<u>Exam 2:</u> March 14
Week 10: March 17 – 21	** SPRING BREAK, NO WORK (YAY)! **		
Week 11: March 24 – 28	Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 9 • Cohen Reading • Pew Research Center Report • Greenblatt Reading 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Current Event</u> <u>Reaction 3</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discussion Week #5</u></p>
Week 12: March 31 – April 4	Voting, Campaigns, & Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 10 • Drutman Reading 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Quiz 5</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discussion Week #6</u></p>
Week 13: April 7 – 11	Public Opinion & The News Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 5 • <i>TSD</i> Chapter 6 • Gorvett Reading 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Current Event</u> <u>Reaction 4</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Discussion Week #7</u></p>

Week 14: April 14 – 18	Interest Groups & Social Movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>TSD</i> Chapter 7• <i>TSD</i> Chapter 8• Finger Reading	<u>Essay 2</u>
Week 15: April 21 – 23	Where To Go From Here	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• See materials on the Canvas page for Module 15!	<u>Exam 3:</u> April 23

Last updated: October 29, 2024