

POL 101
Introduction to American Government
Spring 2016
Section 3

Basic Information

Instructor: Dr. Ondercin

Office: 233 Deupree

E-mail: ondercin@olemiss.edu

Office Phone: 915-7218

Office hours: Tuesday and Thursdays 9:00-10:30.

Teaching Assistant: Daniel Fudge

Teaching Assistant Office: 136 Deupree

Teaching Assistant Office Hours: Wednesday 9:00-12:00 Teaching Assistant E-mail: dj-fudge@go.olemiss.edu

Class information: 1:00-2:15, Bishop 107

You are welcome to meet with me about the class, or your professional development at any point during the semester. To facilitate meeting with me, please go to <https://ondercin.youcanbook.me/> and select an available time. You must do this at least 12 hours before you wish to meet with me.

I'm usually not hard to find. I check my e-mail multiple times a day. I will try to respond to your message as soon as possible, but if you do not receive an instant reply don't panic.

We also have teaching assistant for this class. The teaching assistant will be holding office hours that are open, no appointment necessary.

A note about email communications: Please do not hesitate to email me with any questions or concerns you may have. However, please be professional in your emails. Just like a written letter, be sure to open your email with an appropriate greeting like, "Dear Dr. Ondercin", or "Professor Ondercin." Please make sure to identify who you are and what class you are taking from me in the body of the e-mail. Before sending an email, please make sure you cannot easily get the answer from another source (i.e. from the syllabus or other class documents). In addition, in many cases, I may request you meet with me to discuss your question rather than engage in a series of back-and-forth emails.

Table 1: Important Dates

Examination 1	February 16 th
Last Day to Withdrawal	March 3 rd
Examination 2	March 30 th
Examination 3	May 11 th at Noon

Overview of the Course

This is an introductory course to the U.S. political system. The central goal of the course is to arm you with the necessary skills and knowledge to be consumers of the political world. We will do this through an examination of the fundamentals of the U.S. political system. However, our exploration of the U.S. political system will stretch beyond the rote memorization of names and dates. Rather, my goal is to have you think critically about U.S. politics and grapple with the difficult questions that face the United States.

Our focus will be on the national government of the United States. This is an introductory course so we will briefly cover a wide variety of topics. We will start with the basic foundations of U.S. politics, including the formation of the Constitution, civil liberties, and civil rights. In this discussion, we will start to uncover the complexities and contradictions that are part of the U.S. political system. Then we will explore the connections between the citizenry and the government. This section of the course will examine contemporary participation with government through campaigns, elections, voting, the media, and interest groups. Finally, we will investigate the structure and operation of the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

Learning Objectives

- Through classroom learning and discussions, assigned readings, and exams, students will develop an understanding of the complexity and contradictions of the U.S. political system.
- Through classroom learning and discussion, assigned readings, and exams, students will acquire the skills and knowledge to effectively participate in the U.S. political system and apply what they have learned in this class to real life debates and decisions.

What You Can Expect of the Course

Since this is an introductory course, we will spend much of the time introducing new ideas through lecture and then discussing them as a class. The general format will be a mix of lecture and discussion. At all times, my aim will be to help you achieve a deep understanding of the material.

Two things are very important to the success of this class: 1) your participation in every class; and 2) that you have completed the readings **before** the class in which we will discuss them. We have a large class, but I want you to feel free to speak up and ask questions at any point during class. I have found that class is much more interesting for everyone if students actively participate in the process. You can actively participate in class by asking questions, participating in class discussions, and generally coming to class prepared (i.e. having read the material) and ready to learn. It is important that you respect the diverse views of your fellow students and utilize common courtesies during class.

Books and Required Readings

You paid a course fee for this class. The course fee covers the cost of the required course materials for this class. You will click on links embedded in your Blackboard course to access course materials. Once students click on the links embedded in your Blackboard course an account is automatically created for them. No registration code or manual registration. As part of this access you will have access to both the eBook and InQuizitive. When accessing the link, you will be prompted to accept the terms. Once they accept the terms, they are all set and will have access to all the course materials.

If you please contact the publisher's Helpdesk at: support.wwnorton.com with any questions or concerns they may have.

In addition to the textbook there will be several supplemental readings. These are all posted on Blackboard.

Course Policies

Attendance: The class meets twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I expect you to be there at **all times**. You are paying far too much money for college not to attend. Moreover, I assume that since you are here to learn, you will want to come to class so you can do so. (If you are not here to learn, you should be asking yourself far bigger questions about why you are here!)

I do not grade on attendance. However, I will be taking attendance as part of the University's Freshman Absence-Based Intervention (FABI) program. Attendance will be taken in this class via a scanner. You must bring your id to class, failure to bring your id will result in an absence. Results will be reported on midterm and final grades. While attendance is not graded, you will not do well in this course if you do not regularly attend (and come to class prepared). I do not lecture directly from the book, and thus missing class means missing material that will be on the exams. More importantly, it means missing important contextual information that highlights the concepts we are examining. I am not your parent, and thus

will not hound you about missing class. I will simply give you the grade that you earned. To incentivize attendance, I will award extra credit at the end of the semester based on attendance. See extra credit policy for information about earning extra credit through attendance.

Attendance will be taken daily using the attendance scanners in the classrooms. Students should scan their student id card before class. The scanners will not record your attendance after the class has started, thus if you are late for class you will not be counted as present. You must bring your student id with you, there will be no alternative method for recording your attendance. Scanning any student id other than your own student id is an act of academic dishonesty. Additionally, scanning your id before class and leaving class is also an act of academic dishonesty. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the university.

The university requires us to verify your attendance at least once during the first two weeks of the semester for financial aid and other administrative purposes. Students whose attendance is not verified after a certain period will be dropped from the class. If attendance is not verified, then a student will be dropped from the course and any financial aid will be adjusted accordingly. Please see <http://olemiss.edu/gotoclass> for more information.

Common Courtesy and Respect: I expect you to observe common courtesy when you are in class. Please come on time – lateness is very rude! It is important to remember we are adults in an academic setting and we must remember to respect not only each other but also the free exchange of ideas. We will discuss controversial political topics in this class and I hope we will have open discussions in which we share our differing opinions. As such, please be respectful to your fellow classmates and to the professor when they are speaking. A partial list of disrespectful activities includes: side conversations during lecture and discussion, sleeping, reading the newspaper, playing with cell phones, text messaging, listening to iPods, coming to class late, leaving class early, and other generally disturbing activities. Failure to follow these basic guidelines for common courtesy could result in the loss of extra credit points, (see section on extra credit).

I do not teach in your bedroom; therefore, please do not sleep in my classroom. I expect you to be mentally present as well as physically present in class; this is the best way to ensure that you learn the course material.

Electronics: Please **TURN OFF CELL PHONES!** I do not want to see them or hear them. **NO LAPTOPS or TABLETS ALLOWED!** Laptops will only be allowed if you have a written excuse from a physician. You will be required to sit in the first two rows of class.

Grading

Grades for the class will be based on online activities and three exams.

I know class is more fun for everyone when students do well, so I will devote my effort this term to helping you make this happen. I'll meet you halfway: I'll plan the best class sessions I can, administer fair and reasonable exams, create interesting learning activities and make myself available to you for help when you need it. You, however, will need to come to class, do the readings, study, participate in class, and ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT. You do your part, I'll do mine, and hopefully everyone will end up happy and successful!

On-line Activities: You will be asked to complete regular on-line activities through In-Quizitive. These activities are designed to be completed after you have done the assigned readings. All assignments are listed in the course outline below. All assignments are due at 5:00 PM the day they are listed in the course outline. Pay careful attention to the course schedule for when the on-line assignments are due. There is no ability to make up missed assignments or extend the deadline for these assignments.

Exams: There will be three exams in the class. Each exam is worth 30% of your final grade. The exams are not cumulative and will only cover material from that section of the class. Each exam will consist primarily of multiple choice questions, but may also include true/false and matching questions. The exams will cover material from lectures, the textbook, class discussions, and any other assigned readings. They will also include items in which I ask you to identify a key term and discuss its significance. The bulk of the exam, however, will consist of questions in which I ask you to think about course material and apply what you have learned. Questions are not going to ask you to regurgitate details, but rather will focus on using what you learned.

Students need to supply their own scantrons. We will be using the purple scantrons (form #: 16485). I will not grade exams completed on the wrong type of scantron.

Make-up exams will be given only in the case of a documented illness or emergency. It is at the instructor's discretion to determine what is appropriate documentation and reason for a make-up exam. I reserve the right to give essay exams for make-ups.

If you have accommodations through the Office of Disability Services, please provide me with the documentation as soon as possible. I will work to provide you the best accommodations, but this needs to be completed at least two weeks before any exam.

Extra Credit: There are two ways to earn extra credit in the class. The first is through attendance and proper class room behavior. Every student starts off with 5 extra credit points that will be added to their final grade in the class. You can lose these points two different ways. After your second absence, I will deduct 1 point for every absence. If you miss two classes that means you will get 5 points added to your final grade. If you miss 3 classes you get 4 points. If you miss 7 or more classes you will not receive any extra points for attendance. If you are caught scanning in and leaving class or having a fellow

Table 2: Grade Distribution

A	100 – 93
A–	92–90
B+	89–87
B	86–83
B–	82–80
C+	79–77
C	76–73
C–	72–70
D	69–60
F	59 and below

classmate scan in for you, your ability to receive any extra credit via attendance is automatically forfeited. This is also an act of academic dishonesty and will be reported to the university. Additionally, you will lose points when you fail to abide by basic classroom courtesy and rules. This includes but is not limited to using cell phones or laptops in class, sleeping in class, or carrying on disruptive conversations during class. One point extra credit point will be deducted for every instance I observe. The second method to earn extra created is through improvement on exams. Details about this will be discussed in class. These will be the only extra credit opportunities available during the semester, so don't ask or beg for any other type.

Please note: Departmental policy is that Political Science majors need to make a C in a class for it to count toward the major.

Tentative Course Outline¹

Week 1 Introduction to Class and Fundamentals of Government

Tuesday, January 23th:

- Read the syllabus!
- On-line Assignment: How to Use Inquisitive [will have until 1/31 to complete].

Thursday, January 26th:

- Chapter 1 We the People
- The Submerged State: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/20/opinion/our-hidden-government-benefits.html>
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 1 [will have until 1/31 to complete].

¹Any changes to this schedule will be announced verbally in class. It is the student's responsibility to note changes and adhere to the new schedule.

Week 2 The Birth of a New Nation: Revolution and the Constitution
Tuesday, January 31st:

- Chapter 2 (pages 38-46) We the People
- On-line Assignment: How to Read Charts and Graphs

Thursday, February 2nd:

- Chapter 2 (pages 46-75) We the People
- On-line Assignments: Chapter 2

Week 3 Balancing Power Between the National Government and State Governments
Tuesday, February 7th:

- Chapter 3 (pages 76-92) We the People

Thursday, February 9th:

- Chapter 3 (pages 92-113) We the People
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 3.

Week 4 Exam Week
Tuesday, February 14th:

- review for exam

Thursday, February 16th:

- Exam

Week 5 Civil Liberties
Tuesday, February 21st:

- Chapter 4 We the People (pages 114-136)

Thursday, February 23rd:

- Chapter 4 We the People (pages 137-155)
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 4

Week 6 Civil Rights
Tuesday, February 28th:

- Chapter 5 We the People (pages 156-177)

Thursday, March 2nd:

- Chapter 5 We the People (pages 178-201)
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 5

Week 7 Public Opinion

Tuesday, March 7th:

- Chapter 6 We the People

Thursday, March 9th:

- “Poll Dancing: This Worth Knowing about Public Opinion” by Kirby Goidel and Keith Gaddie
- Pew Political Knowledge Quiz: <http://www.pewresearch.org/quiz/the-news-iq-quiz/>
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 6

Week 8 Spring Break

Week 9 Political Participation, Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Tuesday, March 21st:

- Chapter 8 We the People
- “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital” by Robert Putnam
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 8

Thursday, March 23rd:

- Chapter 10 We the People
- “9 media Myths about Independent Voters about Independent Voters, Debunked” by Samara Klar and Yanna Krupnikov
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 10

Week 10 Exam Week

Tuesday, March 28th:

- Review for Exam

Thursday, March 30th:

- Exam

Week 11 Media

Tuesday, April 4th:

- Chapter 7 We the People

Thursday, April 6th:

- The Sports Centerization of Political Journalism <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2012/01/thesportscenterization-of-political-journalism/250882/>
- Finders guide to facts http://www.npr.org/2016/12/11/505154631/a-finders-guide-to-facts?utm_campaign=storyshare&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_medium=social
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 7

Week 12 Parties and Interest Groups

Tuesday, April 11th:

- Chapter 9 We the People
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 9

Thursday, April 13th:

- Chapter 11 We the People
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 11

Week 13 Legislative Branch

Tuesday, April 18th:

- Chapter 12 We the People (pages 470-492)
- Crile, George. 1975. "The Best Congressman." Harper's Magazine, January 1975, pages 60-66.

Thursday, April 20th:

- Chapter 12 We the People (pages 492-517)
- "This is the best explanation of gerrymandering you will ever see" by Christopher Ingraham
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 12

Week 14 Executive Branch

Tuesday, April 25th:

- Chapter 13 We the People
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 13

Thursday, April 27th:

- Chapter 14 We the People
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 14

Week 15 Judicial Branch

Tuesday, May 2nd

- Chapter 15 We the People
- On-line Assignment: Chapter 15

Thursday, May 4th

- Review for Exam