

## *Course Syllabus*

---

### **Course Information**

P SC 1113-200

American Federal Government

Summer 2017: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday 8:00am-10:00am

Copeland Hall, 0246

---

### **Contact Information**

Instructor: Matthew Geras

Office: 106 Monnet Hall

Email: [mgeras@ou.edu](mailto:mgeras@ou.edu)

Office Hours: Wednesday 10:00am-12:00pm and by appointment

If possible contact me through email opposed to Canvas. My policy is to respond to emails within 24 hours Monday through Friday and within 48 hours on the weekends. Normally you will get a response from me much quicker, but if you have not heard back from me within this timeframe, assume that I did not get your original email and please try contacting me again.

### **Course Description**

The purpose of this course is to serve as an introduction to the actors, institutions, and processes of American government. Since this is an introductory course, we will cover many topics such as the Constitution, Congress, the Presidency, Voting and Elections, and Public Opinion. While we will not go into deep detail in any one particular topic, this class will provide you with the skills necessary to understand how our government works, and the ability to think critically and logically about its functions. We will also spend time linking current events in the U.S. Government with political science theories and historical trends. In addition, students will engage topics and issues related to Civic Engagement, Issue Engagement, and Data Engagement.

**The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.**

---

### **Objectives**

- Students will be able to provide examples of and apply important theoretical and scholarly approaches to understanding state and national institutional behavior, citizen involvement and interaction between citizens and institutions of government.
- Students will be able to analyze and appreciate historical trends in development of government institutions and their constitutional foundations.
- Students will be able to identify, describe, and analyze various mechanisms of citizen political involvement.

### **Required Textbook**

*The Logic of American Politics, 7th Edition*, Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck

The book is also available for rent and as an ebook.

The dates for specific readings are detailed below. You will find it useful to have the reading done prior to the class where it is discussed. Students who expect to read all of the material the night before an exam will most likely receive a poor grade.

---

### **Assignments and Grading**

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following breakdown:

30% = Two Exams

25% = Four Take-Home Quizzes

15% = Final Policy Paper

10% = Who Represents Me Assignment

10% = Participation & In-Class Assignments

5% = Attendance

5% = Current Event Briefing

#### Exams (30%)

There will be two in-class, non-cumulative exams each worth 15% of your grade for a total of 30%. **The exams will be on July 17 and August 1.** Makeup exams will only be given with proper documentation. Missing an exam without documentation will result in a zero and you will not have the opportunity to take the exam. If you are missing class for an excused absence you must let me know in advance. All students missing class for excused OU related activities must turn in the appropriate documentation from your organization with the excused dates. If you miss an exam due to illness, you must provide proper documentation and let me know within 24 hours of the missed exam.

#### Take-Home Quizzes (25%)

There will be four take-home quizzes worth a total of 25% of your final grade. You will be given two to four days to complete each quiz outside of class. While you are allowed to reference the assigned textbook and your class notes when taking the quizzes, **you are not allowed to consult with other people.** Although quizzes are not held during class time, they are still meant to assess your individual comprehension of the assigned readings and class discussions. If you are not present on the day a quiz is distributed, it is your responsibility to make arrangements to obtain a copy of the quiz from me.

#### Final Policy Paper (15%)

For this assignment, you will be asked to identify a public policy problem at either the national, state, or local level, for example, economic inequality has increased over the past few decades which has had adverse effects on the country's standard of living, or Oklahoma's budget deficit has caused the state to make significant budget cuts to other areas of government spending. After identifying your policy problem, you will write 3 to 4 page paper analyzing why you think this problem is important and then offer a potential solution to that problem. More information on this assignment can be found on the corresponding grading rubric. Submit your completed paper to Canvas.

### Who Represents Me? (10%)

This assignment requires you to investigate who represents you at different levels of government. After identifying your representatives, you will report your findings and analyze how well you feel represented in a short 2 to 3 page paper. More information on this assignment can be found on the corresponding grading rubric. Submit your completed assignment to Canvas.

### Participation & In-Class Assignments (10%)

In addition to simply showing up to class, you will be expected to participate in class activities. This will include several in-class assignments, which will mostly take the form of group work, short writing assignments, and class discussions. This portion of your grade will assess the quantity and quality of your participation in class.

### Attendance (5%)

Since one goal of this class is for it to be driven largely by in-class activities, showing up is necessary. Students are allowed **one** no questions asked absence. After that, excuses will be dealt with on a case by case basis in accordance with the university's attendance policies.

### Current Event Briefing (5%)

Each day we will spend the first 5 to 10 minutes of class discussing current events. Over the next month, each student will be responsible for leading our current events discussion during one class period. This will involve finding a current event article about public policy or government from a newspaper or an online edition of a credible newspaper (ex: New York Times, Washington Post, LA Times, The Oklahoman, Tulsa World, Norman Transcript, etc.) and then reporting this story to the class on the day you lead the current events portion of class. You will also submit a one paragraph summary of this article in class on the day you present.

### **Grading Policy**

The grading scale for this class is as follows: A = 100-90; B = 89-80; C = 79-70; D = 69-60; F = anything less than 60. Grades will only be rounded up if they are within 0.5 of the next higher letter grade. There will be no deviation from this policy. Requests to "boost" grades will be ignored. I will not discuss grades via email. If you have questions about your grade, please meet with me during office hours or schedule an appointment that works for your schedule.

---

### **Course & Instructor Policies:**

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. While you will be allowed to use your laptops in class to take notes or complete in-class assignments, I reserve the right to ban the use of electronic devices when their use becomes inappropriate or a distraction to you or your classmates. You will be held responsible for all material in the textbook and in lectures, even if you miss a class. It is your responsibility to remain aware of when assignments are due and to be sure they are completed on time. I recommend that you plan ahead when working on assignments or studying for an examination to avoid unnecessary problems.

### **Cheating:**

Cheating on exams, plagiarism on term papers, forging another's name on the attendance sheet, and forging documentation that excuses an absence will result in penalties in accordance with

university policies. If you have not already, I encourage each of you to peruse the Provost's website. You may be surprised to see how many things constitute academic dishonesty.  
[http://integrity.ou.edu/students\\_guide.html](http://integrity.ou.edu/students_guide.html)

## I DO NOT TOLERATE CHEATING

### **Students with Disabilities:**

The University of Oklahoma is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities. Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact the instructor personally as soon as possible to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services prior to receiving accommodations in this course. The Office of Disability Services is located in Goddard Health Center, Suite 166, phone 405-325-3852 or TDD only 405-325-4173.

### **Religious Holidays:**

It is the policy of the University to excuse the absences of students that result from religious observances and to provide without penalty for the rescheduling of examinations and additional required classwork that may fall on religious holidays. Please see the instructor immediately if you will need to miss class any time during this semester.

### **Adjustments for Pregnancy/Childbirth Related Issues:**

Should you need modifications or adjustments to your course requirements because of documented pregnancy-related or childbirth-related issues, please contact me as soon as possible to discuss. Generally, modifications will be made where medically necessary and similar in scope to accommodations based on temporary disability. Please see [www.ou.edu/content/eoo/faqs/pregnancy-faqs.html](http://www.ou.edu/content/eoo/faqs/pregnancy-faqs.html) for commonly asked questions.

### **Title IX Resources:**

For any concerns regarding gender-based discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking, or intimate partner violence, the University offers a variety of resources, including advocates on-call 24-7, counseling services, mutual no contact orders, scheduling adjustments, and disciplinary sanctions against the perpetrator. Please contact the Sexual Misconduct Office at 405-325-2215 (8-5, M-F) or the Sexual Assault Response Team at 405-615-0013 (24-7) to learn more or to report an incident.

## Course Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
7/5	Introduction & Syllabus		
7/6	Logic of American Gov.	Ch. 1	
7/7	Constitution & Founding	Ch. 2	
7/10	Congress	Ch. 6	Quiz 1
7/11	Congress		
7/12	Presidency	Ch. 7	Paper Topic Selection
7/13	Judiciary	Ch. 9	
7/14	Catchup Day/Review for Exam 1		Quiz 2
7/17	<b>Exam 1</b>		
7/18	Civil Rights	Ch. 4	
7/19	Civil Rights		
7/20	Civil Liberties	Ch. 5	
7/21	Public Opinion	Ch. 10	Who Represents Me
7/24	Campaigns & Elections	Ch. 11	Quiz 3
7/25	Political Parties	Ch. 12	
7/26	Political Parties		
7/27	Interest Groups	Ch. 13	
7/28	News Media	Ch. 14	
7/31	Catchup Day/Review for Exam 2		Quiz 4
8/1	<b>Exam 2</b>		Final Paper

**\*Please note this is a tentative schedule and that I can make changes at my discretion.**