

Introduction to American Federal Government

PSC 1113-200

July 12th- August 5th, 2021

Instructor: John D. Rackey

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	Class Hours	Office Hours*
Day	MTWRF	MW
Time	10:30am-12:40pm	2-3:00pm
Place	MWF-Zoom TR-Dale Hall 112	HRC D122/Zoom

*Office Hours will be held at the times listed or by appointment.

OU Catalog Description:

American Federal Government: A study of the structure, organization and powers of the executive, legislative and judicial branches including relationships between state and national governments. Emphasis upon political processes and popular government; elections, political parties, pressure groups, voting behavior.

Required Materials

Krutz, Glen & Waskiewicz, Sylvie, **American Government**. OpenStax College: Rice University.
<https://openstax.org/details/american-government>

* Additional readings and materials will be posted to the Canvas page for the course. Please pay attention to Canvas Announcements to keep up with the additional readings and materials needed for upcoming classes and topics.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to identify 1) the motivations of the Founders in drafting the Constitution and why we have the system we do today, 2) the importance of (and differences between) civil liberties and civil rights, 3) the role of individuals and groups in the governing process, and 4) the checks and balances separating the three branches of government.

Grading Policy

Students will be evaluated based upon the assignments listed below. Assignments must be completed by the due date indicated on the syllabus. All assignment submitted past the due date will have 10 points deducted for each day past the deadline. Additionally, tests will not be given outside of class time unless scheduled with the instructor beforehand. Grades will not be discussed via e-mail, and all questions about grades must be handled during office hours. Note that it is your responsibility to contact me if you foresee or experience a problem that will affect an assignment.

A: 89.5-100% B: 79.5-89%
C: 69.5-79% D: 59.5-69%
F: 0-59.4%

Assessment	Weight
Attendance & Participation	15%
Representation Assignment	15%
Reading Quizzes	15%
Civil Rights Essay	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%

Attendance & Participation (15%)

Because of the condensed format of this course, attendance every day is CRITICAL to your performance. Attendance will be taken each class meeting. You are allowed 2 absences without deduction from your grade. Additionally, students will be expected to be active participants in class and their participation will be monitored. In order to receive full participation during Zoom class periods your camera must be turned on when instructed unless exceptions are addressed individually beforehand.

Civil Rights Essay (15%)

For this essay you will reflect on two speeches delivered by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and a poem by Langston Hughes. After watching/reading the assigned content you will reflect upon the many strides the United States has made when it comes to civil rights as well as your own thoughts about areas for future improvement. More details will be given in class/on Canvas. **DUE 7/16.**

Representation Assignment (15%)

There are many layers of government in the United States, and people are represented differently at each level. The purpose of this assignment is to familiarize students with their representatives at the state, and national level. Students will be tasked with identifying 6 people that represent them (State Representative, State Senator, Governor, U.S. Congressman, two U.S. Senators). After each of the six representatives have been identified students will pick one of those representatives to write a constituent letter to about a specific policy issue of their choice. More details will be given in class/on Canvas. **DUE 7/30.**

Reading Quizzes (15%)

There will be four quizzes during the course. The quizzes will cover material read for the class periods leading up to the day of the quiz. These quizzes must be completed at the time they are assigned and can only be made up with a valid University absence. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that students are attending class, paying attention, and reading the assigned materials. The lowest of the four quiz scores will be dropped.

Exams (40%)

There will be two exams in this class, each worth 20% of the final grade. The first will be given at the end of week 2 and will cover the first half of the class. The second will be given on the final day of class and will cover the second half of the class. THE FINAL EXAM WILL NOT BE CUMULATIVE.

Policies and Resources

Expectations

Students are expected to read the material, think about it, come to class and participate.

Adhering to the following policies will help us meet those expectations:

1. Come to class. Students with better attendance find the class more enjoyable and more useful.
2. We will maintain an environment that reduces distractions. No cell phones visible in class. They need to be on silent, not on vibrate, in a bag or otherwise off the desk/lap.
3. Laptops are fine for notetaking in class. But if I suspect based on your behavior that you're doing something other than taking notes, you will automatically lose participation points for the day.

Etiquette

Your actions in the classroom should take others into consideration. A major part of this course involves interaction amongst each other through discussions. If you haven't noticed lately, politics can be a contentious or controversial topic. I encourage spirited debate and discussion. But I also assume that this course can be conducted in the spirit of full academic freedom with civility and courtesy. Any member of this course may express any serious idea, point of view, and/or partake in a serious learning environment without disrespect. Racist, sexist, ethnocentric, and other rude behavior are not acceptable in the classroom. Students who exhibit rude and/or unacceptable behavior will be removed by the instructor, to be reinstated only after meeting with the instructor to discuss and amend their inappropriate behavior.

Avoid language that can be misconstrued as, or is, explicitly offensive. In class discussions and online discussions are not to be treated like Facebook walls or YouTube comment sections.

Diversity and Inclusion

In an ideal world, science would be objective. However, much of science is subjective and is historically built on a small subset of privileged voices. In this class, we will make an effort to read work from a diverse group of scholars, but limits still exist on this diversity. I acknowledge that it is possible that there may be both overt and covert biases in the material due to the lens with which it was written, even though the material is primarily of a social scientific nature. Integrating a diverse set of experiences is important for a more comprehensive understanding of social science. Please contact me (in person or electronically) if you have any suggestions to improve the quality of the course materials.

Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences, and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official OU records, please let me know.

If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is an excellent resource: <https://www.ou.edu/diversity>

Learning about diverse perspectives and identities is, and should be, an ongoing and continuing process. Meaning, mistakes will likely be made. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it so the situation can be appropriately addressed and corrected. As a participant in course discussions, you should also strive to honor the voices, experiences, and backgrounds of your classmates.

Religious Holidays Policy

It is the policy of the University to excuse 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. Students who plan to observe a holiday should notify me immediately to make appropriate arrangements.

Reasonable Accommodation Policy

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 them from fully demonstrating their abilities should contact me personally at the beginning of the semester, so we can discuss accommodations. The university requires students requesting accommodations go through the Accessibility and Disability Resource Center prior to receiving accommodations. For more information, please visit: <http://www.ou.edu/drc>

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic misconduct includes plagiarism, cheating on exams, improper collaboration, and fraud (such as submitting the same assignment for different classes or fabricating sources).

1. Plagiarism includes
 - a. Copying words and presenting them as your own by failing to use quotation marks or block quote format
 - i. even when a source is cited, and
 - ii. even when you change them slightly from the original.
 - b. Taking ideas, information, and arguments without citing the source
 - i. even when you express them in your own words.
2. You are encouraged to read and familiarize yourself with the university's guide to academic integrity <https://integrity.ou.edu/students.html> which I will adhere to.
3. **TLDR: I have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty including cheating and plagiarism. Students who engage in those practices will receive an immediate zero on the assignment in question and will be sanctioned according to university policy.**

Emergency Information and Course Continuity

In the event of severe weather or other emergency, the campus might be closed and classes canceled. Official closures and delays are announced on OU website. Assignments will still be due at the designated time, unless told otherwise.

REMEMBER: *I want each of my courses to be a collaborative enterprise between myself and all of you, moving together toward an intellectual goal. But an instructor can be no more than a resource. Whether you effectively learn and grow intellectually through this course depends, ultimately, on your own commitment and efforts. My goal in this class is to provide you with a structure that can help you direct your own learning. Everything else is up to you.*

Assignment & Reading Schedule

Date	Topic	Assignment/Reading
Module 1		
M: 07/12	Introduction	Syllabus; Chapter 1
T: 07/13	The Founding and the Constitution	Chapter 2
W: 07/14	Federalism; Essay #1 Info	Chapter 3; RQ #1
R: 07/15	Civil Rights Lecture and Activity	Chapter 5
F: 07/16	Civil Liberties Lecture	Chapter 4
		Due: Civ. Rights Essay
Module 2		
M: 07/19	Public Opinion Lecture	Chapter 6; RQ #2
T: 07/20	Public Opinion Activity; Campaigns Activity	
W: 07/21	Elections Lecture; Elections-Guest Speaker	Chapter 7
R: 07/22	Faith in Elections; Exam Review	
F: 07/23	Midterm Exam (on Canvas)-No Lecture	
Module 3		
M: 07/26	The Media; Essay #2 Info	Chapter 8
T: 07/27	Media Activity; Interest Groups Lecture	Chapter 10
W: 07/28	Lobbying-Guest Speaker; Political Parties Lecture	RQ #3
R: 07/29	Political Parties Activities	Chapter 9
F: 07/30	Congress Lecture	Chapter 11
		Due: Rep. Essay
Module 4		
M: 08/02	Presidency Lecture	Chapter 12; RQ #4
T: 08/03	Presidency Activity; Courts Activity	
W: 08/04	Courts Lecture; Course Wrap Up	Chapter 13
R: 08/05	Review (via Zoom) & Final Exam (on Canvas)	

I reserve the right to alter readings/assignments throughout the course of the semester.