

# POLI 2051 Introduction to American Government

Fall 2021

2:30-3:20pm, Mondays, Wednesdays, and  
Fridays

Location: Coates 127

Instructor: Max Magaña

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Virtual Office Hours: 3:30-4:30pm, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

Office: Stubbs 332, Department of Political Science

Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.

Pericles, statesman in Ancient Greece

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended to introduce students to the fundamentals of American government and politics. Topics are divided into four broad categories. The first category focuses on the ideological, historical, socioeconomic, and constitutional contexts of politics in the United States. The second category focuses on political processes, including interest groups, political parties, and elections. The third category focuses on the institutions of government (executive, legislative, and judicial branches) that create and implement public policies. The fourth category focuses on the public, which includes the media, public opinion, and voting. While this course focuses on national level politics, it also includes some aspects of state and local governments.

## CORE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

The core curriculum requirement in political science is designed to communicate an understanding of the nature of governments and of the actions of people concerning government and public policy. Such a requirement is intended to inform students in order that they may function more effectively as responsible citizens in their community, state, and nation.

## Required Text:

‡ 21 & R Q Q R U . D U H Q / 21 American Government: Roots and Reform  
2020 Presidential Election Edition, 14<sup>th</sup> edition. (Pearson).

## GRADING POLICIES

- 1) Attendance and participation (10%)
- 2) Seven Quizzes (30%)
- 3) First mid-term examination (15%)
- 4) Second mid-term examination (15%)
- 5) Final examination (30%)

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A+	B+	C+	D+	F
	87- 89	77- 79	67- 69	<60
A	B	C	D	
93- 96	83- 86	73- 76	63- 66	
A-	B-	C-	D-	
90- 92	80- 82	70- 72	60- 62	

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Classes consist of lectures on the reading material assigned for each session. Lectures are intended to provide an in-depth discussion of the material, to elaborate on and clarify the reading material. Participation from students is very important and will count toward the final grade. Some material and lectures might be difficult, so feel free to ask questions in class. Quality participation is especially important if you are struggling because it indicates that you are putting in the effort to learn. Moreover, feel free to email me and stop by during office hours. The general philosophy is that students who put in work and effort will be rewarded.

Final grades are based on attendance/participation, quizzes, and examinations for a total of 100 points.

**Quizzes** There will be 7 quizzes, which will be taken on Moodle. Quizzes will be held after we complete topics in class, so the quiz dates might change depending on our lectures. Quizzes will be open for 24 hours on Fridays and you will be given only one attempt. There are absolutely no makeups for missed quizzes. I reserve the right to change into in-class format if necessary. The lowest 2 quiz scores will be dropped.

Exams: The course consists of two class exams and an inclass final exam. The class exams will not be cumulative and could consist of a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and the syllabus, as well as on the reading calendar. Please review Student Evaluation and Policies section and reach out to me if you have any confusion.

## Course Schedule

Note that the schedule is subject to change and any changes will be noted in the “**Announcements**” section on Moodle.

### PART I: FOUNDATION OF GOVERNMENT

Week 1 (08/23) Introduction; American Roots, Context, & Culture.

Week 2 (08/30) The Constitution Quiz 1 (Friday, 09/03)

Week 3 (09/06) The Federal System.; Civil Liberties

Week 4 (09/13) Civil Liberties & Civil Rights. Quiz 2 (09/17)

Week 5 (09/20) Review. First Midterm Examination

### PART II: INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

Week 6 (09/27) Congress.

Week 7 (10/04) Congress; The President Quiz 3 (10/08)

Week 8 (10/11) Bureaucracy; Judiciary Quiz 4 (10/15)

### PART III POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Week 9 (10/18) Political Party

Week 10 (10/25) Campaign, election, and voting. Quiz 5 (10/29)

Week 11 (11/01) The News Media.

Week 12 (11/08) Review. Second Midterm Exam

Week 13 (11/15) Public Opinion. Quiz 6 (11/19)

PART IV: PUBLIC POLICY

Week 14 (11/22) Social and Economic Policy.

Week 15 (11/29) Foreign and Defense Policy. Review of Quiz 7 (12/03)

Week 16 (12/09) Final Exam. 12:30- 2:30 pm

## How to Contact Me

The best way to contact me is Moodle, but you can reach me through my email. I will normally respond within 24 hours during the normal workweek. I will also hold virtual office hours after class, but I invite you to speak with me immediately after class if that works for you. If you would like to set up a specific time to talk, email me and we can schedule a time that is mutually convenient. The takeaway I wish to convey to you here is that I will try my best to accommodate you.

## STUDENT EVALUATION AND POLICIES

Academic Integrity: Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the LSU Code of Student Conduct <https://www.lsu.edu/sas/students/codeofconduct.php>

circumstances. The absence must be a university-excused absence (P22), and advanced notice (if possible—e.g., if not an accident) must be given. Makeup exams granted under these circumstances will only be made available for 48 hours after their scheduled time. I recognize that there are exceptions to this 48-hour rule (e.g., injury or illness), and I will accommodate accordingly.

Accommodations