

**SOUTHERN POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF ARTS SCIENCES**  
**SOCIAL & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

**American Government**  
**POLS 1101**  
**(3) Credit Hours**

**Spring 08**  
**MWF 9-9:50AM**  
**Bldg/Room: Atrium (J) 101**

Instructor: Dr. Rhonda Whitfield

Office: Atrium (J) Building, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, RM J319

Hours: MWF 12 -1pm  
And By Appointment

E-mail: [rwhitfie@spsu.edu](mailto:rwhitfie@spsu.edu)

**Information outlined in this syllabus is subject to change at the instructor's discretion. Any changes will be announced during class and students are responsible for learning of such changes.**

**Course Description:** This course is designed to provide students with an in-depth understanding of government and politics in the United States. The focus of the course will be primarily at the national level; however, attention will also be given to state and local politics.

We will examine the constitutional framework, federalism, public opinion, the media, political parties, interest groups, the three branches of government including the bureaucracy, and other components of American politics. Upon completion, students should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts and participatory processes of the American political system.

**Learning Outcomes:**

- Define democracy and note variations in democratic systems, such as direct democracy and pluralist, elitist, and participatory theories of democracy.
- Illustrate the basic organization of the system as laid out in the U.S. Constitution.
- Describe the powers allocated to each branch, explaining the founders' belief in the necessity of a system of checks and balances and separation of powers.
- Explain the important civil liberties and rights granted to all citizens.
- Describe the influence of the media, money, and interest groups on politics".

**Required Reading:** There is (1) required text for this course:

Stephenson, et al. (2007). *Introduction to American government* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Redding, CA: Best Value Textbooks.

Additional readings may be assigned.

**Assignments:** Students will be evaluated based upon the following:

Exams	40%
Oral Presentation	25%
Quizzes	20%
<u>Participation</u>	<u>15%</u>
TOTAL	100%

Exams

There will be two exams for the course: mid-term and final. The examination format will consist of (25) multiple choice questions.

Oral Presentation

A 10–15 minute oral presentation of a substantial inquiry into a local, state or federal issue is required. All topic selections must be approved by the instructor. In addition, students are expected to submit a typed executive summary on scheduled presentation dates.

Quizzes

There will be a total of four quizzes for the course. The format will consist of (5) questions that will require short essay responses. Students will be able to “throw out” their lowest quiz grade.

Participation

This course is centered on interactive learning; therefore, participation is imperative in order to achieve and demonstrate mastery of the subject matter. This component includes, but is not limited to, attendance, readings, class discussions, group exercises, debates and other assigned projects.

**Grading Scale:** Grades will be distributed as follows:

A	90-100
B	80-89
C	70-79
D	60-69
F	59 and below

Students are welcome to appeal grades. All appeals must be submitted in writing (by electronic mail only) *no later than (1) calendar week after a grade has been awarded.*

NOTE: It is the student’s responsibility to follow up on the status of a grade appeal.

**Students with Disabilities:** Students who require classroom and/or academic adjustments due to special needs, please contact a counselor working with disabilities at 678.915.7244 no later than the first week of course.

**Classroom Behavior:** The classroom is a place where students learn in a safe and relaxed environment. Excessive talking, foul language, sleeping and any other form of disruptive behavior are considered a distraction and will not be tolerated. The use of cell phones and other audible devices is also a distraction; therefore, please turn off all audible devices BEFORE class begins. In addition, no tape recorders are allowed. Students who do not adhere to these policies will be dismissed from the class. Please note that the instructor reserves the right to withdraw students from the course, should ANY form of unacceptable classroom behavior persists.

**Attendance Policy:** Class attendance is expected for this course. To be considered present for the entire class period, students must sign the roster at the start of class *and* remain present until class ends. If a student is late, it is his/her responsibility to sign the roster *after* class ends. Students who fail to sign the roster will be considered absent. Students are allowed (3) *unexcused absences* for the semester. Students with *excessive tardiness and absences* may be withdrawn from the course at the discretion of the instructor.

**Make-up/Late Work:** Make-up exams and late work is allowed *only in the case of extreme emergency and/or extenuating circumstances*. No make-up exam will be scheduled and no late work will be accepted until the student provides an acceptable documented excuse. It is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor of the emergency/circumstance (if possible) prior to the due date.

**Academic Honesty:** Be sure you read the relevant section and know and understand the potential penalties in the University Academic Regulations in the current undergraduate catalog or on the campus web site. The penalty in this course for a first offense of academic dishonesty is a score of zero on the assignment in question and a written warning. Repeat offenders will receive a course grade of F.

**Key Dates:**

January 14	First Day of Classes
January 17	Drop/Add Ends
January 21	M. L. King Holiday
January 28	Early Warning Indicator Report Deadline
March 2-8	Spring Break
March 11	Last Day to Withdraw and Receive a “W”
May 1	Last Day of Classes
May 2-7	Final Exams
May 10	Graduation

**Tentative Course Outline:**

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**Part I: Foundations of American Government (January 14<sup>th</sup> – February 25<sup>th</sup>)**

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Syllabus Overview	Democracy
Class Introductions	Constitution
Politics	Federalism
Government	Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

**Readings: Introduction – Chapter 3**

**Topic Selection for Oral Presentation: Wednesday, January 23**

**Quiz #1: Wednesday, January 30**

**Quiz #2: Friday, February 15**

**Exam #1: Monday, February 25**

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**Part II: Linking People with Government (February 27<sup>th</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup>)**

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Political Ideologies	Politics and the Media
Public Opinion and Political Participation	Interest Groups and Political Parties
	Campaigns and Elections

**Readings: Chapters 4 - 8**

**Quiz #3: Monday, March 17**

**Oral Presentations: Wednesday, March 19 – Monday, March 31**

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**Part III: Institutions of Government (April 2<sup>nd</sup> – April 28<sup>th</sup>)**

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Congress	The Supreme Court and the American
The Presidency	Judiciary
Bureaucracies	Government and Public Policy

**Readings: Chapters 9 – 16**

**Quiz #4: Friday, April 11**

**Oral Presentations: Monday, April 21 – Friday, April 25**

**Final Exams: TBA**