

Basic Course Information

Semester:	Spring 2021	Instructor Name:	Dr. Steven Cauchon
Course Title & #:	POLS 102, American Gov't	Email:	Steven.cauchon@imperial.edu
CRN #:		Webpage (optional):	N/A
Classroom:	N/A	Office #:	2131
Class Dates:	Spring semester	Office Hours:	M/W 12:30 – 2:30
Class Days:	N/A	Office Phone #:	760-355-6288
Class Times:	N/A	Emergency Contact:	N/A
Units:	3	Class Format:	Asynchronous

Course Description

Welcome to our course! We will begin our journey by discussing the origin, development and operation of government and political institutions in the United States. As we continue on, you will learn more about the foundation of the American regime and the ideas, interests, & circumstances that helped shape it. You will also learn to analyze political behavior and the formal structures and institutions that make up the American political system. Throughout this journey, we will engage some of today's most pressing issues: immigration, gun control, and the rise of social media in politics. By the time you have finished this course, you will have an improved understanding of American politics, a more developed political voice, and an increased interest in civic engagement!

Course Prerequisite(s) and/or Corequisite(s)

N/A

Student Learning Outcomes

- *Develop an understanding of civic responsibility*
- *Participate in activities that promote the public good (e.g., the voting process, jury duty, community service)*
- *Examine the election and voting process*

Course Objectives

1. *The significance of the Declaration of Independence concerning the American political philosophy.*
2. *The Articles of Confederation and the principal reasons why they were replaced by the Constitution.*
3. *The significant features of the Constitution and the major ways that the Constitution changes.*
4. *The concept of federalism and how it has changed throughout American history.*
5. *The significance of the Bill of Rights, and the continuing debate over civil liberties.*
6. *The role of public opinion and the media in the American political system.*
7. *The importance of the American political parties, lobbying, and interest groups.*
8. *The American election process, including political campaigning and voter behavior.*
9. *The formal structure of the Congress and the committee system, the legislative process and congressional powers.*
10. *The principal powers of the presidency and how they expanded dramatically in the 20th century.*
11. *The American bureaucracy.*
12. *The American judicial system and how it is affected by critical issues in American society.*

13. The organizational structure, powers, and challenges confronting California's state and local governments.

Textbooks & Other Resources or Links

- Glen Kurtz, *American Government 2e*: ISBN: 1-947172-66-2. Hard copies are available at the IVC bookstore/Amazon and [access is FREE here](#) (download the pdf version as the Canvas version does not have page numbers to cite).
- All other course readings will be posted on Canvas within each module.

Course Requirements and Instructional Methods

Midterm & final (60%): Each exam may consist of multiple choice, fill in the blank, short answer, which that ask you to do more than simply memorize content. Exams take place within Canvas and each will be unique to you (i.e. students will not have the same exam). **You will have 60 minutes to complete each exam**, giving you about 60 seconds per question. However, since the exam is open book/note, your level of preparation is key. As these **exams cover everything (readings, lectures, and discussion forums) up until that exam week (see our course syllabus for details)**, I suggest using the reading quizzes, lecture notes, and the review/critical thinking questions at the end of each chapter to prepare. The final exam will not be cumulative and will cover everything we have gone over since the midterm exam.

READING QUIZES (5%): Weekly reading quizzes will directly relate to the week's readings, lectures, and supplemental videos. All reading quizzes will open on the Monday before they are due and must be completed by the following Saturday at 11pm. **Quizzes cannot be reopened once closed**, so do not wait until the deadline! You will have the opportunity to **make one missed quiz up** at the end of the course, which will otherwise serve as extra credit.

Discussion posts (15%): As students of international relations, it is important that we engage in deliberative exchanges. To help facilitate said exchanges, I will ask you to participate in weekly discussion via Canvas. Discussion forums will open the Monday of each new module—**initial topic replies are due the following Wednesday at 11pm and peer replies are due the following Sunday at 11pm**. I will ensure that our discussions are respectful, interactive, and enjoyable. To ensure that we are presenting claims/positions based on evidence, your posts are expected to cite our textbook (see assignment instructions in Canvas for further details). Strict plagiarism standards will be used for these posts, so please be aware that you will need to show originality of thought. **Discussion posts cannot be made up**, so don't wait until the deadlines!

Course Grading Based on Course Objectives

- **Midarm & Final: 60%**
- **Discussion Posts: 35%**
- **Reading Quizzes: 5%**

Course Policies

Communication

- **The best way to contact me is through email.** I will generally respond to emails Monday – Friday between 7am – 5:30pm within 24 hours of receiving them. If you do not receive a response, please resend or call my office: 760-355-6288.
- Email should be used to schedule online office appointments, for short questions clarifying assignments or specific lecture items. **In-depth questions about course readings, an entire lecture, etc. are appropriate for office hours, not e-mail.** For general questions, please consult the syllabus first and/or use the **Cougar Courses Q/A forum** or **consult your peers first**.

- Scores of all assignments & exams will be posted on Cougar Courses. If you wish to discuss your grade, please communicate via Cougar Courses or office hours.
- If you need accommodations due to disabilities, unforeseen circumstances, etc. be proactive—I can better assist you before, rather than after assignments are due.

Drop policy

- In distance education, our coursework is used to determine your attendance. Students who fail to submit substantive coursework by due dates or **complete assignments on the first day may be dropped from the class**. Please refer to the class schedule for specific attendance & effective coursework requirements.

Student conduct & Online Netiquette

- In order to learn, we must be open to the views of people different from ourselves. Therefore, please honor the uniqueness of your fellow classmates and appreciate the opportunity we have to learn from one another. Please **respect each other’s opinions** and refrain from personal attacks or demeaning comments **of any kind**.
- Netiquette is internet manners, online etiquette, and digital etiquette all rolled into one word. Our rules of netiquette: (1) identify yourself, (2) include a subject line, (3) avoid sarcasm, (4) respect others’ opinions and privacy, (5) acknowledge and return messages promptly, (6) copy with caution, (7) do not spam or junk mail, (8) be concise, (9) use appropriate language, (10) use appropriate emoticons (emotional icons) to help convey meaning, and (11) use appropriate intensifiers to help convey meaning [do not use ALL CAPS or multiple exclamation marks (!!!!)].

Late work policy

- Extensions are granted under extenuating circumstances. Excuses that may prove acceptable include serious injury & family emergencies, serious accident, or the observance of a religious holiday. In order to be excused, you will need to email the original documentation. Unexcused late work may be accepted, but at my discretion.

Missing assignments & grade challenges

- You are responsible for any work lost or late due to technical problems.
- Missing assignments and requests to re-grade must be reported/requested **within one week of the assessment being graded**. Grade challenges must be accompanied with detailed explanation & evidence justifying the request.

IVC Student Resources

IVC wants you to be successful in all aspects of your education. For help, resources, services, and an explanation of policies, visit <http://www.imperial.edu/studentresources> or click the heart icon in Canvas.

Anticipated Class Schedule/Calendar

WEEK #	TOPIC & LEARNING OBJECTIVES	READING	ASSIGNMENT
Week #1 2/16	<p>What is Politics & Why Does it Matter?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain what government is and what it does/ought do 2. Discuss source and solutions to collective action problems & conflict 	<p>Syllabus</p> <p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 1-34</p>	<p>Submit initial post to Discussion post # 1 by 11 pm Weds. to avoid being dropped</p>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Describe American political culture & the power of ideas, narratives, and authority 4. Discuss the is/ought distinction & apply it to American inequality 		Get 10/10 on syllabus quiz to open next module
Week #2 2/22	<p>The Constitution & Its Origins: How Should We Think about the Framers & the Constitution?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain what the Articles of Confederation did and failed to do. 2. Identify the goals, divisions, and compromises that shaped the Constitution. 3. Draw inferences from Dahl's account & apply them to how we should think about the Constitution 4. Identify the Constitution's democratic shortcomings. 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 35-68</p> <p>Dahl, <i>How Democratic is the American Constitution</i>, Ch. 1 & 2</p>	<p>Discussion #2 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #2 Sat by 11 pm</p>
Week #3 3/1	<p>American Federalism & Immigration</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify the foundations of American federalism & the ways in which it divides power between national and state governments. 2. Describe the historical expansion of federalism & the ways in which the national government can influence the states. 3. Explain historical trends in immigration at the state & federal level. 4. Analyze the restrictive & integrative approaches used by states & local governments. 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 69-106</p> <p>Ramakrishnan & Gulasekaram, "Understanding Immigration Federalism"</p>	<p>Discussion #3 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #3 Sat by 11 pm</p>
Week #4 3/8	<p>Fundamental Liberties</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain how the Bill of Rights relates to the federal government and to the states. 2. Describe how the First Amendment protects both church and state, as well as individuals' religious freedom. 3. Show how the protections of freedom of speech and of the press have been tested. 4. Discuss the extent of an individual's right to privacy and compare the idea civil obligations. 5. Explore how the "secret history of guns" in the US might complicate our 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 107-152</p> <p>Winkler, "The Secret History of Guns"</p>	<p>Discussion #4 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #4 Sat by 11 pm</p>



	<p>understanding of Second Amendment rights.</p> <p>6. Discuss the Second Amendment & the controversy surrounding its interpretation.</p>		
<p>Week #5 3/15</p>	<p>Public Opinion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze how well American citizens measure up to notions of an “ideal democratic citizen” 2. Describe the principle-agent problem in American politics 3. Discuss how Americans become politically socialized 4. Describe & evaluate different techniques used to gauge public opinion. 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 199-240</p>	<p>Discussion #5 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #5 Sat by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #6 3/22</p>	<p>The Struggle for Equal Rights</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summarize key events and outcomes in the struggle for equality of African Americans. 2. Outline the criteria used by the courts to determine if and when the law can treat people differently. 3. Identify tools used by citizens to expand the promise of civil rights. 4. Explain the different paths to equality taken by other gender, racial, & marginalized groups 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 153-198</p>	<p>Discussion #6 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #6 Sat by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #7 3/29</p>	<p>Congress</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe the tensions between local representation and national lawmaking. 2. Explain how checks and balances work between the Congress and the executive and judicial branches. 3. Discuss the relationship between the people and Congress. 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 403-444</p>	<p>Discussion #7 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #7 Sat by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #8 4/5</p>	<p>***Spring Break***</p>		
<p>Week #9 4/12</p>	<p>***MIDTERM***</p>		<p>Sunday by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #10 4/19</p>	<p>The Executive & the Bureaucracy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compare the modern presidency with the founders’ expectations for a limited executive. 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 445-484 & pp. 557-588</p>	<p>Discussion #8 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Identify strategies and tools presidents employ to overcome the constitutional limitations of the office. 3. Describe the organization and functions of the executive office. 4. Explain the characteristics of what the federal bureaucracy is and does 5. Compare the spoils & civil service system & discuss the attempts to privatize or eliminate parts of the bureaucracy 		<p>Reading Quiz #8 Sat by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #11 4/26</p>	<p>The Courts</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate Hamilton’s claim that the judiciary was the “least dangerous branch of government” in light of the power it wields. 2. Outline the institutional rules and political influences that shape the Supreme Court 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 485-520</p>	<p>Discussion #9 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #9 Sat by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #12 5/3</p>	<p>Media & Power</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the roles and responsibilities of journalists. 2. Describe the link between media and politics. 3. Discuss the relationship between citizens and the media. 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 287- 326</p>	<p>Discussion #10 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #10 Sat by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #13 5/10</p>	<p>Voting and Elections</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyze the reasons why Americans vote—or don’t vote. 2. Summarize the importance of elections for citizens. 3. Discuss dark money, PACS & assess their potential influence in democratic politics. 4. Explain the Electoral College, how it came to be, and its critics 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 241-284</p> <p>Gerken, “The Real Problem With Citizens United”</p>	<p>Discussion #11 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #11 Sat by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #14 5/17</p>	<p>Political Parties & Interest Groups</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe political parties and what they do 2. Outline the evolution of the party system in the United States. 3. Describe how interest groups use lobbying activities to get the public policy they want. 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 327- 402</p>	<p>Discussion #12 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #12 Sat by 11 pm</p>



	<p>4. Compare public and private interest groups</p>		
<p>Week #15 5/24</p>	<p>Domestic & Foreign Policy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain what policy is, who makes it, and how it is made. 2. Identify government policy programs that attempt to improve citizens' lives. 3. Identify the basic goals and types of foreign policy. 4. Describe ways in which policy making reflects public opinion. 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 589-658</p>	<p>Discussion #13 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #13 Sat by 11 pm</p>
<p>Week #16 6/1</p>	<p>California State & Local Govt.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outline the unique features of California's state & local government 2. Discuss how one can have an impact on state & local politics 3. Review the unique history of California through the lens of Governor Pat Brown 4. Examine the impact that water, infrastructure, and social movements had had on California politics 	<p><i>American Government</i>, pp. 521-556</p> <p>Watch Entire Video Via Canvas</p>	<p>Discussion #14 Wed/Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>Reading Quiz #14 Sat by 11 pm</p> <p>California State of Mind Extra Credit quiz Sat by 11</p>
<p>Week #17 6/7</p>	<p>***Final Exam***</p>		<p>Sun by 11pm</p>

*****Subject to change without prior notice*****