



American Government & Politics

POL 10100
CRN: 18362
01.13 – 05.10.2025
3 Credit Hours

Instructor Info —



Christina Walker



Office Hrs: Tuesdays Noon-2 PM
or by appointment (via Zoom)



Click here to schedule



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Course Info —



Tuesdays, Thursdays



10:30-11:45 AM



WTHR 104

About —

This course provides an overview of the nature of the American government, its connections with our daily lives, and its organization at different levels. Students will study the nature of democratic government, the U.S. Constitution, federalism, civil rights, political dynamics, the presidency, Congress, and the judiciary.

Teaching Philosophy

As an instructor, I am responsible for maximizing each student's opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed in reaching the outcomes I define for the course and your personal goals related to the class and your career. To achieve this, I draw on theories and practices rooted in student-centered, collaborative, and active learning principles. I focus on student learning, which develops your skills to view the world in new ways and engage in debates and discussions. I have attempted to make this course and pedagogy as transparent and collaborative as possible. If something is ever unclear, I ask that you let me know, and we can discuss it via email or during office hours. I want to help you develop interests and have what you learn be something you return to throughout your career.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the basic theories & concepts used in the study of American politics.
2. Explain the institutions, processes, & values that underpin American political behavior & events.
3. Apply the knowledge gained to act as an educated citizen.
4. Connect course content with contemporary social, political, & economic events.

Transferable Skills

- **Critical Thinking:** Enables analysis, effective communication, & collaboration.
- **Problem-Solving:** Allows individuals to address complex workplace issues, find innovative solutions, & improve communication skills.
- **Effective Communication:** Useful for conveying ideas & information clearly and concisely, building strong client relationships, meeting organizational goals, & resolving conflicts.
- **Collaboration:** Essential for working towards a common goal, building strong relationships with colleagues, achieving better results, & developing leadership skills.
- **Understanding Different Perspectives:** Necessary for building strong relationships with colleagues, clients, & customers, & promoting critical thinking skills & empathy.

Course Materials

Required Texts: All course texts are available for free online.

Computer Capabilities: You will need a fast, reliable internet connection as this course relies on Brightspace and Perusall. You will need a **word processor** (i.e., Microsoft Word or Google Docs), remember MS Office is free for all students. See Purdue's Student Services for resources such as Technology Help, Academic Help, and Campus Resources.

Student Success

Achieving these learning objectives requires you to work hard and challenge yourself while being open to new and difficult questions or revisiting existing beliefs and biases. To help you succeed in this course, I have dedicated a section on Brightspace under the Class Resources module. I provided resources to help improve your writing, avoid plagiarism, better your time management, etc.

If you want to be a successful student and professional:

- Be self-motivated and self-disciplined.
- Be willing to speak up if problems arise.
- Access the resources that are available to you; reaching out for assistance is a critical life skill, rather than an indication of weakness.
- Be able and willing to commit 3-5 hours per week to this course. This includes class lectures, completing the readings/videos/podcasts, course assignments, and studying.

How to Get Help: I authentically care about your success and well-being. If a problem is mitigating your ability to succeed, contact me **as soon as possible**. You can reach me via email or by scheduling office hours. The sooner you reach out, the easier to find a path forward.

Grading Philosophy, Deadlines, & Late Work

Grading Philosophy: I understand grades can cause anxiety. To help with this, every assignment has a rubric that you will be graded on for transparency. As shown in the tables below, I automatically round your grade up ($\geq .5$) and you have the opportunity to receive up to 10% in extra credit on your final exam. With these two things in mind, **do not** email me at the end of the semester asking to increase your grade or for additional extra credit.

Late Work: Deadlines are an unavoidable part of being a professional and this course is no exception. There will be no final exam make-ups/rescheduling unless there is an extenuating circumstance with documentation. Course requirements must be completed on or before the specified deadline. To help you improve your skills and understanding of the course, I am committed to returning feedback to you within 7 days of the due date. To accomplish this, I need you to turn in your assignments by the due date. However, I understand that life happens. Therefore, you all have **two** "Oops Tickets."

Oops Tickets: These tickets can be used to submit a late assignment or re-do an assignment to improve your grade, no questions asked. In either case, please contact me **before** you submit the assignment to confirm the assignment is eligible and I can re-open the submission tool for you. You do not need to explain why you are using your ticket. My goal is to not force you to explain any personal details to me that may be further exhausting or triggering to you. This will not be available for the final exam. You will **not** be allowed to use one of your tickets to re-do an assignment if there is suspicion of academic dishonesty.

Grading

Percentage	Assignment	Description
15%	Class Participation	Engagement with course materials.
30%	Assignments	There will be 8 assignments throughout the course.
15%	Reading Participation	Engagement with the readings each week.
40%	Final Exam	Cumulative exam. You can earn up to 10% with weekly review questions.

Class Participation: There will be activities done during lectures. To receive full credit, you need to participate in at least 13.

Assignments: There are multiple assignments throughout the course and each will have equal weight.

Reading Participation: This will come from your assignments that take place on Perusall (reading, annotating, videos, etc.).

Final Exam: The exam is cumulative, includes multiple-choice and short-answer questions, and will be during final exam week.

Extra Credit for Final Exam: Each week (starting week 2), I will upload a quiz on Brightspace with sample questions about the material. If you complete each weekly quiz before the final exam and receive 100%, you will get 10% added to your exam grade. You can retake these quizzes as many times as you'd like. This will also help you prep for your final exam – there will not be an additional study guide.

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentages	Description of Work
A+	97.5-100%	Work is exceptional in most respects
A	92.5-97.4%	Work is exceptional in many respects
A-	89.5-92.4%	Work is exceptional in some respects
B+	87-89.4%	Work is good in most respects
B	82.5-86.4%	Work is good in many respects
B-	79.5-82.4%	Work is good in some respects
C+	76.5-79.4%	Work is satisfactory in most respects
C	72.5-76.4%	Work is satisfactory in many respects
C-	69.5-72.4%	Work is satisfactory in some respects
D+	66.5-69.4%	Work is marginal in most respects
D	62.5-66.4%	Work is marginal in many respects
D-	59.5-62.4%	Work is marginal in some respects
F	0-59.4%	Work is failing in most respects

**Notice that grades at or over .5 will be rounded up*

Academic Integrity

While I want this space to be collaborative, all submitted assignments must be entirely original work (e.g., not AI-generated) and include proper attribution. I will be using a plagiarism checker on your assignments. If an academic integrity situation does arise, I reserve the right to give you a 0 on the assignment, and you will be subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University following Purdue Protocols. Please do not place yourself or me in that situation. For more resources about academic integrity, see the Class Resources module.

Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Purdue University and I are committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of all people. This class is a place where you will be treated with respect. I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, and abilities. All class members must contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. Achieving equity in the classroom requires both myself as the instructor and you as students to identify and remove barriers that may prevent someone from full access or participation.

In our discussions, we will explore various challenging issues that can help enhance your understanding of different experiences and perspectives. I recognize that this can be challenging as some topics in this course can be controversial. However, in overcoming these challenges, we find the greatest rewards. I ask that you be respectful and have information to support your viewpoints. Please keep in mind the following:

- We are all in the process of learning about others and their experiences. If someone is making you uncomfortable, don't hesitate to contact me via email or anonymously in the form under the Class Resources module.
- Intention and impact are not always aligned, and we should respect the impact something may have on someone even if it was not the intention.
- We all come to the class with various experiences and a range of expertise. We should respect these in others while critically examining them in ourselves.

Netiquette

To help foster a tolerant, safe learning environment, please abide by the Netiquette rules for this course:

- Do not use offensive language and avoid slang language. Present ideas appropriately and clearly.
- Keep an "open mind" and be willing to express even your minority opinion.
- Seek and take feedback from others; learning from others is an important life skill.

When contacting me via email, please remember the critical skill of writing a professional email. Your emails should generally include the following: (1) a subject line briefly explaining the topic of the email and what class it pertains to (POL 327), (2) a respectful greeting (Hi Prof. Walker), (3) a straightforward question or request, and (4) your name. Emails lacking these criteria will not be returned. You can expect me to respond to most emails within 24 hours on weekdays and 48 hours on weekends.

Accessibility

I strive to make the learning experiences in this course as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, please notify me at the start of the semester to discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247. I will arrange to provide accommodations for those with them as a part of their DRC Course Accessibility Letter (CAL). You must release your CAL to me as soon as they are available so I can make these arrangements.

Mental Health and Wellness

As we all continue to cope with the news cycle and our hardships, I encourage you to focus on your mental and physical wellness. Below are some resources.

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety, and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try WellTrack.

If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students.

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc. sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell.

If you are struggling and need mental health services contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). There is also a list of providers who are not affiliated with Purdue but who want to work with students.

If you are struggling to secure food or housing, you are urged to contact the the Office of the Dean of Students for support.

Course Schedule

American Government		
Class Date	Topic	To Do (Due Before Class Unless Otherwise Noted)
January 14	Syllabus, What is Political Science?	
January 16	What is Government?	• Read the Syllabus • Read P. 8-13
January 21	The Constitution	• Read P. 31-36 • Watch Constitutional Compromises
January 23	American Federalism	• Read P. 66-75 • Assignment 1 due 1/27, 11:59 PM ET: American Federalism
January 28	What are Civil Liberties & Civil Rights?	• Read P. 102-108 • Watch 3-minute guide to the Bill of Rights • Read P. 144-147
January 30	Struggles for Civil Liberties & Rights	• Watch Equal Protection • Read P. 148-158 • Read P. 158-164 • Read The Struggle for Sovereignty: Series Overview • Read History of the Asian American Civil Rights Movement • Assignment 2 due 2/3, 11:59 PM ET: Create a Government
February 4	Interpretation of Liberties & Rights	• Watch Discrimination Video • Read P. 130-136 • Listen to More Perfect: The Gun Show
February 6	The Role of Public Opinion	• Read P. 186-194 • Read Polling Public Opinion: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly • Read Americans Views of Government • Watch Where do Political Beliefs Come From?
February 11	The Effects of Public Opinion & Turnout	• Watch How Do Polls Affect Presidential Elections? • Read P. 228-236 • Watch Campaign Strategy • Read Comparative Voter Registration
February 13	Campaigns	• Read P. 236-246 • Watch US election campaigns longer than rest of world • Watch Unpacking US campaign spending • Watch Political Campaign Strategy • Watch Do General Election campaigns actually influence the result? • Read P. 254-258 • Assignment 3 due 2/17, 11:59 PM ET: Create a Political Party
February 18	No Class	
February 20	The Media	• Read P. 266-272 • Watch Impact of Media Evolution in Politics • Read P. 281-289 • Watch How does Media Bias affect the Free Press • How does the media impact politics?
February 25	Political Parties	• Read P. 304-310 • Read P. 310-317 • Read P. 317-325 • Read P. 325-333

February 27	Interest Groups and Lobbying	• Read P. 340-346 • Watch Interest Group Formation • Assignment 4 due 3/3, 11:59 PM ET: Compare Interest Groups
March 4	The Design of Congress	• Read P. 374-382 • Read P. 382-388 • Watch How does Congress “Work”?
March 6	Representation and The Legislative Process	• Watch Who are the People Who Represent Us? • Read P. 401-404
March 11	The Design of the Presidency	• Watch Presidential Power • Watch Informal Powers • Read P. 419-423
March 13	Changes to the Presidency	• Read The Presidential Transition: What Happens Next? • Watch First Ladies • Assignment 5 due 3/16, 11:59 PM ET: Historical Presidents
March 18	No Class	
March 20	No Class	
March 25	Overview of the Courts	• Read P. 448-454 • Read The U.S. Court System, Explained
March 27	The Federal Courts	• Watch The federal court system, explained • Watch How the Supreme Court Works • Watch The US Supreme Court’s history of political influence • Separation of Powers • Assignment 6 due 3/31, 11:59 PM ET: 24-25 SCOTUS Cases
April 1	State Power and Culture	• Read P. 482-489 • Read What does state political culture mean for policy analysis?
April 3	No Class	
April 8	Governors, Legislators, City Government	• Read P. 494-504 • Listen to A Look at Elections for State Legislatures and Why They Matter • Read Term Limits – Time for Reform • Read P. 508-509 • Watch Types of Bureaucracies
April 10	The Bureaucracy	• Watch Bureaucracy Basics • Read P. 521-525 • Watch Controlling Bureaucracies • Assignment due 7 4/14, 11:59 PM ET, The Role of Bureaucracy
April 15	Domestic Policy	• Read The Evolution of Public Policy
April 17	Policy Arenas	• Read P. 555-559
April 22	Policymakers	• Read P. 559-564 • Listen to Two Indicators: Inside the Fed, then and now • Assignment 8 due 4/21, 11:59 PM ET, Research a Policy Area
April 24	What is Foreign Policy?	• Watch What is Foreign Policy? • Watch What Foreign Policy Tools Can Leaders Use?
April 29	Approaches to Foreign Policy	• Watch The Role of Congress and the President in Foreign Policy • Watch Our Evolving Foreign Policy

May 1	Exam Review	
May 9	Final Exam	10:30 AM-12:30 PM, WTHR 104

This schedule is subject to change. Look at the Brightspace Modules for more details.