



POLS 1310 05 American National Government online

Fall, 2010 Dr. Margaret E. Scranton

About American National Government

This class is part of the core requirements for a Bachelor's degree from UALR for a very good reason: all citizens need to understand how our government works and how political power is exercised by individuals, groups, and institutions in the United States and beyond. Our approach to understanding government and politics breaks down into five main topics:

- background information about our political history and political culture beginning before the American Revolution and leading up to the present
- the ways individuals engage in politics
- the ways groups engage in politics and how groups interact with individuals and the institutions of government, connecting the "we the people" with our leaders
- the three branches of the national government and how each institution makes its own decisions and contributes to making policy
- an overview of our major domestic and foreign policies in recent decades and currently on the agenda

By the end of the semester, I hope that you will feel better informed about government and politics and more capable of taking political action, if and when you choose to do so.

Requirements and assignments

#1. Read chapters 1-15 in *Understanding American Politics and Government*, brief edition, by Coleman, Goldstein, and Howell, 2010, published by Pearson/Longman. Note the image of our book cover at the top of this page: the book you buy should match. The textbook's ISBN is 978-0-205-68860-9 for just the book; ISBN 978-0-2-0567801-3 for the book plus the access code for MyPoliSciLab which you need to access the textbook publisher's website which has learning activities, study resources, and practice tests. Your MyPoliSciLab access code package should have the same textbook cover as you see at the top of this page.

If you did not purchase an access code for MyPoliSciLab with your textbook, you can buy one separately (ISBN: 9780205701636) at the UALR Barnes & Noble Bookstore on campus or at www.mypoliscilab.com.

After you enter your access code, you will need to input your MyPoliSciLab class ID which is **cm779643**. So the registration for MyPoliSciLab has two parts: paying to get in with your access code and then registering for our class with this class code. Don't confuse your personal access code (every student has

their own individual access code) with our class ID code (the cm number that all students will use). MyPoliSciLab connects you to the assignments and practice tests that match our textbook. I give you detailed instructions for signing in to MyPoliSciLab in the Chapter 1 class folder in Blackboard.

#2. Complete 15 chapter tests in Blackboard, according to the deadlines on the class calendar (and listed below). Our final exam is the 15th chapter test.

If you do not complete a test on time, you get a grade of 0 for that test. When I average your grade for the semester, I drop your lowest test grade, so if you miss one test, that test would count as the chapter test grade that I drop.

Classes start on August 19, 2010.

All chapter tests in Blackboard must be completed during the dates listed below:

Chapter 1	between noon August 26-11:30pm Sunday, August 29 th
Chapter 2	between noon, Tuesday, August 31 – 11:30pm Thursday, September 2 nd
Chapter 3	between noon Thursday, September 9 -11:30pm Sunday, September 12 th .
Chapter 4	between noon, Thursday, September 16 th – 11:30pm Sunday, September 19 th
Chapter 5	between noon, Thursday, September 23 rd – 11:30pm Sunday, September 26 th
Chapter 6	between noon, Thursday, September 30 th – 11:30pm Sunday, October 3 rd
Chapter 7	between noon, Thursday, October 7 th – 11:30pm Sunday, October 10 th
Chapter 8	between noon, Thursday, October 14 th – 11:30pm Sunday, October 17 th
Chapter 9	between noon, Thursday, October 21 st – 11:30pm Sunday, October 24 th
Chapter 10	between noon, Thursday, October 30 th – 11:30pm Sunday, October 31 st
Chapter 11	between noon, Thursday, November 4 th – 11:30pm Sunday, November 7 th
Chapter 12	between noon, Thursday, November 11 th – 11:30pm Sunday, November 14 th
Chapter 13	between noon, Thursday, November 18 th – 11:30pm Sunday, November 21 st
Chapter 14	between noon, Tuesday, November 23 rd – 11:30pm Sunday, November 28 th
Chapter 15	between noon, Thursday, December 2 – 11:30pm Sunday, December 5 th

Pay close attention to the "FAQs about Chapter Tests" located in the "Syllabus, Policies, Dates" folder: there I explain the different types of questions on the chapter tests, how to reason through the different types of questions, overlapping questions that are on the MyPoliSciLab site and also on the "real" chapter tests, and the protocol to follow when you want to ask about answers to questions on the tests.

#3. Complete specified assignments in MyPoliSciLab for each chapter. These test scores are not included in your semester grade but they definitely contribute to improving your chapter test grades. You should use as many of the MyPoliSciLab study resources as you can: chapter pre-tests, practice chapter tests, post-tests, simulations, visual literacy activities, and comparative politics features. The more of these resources you use, the better you will understand the chapters and the better prepared you will be to take the 15 required "real" chapter tests in Blackboard.

#4. Take the required practice test on the syllabus, course information and class policies (including the FAQs about Chapter Tests). Before you can take your first "real" chapter test in Blackboard, you must take a practice test on this syllabus and other introductory materials. You must make a grade of 85 or higher on this practice test in order to access the first chapter test.

Taking the practice test has two purposes: 1) both you and I will know that you understand the syllabus and important information about the class and our tests, and 2) you will make sure that your computer interfaces properly with Blackboard and the LockDown Browser software that you need to install on your computer in order to take the chapter tests in Blackboard. You want to have your computer in perfect working order before you take your Chapter 1 test in Blackboard.

Your grade on the practice test is not part of your semester grade; your semester grade only includes the "real" chapter tests in Blackboard. The link to this practice test is located in the Getting Started section of the class web site in Blackboard.

Contact Information for Dr. Scranton

Use Blackboard mail for class communications. To contact me in the Blackboard private e-mail program, select "All Section Instructors" at the top of the list that appears when you browse the "send to" function. Then scroll down to the "save" button below the list of students; click "save" to put my address in the "send to" box. You can also send private mail to classmates, whose names are listed alphabetically on this list. At the beginning of the semester, everyone will introduce themselves on our class Discussion Board, so you may find that our class includes friends, neighbors, high school classmates, or people with the same major as you have chosen.

I check our class at least once every 36 hours and usually I respond to Blackboard mail within 24 hours during the work week. I usually check our class once during weekends. Your Blackboard mail messages also come to my cell phone, so in an emergency I'll know to check Blackboard ASAP. Since I teach most of my classes online, I'm not usually in my UALR office, so do not use my UALR office phone for messages. Instead, use Blackboard e-mail to contact me. I keep my ualr.edu mail separate from our coursework for Blackboard, especially since I get so much spam through the UALR server and delete those messages very quickly. Blackboard is on a different server and always keeps your mail safe and secure.

You can also post questions and comments on the Blackboard public Discussion Board. I count on experienced Blackboard users in the class to offer helpful suggestions on the Discussion Board. Every semester I find that more and more classmates have already taken online classes in Blackboard and these students are always generous and kind in offering helpful suggestions and quick fixes. If you're new to Blackboard, you'll find that after a few days you'll feel right at home in the online classroom environment.

When I make an announcement to the whole class I use the Announcement tool which sends a pop-up message you'll see when you log in. Keeping up with announcements is one of your responsibilities -- often these contain information about test questions, technical support inquiries, and other issues that I need to communicate to the entire class right away.

I have office hours on campus this semester on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00am-9:15am and on Thursdays from 10:50-11:15am. My office is in Room 105 Larson Hall. You are welcome to visit me on campus or to make an appointment to meet in a "chat room" in Blackboard.

In case of an emergency, call my cell phone (501) 551-6524; leave a voice message with your contact information if I don't answer. I keep my cell phone off during my campus classes and for meetings; I'll get back to you as soon as possible.

If you happen to lose internet contact during a chapter test, try to get back into your test; after you finish, send me Blackboard email to let me know what happened and if you needed to take extra time to complete your test. The Blackboard test timer will keep running while you are off line and it will let you keep going after time is up; the timer will show me that you went over the time limit and by how many minutes per question. If you can't return to your test, let me know what happened and I'll get back to you with a solution.

About communicating outside of class

Use Blackboard mail: Please send me any questions, concerns or comments you have about the course. I want to hear from you!

Remember that your classmates can see your posts to the Discussion Board -- that is a public space; think twice about posting personal or private information on the Discussion Board.

You should be considerate and civil in your language whenever you communicate for class and observe the rules of "netiquette." If netiquette is new to you, visit this site (<http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>) to learn more about communicating appropriately online. I will delete any postings that use inappropriate language and/or lack civility and respect for classmates. Remember that there is a difference between class communications and texting friends and family; class communications are more formal and should be civil and appropriate.

I will delete any postings that violate the rules of netiquette. Offensive language and hateful or unkind messages are not allowed in our class environment; students who disrupt class in this way will be warned and, if necessary, I will recommend that a repeat offender be administratively withdrawn from the class.

Technical Support Contact Information

It is important to get IT support whenever you have a computer problem. There are Blackboard tutorials and a "help" feature within Blackboard and at the Student Resources link on the Blackboard entry page.

Remember that I am your Political Science professor, not a computing services technician. Here are the contacts you need to use when you need help with your computer:

UALR Computing Services provides some technical support for online students: contact the Computing Services email: exp-help@ualr.edu.

For problems with your Net ID or with logging into the course contact:

UALR Computing Services Helpdesk:

- (501) 569-8720 – Monday-Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- (501) 569-8727 – Evening and Weekends:
- Mon-Thurs, 6 p.m. to 10:30 p.m.
- Sat 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Sun 1 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Students emailing or leaving messages at the Computing Services Helpdesk should provide the following information: 1) name, 2) T-number, 3) netID, 4) course identification information, and 5) your contact information--phone &/or email, and 6) as much detail about the problem as possible.

For help with Blackboard, go [to%20http://ualr.edu/support/blackboard/](http://ualr.edu/support/blackboard/) or email <mailto:bbhelp@ualr.edu>. You can also phone Blackboard Student Support Office: 501.683.7622 -- After Hours: 501.626.3318

For help with LockDown Browser software, contact <mailto:bbhelp@ualr.edu> rather than Computing Services.

The computer lab in Ottenheimer Library at UALR has LockDown Browser already installed. This is test security software that you must have on your computer in order to open the Blackboard chapter tests. You will install this free software on your own computer when you take the practice test on the syllabus.

Your Responsibilities

- ✓ You are responsible for getting your book in plenty of time to read the chapters in order to take the chapter tests before the deadlines. You need your book right away, as soon as the semester starts. You need to plan to spend about 4-6 hours of preparation per chapter: reading and reviewing the chapter, doing the MyPoliSciLab activities, and taking practice tests. The "real" chapter tests have a 60 minute time limit for answering 50 multiple choice questions; most students take about 30-45 minutes per Blackboard test. Your first two chapter tests have a longer time period, just to get you used to the tests for this class.

- ✓ Since MyPoliSciLab and your Blackboard chapter tests are online, your computer and internet access are essential for your progress and success. Having a computer available and reliable internet service are your responsibilities. You also need a backup plan for taking your tests if anything goes wrong with your computer or internet service.
- ✓ The "getting started" section includes instructions for making sure your computer's settings are compatible with Blackboard; complete these steps right away!! You must make sure that your computer is ready to work with Blackboard and its tools.
- ✓ The UALR Blackboard help site at <http://ualr.edu/support/blackboard/> has tutorials and lots of helpful start up information. Our "Getting Started" materials also include an orientation to Blackboard that is especially helpful if this is your first online experience and your first class using Blackboard.
- ✓ You need a technology backup plan in case anything goes wrong with your computer or internet service. Remember that UALR has computer labs that you can use; so do public libraries. Plan ahead for internet and computer technology emergencies.
- ✓ Since we have weekly deadlines for completing the 15 chapter tests, you need to make a schedule for taking your tests and stick to it. We have no makeup tests, so pay attention to your schedule and get ahead, if possible. Build in extra time for emergencies.

If you miss a test deadline, do not ask for a makeup test or an extension. Instead, plan ahead and build in extra time for emergencies that might happen.

Tests and grading for POLS 1310 online

When I calculate your semester grade, I will drop your lowest test grade and then average your 14 other "real" chapter test grades.

At any point in the semester, you can check your average so far by adding up your test scores and dividing by the number of tests you have taken.

This class has no extra credit assignments; do not ask for extra credit.

The best way to improve your chapter test grades and your semester average is to utilize the study resources at MyPoliSciLab.com. You can find additional suggestions for improving your performance at my FAQs page about testing and in the Chapter 2 folder.

Any missing Blackboard chapter tests are averaged into your grade as zeros.

For the semester grade, I use the standard scale A = 90-100, B = 80-89, C = 70-79, D = 60-69, F = below 60.

I do not curve grades.

All tests must be finished according to the posted schedule on the Blackboard class calendar, by 11:30PM Central Time.

The drop date for Fall 2010 is November 10th.

If you must drop the class, be sure to submit a drop form at the Registrar's Office; you cannot drop online. If you don't officially drop the class you will remain on my grade sheet, and I will have to record a grade of FX, meaning non-attending, for you.

About cheating and test security

Each student gets a different set of questions on each test. Blackboard randomly selects 50 questions for each test from the roughly 140 questions per chapter that I have selected from the publisher's test bank.

I reserve the right to change testing methods if students do not adhere to standards of academic honesty. This means do not share test information with classmates or others, do not allow classmates access to your test, and do not have anyone else take your tests or do your assignments; do your own work at all times.

Do not exceed the required time limit on your test; Blackboard lets you keep going even if time is up; taking more time than is allowed is another form of cheating. I will not count as correct any answers that you submit after the test time limit is over.

I realize that every student will have their textbook near their computer, so instead of hoping that everyone resists the temptation to look up answers, I have timed the tests (usually 60 minutes) to allow you sufficient time to complete a test and score well if you are well-prepared. In fact, you should have several extra minutes to check one or two answers if you have studied well. It is also important for you to realize that while some of the test questions are basic knowledge questions that you could look up and find the answer on the page, the comprehension, analysis, synthesis, and application questions cannot be answered successfully this way. Instead, these types of questions require higher levels of critical thinking – you have to reason your way toward the best answer. Each of these more difficult questions does have a page reference in the textbook, but that's just the starting place for answering the more challenging critical thinking questions. For these, you need to comprehend a whole paragraph or section of the chapter or even the chapter itself and be able to make inferences based on what you know. College level classes are supposed to teach critical thinking skills, and we develop these skills through learning how to answer these more difficult types of questions.

All chapter tests have 50 multiple choice questions.

Anyone who needs to look up lots of answers on a test will fail -- there is not enough time to complete the test that way.

Plus, only some of the questions on the real chapter tests are basic knowledge questions; other types of questions are applications, analysis, comprehension, or synthesis questions which require you to reason your way toward a “best” answer based on what you’ve learned from the chapter. [Yes, I’m repeating this information; that’s because it is so important; you need to realize now that just skimming the chapters will not be sufficient work to earn a passing grade in this class.] That means that you have to understand the material so you can evaluate several possible answers; these types of critical thinking questions do not have simple, obvious answers you can look up. Instead, these questions require you to compare and contrast material in different paragraphs or on different pages – you can’t just hope to find one sentence that has the right answer from looking up the key word in the index or the glossary.

Remember that the Blackboard server keeps track of the time you take for each question on a test as well as your total time.

For this class, cheating would involve getting and/or giving to other students advance copies of tests or test questions; or taking extra time. Lying about why you took extra time to complete a test is another way of cheating.

Collusion refers to unauthorized cooperation among students during or for a test, such as telling each other answers or cooperating to find answers for each other. Remember that the test questions are randomized, so the likelihood that you will have many of the same questions on your test as another student is quite low.

Duplicity involves having someone else take your test for you. Many universities are moving toward special ID protections to prevent duplicity in online courses, and as soon as UALR implements these protections you will be required to comply with them. Remember that duplicity is another form of cheating.

Collusion and duplicity are violations of academic integrity, just like cheating (see UALR policies).

If a student is found guilty of cheating or any other violation of academic integrity, s/he will get a grade of zero (F) on that test. If a student is found guilty a second time of cheating or any other violation of academic integrity s/he will receive an F for the course.

Practice academic integrity! Do the right thing.

Learning Objectives for POLS 1310 and Assessment for the Political Science Major

Knowledge Goals – students majoring in political science will be exposed to a wide range of substantive information about the world of politics, covering subjects such as:	
<i>Student will know and understand the structure of the most important local and state, national, and international political</i>	POLS 1310 chapter content and tests on: Chs 11 (Congress), 12 (Presidency), 13 (Federal Court)

<p><i>institutions and systems</i></p> <p><i>In POLS 1310, the target is the federal government, with some attention to comparative politics and to state/local and international institutions</i></p>	<p>System), and 14 (Bureaucracy) survey the structure of US federal government and its institutions (see also policy chapters below); Ch 4 (Federalism) surveys the US intergovernmental system</p>
<p><i>Student will master structural and cultural constraints and motivations of individual actors at both the mass and elite levels of politics, nationally and internationally</i></p> <p><i>In POLS 1310, the targets are US political culture and mass and elite actors in the US political system.</i></p>	<p>POLS 1310 chapter content and tests on:</p> <p>Ch 2 (Political Culture) surveys cultural constraints; motivations of individuals and group participants are surveyed in Chs 6 (Public Opinion), Ch 7 (Political Participation and Voting), Ch 11 (Political Parties), and Ch 10 (Interest Groups); the media as an intermediary structure and constrain are surveyed in Ch 8.</p>
<p><i>Student will know and understand the processes of creating the government policy and the impact of those policies</i></p> <p><i>In POLS 1310, the targets are the decision processes in each branch of the federal government and intergovernmental and intragovernmental aspects of the policy process.</i></p>	<p>POLS 1310 chapter content and tests on:</p> <p>Current issues, actors in the policy process, and decision processes for budgeting and fiscal policy, various domestic and social policies, and for US national security and foreign policy are surveyed in Chs 15(Domestic - includes Economic and Social Policy- and Foreign Policy). These chapters have case studies that document policy impacts.</p>
<p><i>Student will know and understand, and be able to critically evaluate, the normative foundations of the state, the scope of its activities, and the nature of justice</i></p> <p><i>The focus of POLS 1310 is predominantly empirical rather than normative, although normative aspects of the American revolution and the founding of the state and the meaning of justice, both for the Founders and in the US legal system, are covered.</i></p>	<p>POLS 1310 chapter content and tests on:</p> <p>Chapter 5 surveys the meaning of civil rights and civil liberties in terms of key values in the American Creed and as outcomes of the US justice system. Ch 1 (Thinking About American Politics) distinguishes between normative and empirical political inquiry; Chs 2 (Political Culture) and 3 (Constitution) explore and evaluate the normative foundations of the state in the US historical context; these foundations are also addressed in later chapters on specific institutions, on political participation, and on policies.</p>
<p>Since students take a 50-question test on each chapter, students and faculty can easily evaluate the extent to which students master the content of the chapters listed here as well as the goal content covered in this class.</p>	
<p>Skill Goals – students majoring in political science will develop practical and marketable skills which will help them to apply that knowledge to any number of career paths. These skills include:</p>	

<p><i>Students will possess the ability to read and evaluate primary texts, ideas, theories, and political analysis</i></p>	<p>POLS 1310 chapter content and tests on:</p> <p>Primary texts:</p> <p>Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Federalist #10, Constitution</p> <p>Ideas and theories:</p> <p>political philosophies of the Founding Fathers (Chs 1-4); alternative theories of judicial construction and interpretation (Chs 5-6); the traditional voting behavior model and cost-benefit analysis of political participation (Chs 8, 9, 11 and 12); theory of collective goods and free-rider problems (Chs 12 and 13); alternative theories of individual and group decision making (Chs 13-16), competing economic theories for promoting economic growth and prosperity (Ch 17) and alternative analytical explanations for US foreign policy (Ch 18)</p> <p>Political Analysis:</p> <p>Each chapter includes an introductory vignette and at least one case study presenting a political analysis of a current issue or topic of interest to political scientists, such as counting "the electorate" and the VAP. Most chapter tests have at least one "analysis" question, coded according to Bloom's taxonomy.</p>
<p><i>Students will possess the ability to pose and answer questions effectively in Political Science research</i></p>	<p>POLS 1310 chapter content and tests on:</p> <p>Ch 1 in particular and the entire textbook stress critical thinking skills, especially the concept of association vs causality in political affairs and how to state and appropriately to analyze an empirical question. Each chapter has a section "how do we know" which takes a chapter-relevant question and brings to bear recent political science scholarship in a discussion of answers to that question. Specific "knowledge" and "comprehension" questions cover the content of the "how do we know" sections; in addition, several "analysis" and "application" questions test a student's ability to analyze data, evaluate research results, and apply research conclusions to new situations.</p>
<p><i>Students will the ability to take information gained through coursework and uses it effectively in real world or simulated exercises</i></p>	<p>POLS 1310 chapter content, MyPoliSciLab assignments, and tests on:</p> <p>Students complete several simulations per chapter at the MyPoliSciLab web site; these multimedia activities model real world situations, incorporate "real" data (including comparative political systems), and explore solutions to practical political problems.</p>