

POLS 1310-04 American National Government
University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Dr. Andrew J. Drummond
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Course Meeting Times
TR 8:00-9:15 AM
RH 123

Office Hrs: SH 603N
M 11:00 - 1:00 and by appointment
Office phone: 569-8841

Course Overview and Objectives

This course is an introduction to the American political process with a special emphasis on elections, political participation, policy making, governance, and democratic institutions particular to the US political system. Students will be exposed to both historical and current political debates in the American context, macro- and micro-trends in political behavior and attitudes, and critical assessments of the country's institutional framework for governance and conflict resolution both at home and abroad. While my goal in any course is to help make clear the complex phenomena surrounding politics, my sincere hope is that students will come away with new questions about American politics, and be better equipped to seek out the answers to these through their own political participation.

Learning Objectives

In keeping with the UALR Political Science department's mission "to provide students with both a substantive knowledge of politics and the skills necessary to make use of that knowledge effectively", this course will focus on developing and enhancing the following knowledge and skills goals:

1. The history, characteristics, and impact of political institutions and systems, including international, national, state, and local governments
2. The processes involved in creating government policy and the impact of those policies
3. The behavior of individual actors at both the mass and elite levels
4. The debates over the normative foundations of the state, the scope of its activities, and the nature of justice
5. Analysis/Research – the ability to pose and answer questions effectively
6. Written and Verbal Communication – the ability to communicate ideas clearly on paper or through oral presentations

Required Readings

1. Schmidt, S.W., M.C. Shelley II., and B.A. Bardes *American Government & Politics Today* 2010-2011 Brief Edition. Wadsworth Cengage

Assignments and Grading Breakdown

5% Pop Quizzes
5% Short Responses
30% Midterm Examination 1
30% Midterm Examination 2
30% Final Examination

Description of Assignments and Grading Policy

-- There are three examinations that will test your knowledge of the course concepts and your ability to think critically about them. The format for these tests will be multiple choice with some short answer. Test dates are firm. Only in cases of extreme emergency should students expect that a make-up will be warranted. In any event, students should contact me before the due date to let me know if they are unable to fulfill a class requirement. If a make-up exam is granted, the exam may not be identical to the original, although the content covered will remain the same.

-- There will also be 5 short responses (1 to 2 pages, typed and double spaced), on a news article relevant to a recent or current topic covered in the course. The article must be turned in with the short response. These responses should make an effort to critically assess the arguments made within the news article and apply a relevant course theme to the analysis. I will have more to say about these in short order.

-- I expect you to arrive on time, prepared to discuss the reading material assigned for the day. Because we are engaged in an ongoing discussion, it is important that we maintain a fruitful learning environment with minimal distraction. Periodically (7 times throughout the course), I will administer a pop quiz. These quizzes will be taken directly from the previous day's lecture. It will be very difficult to pass these quizzes if you were not present for the previous lecture. The lowest two quizzes will be dropped from your grade at the end of the semester. The 5 quizzes that remain will account for 5% of your final grade.

-- You should come to class prepared to discuss the reading assigned for the day. The course text is brief, but thorough. I will occasionally supplement this reading with additional pieces to be read online. I will let you know when these come up and how to access them.

Plagiarism/Cheating

Those found to have cheated in the class will receive an automatic failing grade for the assignment or test in question, which may result in a failing grade for the course.

Grade Breakdown

Letter Grades (% Range)	
A (90-100%)	Student demonstrates an excellent understanding of the course concepts and communicates clearly their larger significance. Student has engaged fully with the readings and the result is a cogent and thoughtful response / paper.
B (80-90%)	Student has engaged with the readings and demonstrates an ability to apply them to his/her answers or writing, but demonstration of the larger significance of the response is lacking; less thoughtful.
C (70-80%)	Student demonstrates a working knowledge of the course material, but response does not provide evidence of critical engagement with the readings; not demonstrably thoughtful.
D (60-70%)	Student does not demonstrate an adequate mastery of the course material and readings.
F (Below 60%)	Student demonstrates little understanding of course concepts and readings.

Students with Disabilities

It is the policy of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock to create inclusive learning environments. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion or to accurate assessment of achievement—such as time-limited exams, inaccessible web content, or the use of non-captioned videos—please notify the instructor as soon as possible. Students are also welcome to contact the Disability Resource Center, telephone 501-569-3143 (v/tty). For more information, visit the DRC website at <http://ualr.edu/disability/>.

Reading Schedule

***The order of readings in the syllabus is subject to change. Please check the course website regularly for announcements.

Week 0 8/19 Introductions

Week 1 8/24 Foundations

Ch. 1, pp. 1-12 *American Government & Politics Today* (AG)

8/26 Constitutions

Ch. 2 AG

Week 2 8/31 Federalism Explored

Ch. 3 AG

	9/2	Civil Liberties Ch. 4 AG
<u>Week 3</u>	9/7	Civil Rights Ch. 5 AG
	9/9	Review
<u>Week 4</u>	9/14	Midterm Examination
	9/16	Ideology Examined Ch. 1, pp. 12-16 AG
<u>Week 5</u>	9/21	Political Culture and Socialization Ch. 6 AG
	9/23	Public Opinion Ch. 6 AG (cont'd)
<u>Week 6</u>	9/28	Interest Groups Ch. 7 AG
	9/30	Parties Ch. 7 AG (cont'd)
<u>Week 7</u>	10/5	Participation Ch. 8 AG
	10/7	Campaigns and Elections Ch. 8 (cont'd)
<u>Week 8</u>	10/12	Review
	10/14	Midterm Examination
<u>Week 9</u>	10/19	Congress Ch. 9 AG
	10/21	The Presidency Ch. 10 AG

<u>Week 10</u>	10/26	Executive – Legislative Dynamics No Reading
	10/28	Bureaucracy Ch. 11
<u>Week 11</u>	11/2	Election Day Special Mapping the Predictions
	11/4	Election Recap Mapping the Results
<u>Week 12</u>	11/9	The Courts Ch. 12 AG
	11/11	Domestic Policy Ch. 13 AG
<u>Week 13</u>	11/16	Economic Policy Ch. 13 AG (cont'd)
	11/18	Foreign Policy Ch. 14 AG
<u>Week 14</u>	11/23	TBA
	11/25	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK
<u>Week 15</u>	11/30	Redistricting Game (time permitting)
	12/2	Final Review

***Consult Online Schedule for Final Examination Date and Time**