

Fundamentals of American Government POLS 201 - Fall 2007

Professor: Jason Gainous

Office Location: 406 Ford Hall

Class Meetings: Tuesday and Thursday 1:00 PM-2:15 PM Davidson Hall 109

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday 10:00 AM-12:00 PM, and by appointment

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Course Home Page: <http://louisville.edu/~j0gain01/courses/POLS201/index.html>

Course Objectives

This course is a college level introduction to American government. Students will begin to develop the body of knowledge necessary for informed civic participation. More specifically, students will learn about democratic principles, the structure and institutions of government, the role that ethnicity, race, gender, class, culture and the economy play in shaping the political landscape in America.

By the end of the course students will have learned:

- what the fundamental characteristics of American government are and how the *U.S. Constitution* affects the organization of government, the relationship between national and state governments, and the relationship between government and citizens.
- understand human political behavior as it is expressed individually, collectively, and in groups.
- how the executive, legislative and judicial branches are organized and the role they play in the policymaking process.
- how to effectively use this knowledge as thoughtful citizens participating in civil society.

Books

Lowi, Theodore, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Kenneth A. Shesple. 2007. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. Core 9th Edition. New York: W.W. Norton. (LGS)

Course Requirements

The course uses exams as well as active learning to evaluate student knowledge and performance. There will be three exams in this class. Each exam will be comprised of a series of multiple-choice questions.

During each class session, we will have class discussion. The discussion will consist of a series of questions about the material that are designed to stimulate dialogue in the classroom.

The exams and discussion are weighted as following:

Exam 1 (September 25)	30%
Exam 2 (October 30)	30%
Exam 3 (December 8)*	30%
Discussion/Participation	10%

** Note: Exam 3 is scheduled for Friday, Dec. 7, 2:30 PM - 5:00 PM.*

Course grades will be based on the following scale:

90-100 %	A
80-89 %	B
70-79 %	C
60-69 %	D
Below 60%	F

Schedule

This is my best guess about when we will cover specific topics. As a guess, it means that I am not bound to these dates and you will have to keep up with the readings based on our class progress.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
August 21	Introduction to the Course	
August 23	What is Government	LGS Ch. 1
August 28	Principles of Politics	LGS Ch. 1
August 30	Necessity of Government	LGS Ch. 1
September 4	Making the Constitution	LGS Ch. 2
September 6	Interpreting the Constitution	LGS Ch. 2
September 11	Federalism	LGS Ch. 3
September 13	Civil Liberties	LGS Ch. 4
September 18	Civil Rights	LGS Ch. 4
September 20	More Civil Rights	LGS Ch. 4
September 20	Exam Review	
September 25	EXAM 1	

September 27	Race and U.S. Politics	LGS Ch. 4
October 2	Organization of Congress	LGS Ch. 5
October 4	Lawmaking in Congress	LGS Ch. 5
October 11	Presidency	LGS Ch. 6
October 13	The Public and the Pres	LGS Ch. 6
October 16	Executive Branch	LGS Ch. 7
October 18	Principle-Agent Problems	LGS Ch. 7
October 23	Judiciary	LGS Ch. 8
October 25	Courts/Political Institutions	LGS Ch. 8
October 25	Exam Review	
October 30	EXAM 2	
November 1	Public Opinion	LGS Ch. 9
November 6	Electoral Institutions	LGS Ch. 10
November 6	The (Ir)rationality of Voting	LGS Ch. 10
November 8	Median Voter Theorem	LGS Ch. 10
November 13	Media and Politics	LGS Ch. 13
November 15	Political Parties	LGS Ch. 11
November 20	Two-Party System	LGS Ch. 11
November 22	No Class for Thanksgiving	
November 27	Interest Groups	LGS Ch. 12
December 29	Final exam review	
December 8	Final Exam Fri., Dec. 7, 2:30PM - 5:00PM	