SYLLABUS

Fall 2011
American Government
POS2041 Section 0011(Monday) 3 credits
Ms. Michaela Fazecas

Office Hrs:	Monday 5:00 pm – 6:00 pm
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Webcourses	**https://my.ucf.edu/**

Required Text:

American Government: Roots and Reform
Karen O'Connor, Larry J. Sabato, Alixandra B. Yanus, 2011 Edition

Course Description:

A study of the dynamics of American national government, including its structure, organization, powers, and procedures.

Course Requirements/Attendance:

In addition to the required text book, exam questions will also come from class discussions, video clips and/or movies shown in class and other outside sources you will not find in the text book, and which will be lectured on in class. Course attendance is therefore imperative to do well in the class.

Course Goals:

1. Provide students with a basic understanding of America's political system and its foundation
2. Teach students how the government's institutions/branches work or do not work together
3. Teach students how to critically evaluate information found in the media (opinion vs. fact)
4. Teach students how policies are made and how political interest groups influence/dictate such policies
5. Help students understand that regardless of party affiliation, voting or not voting, government policies affect every aspect of our lives
6. By the end of this course, students should be able to critically evaluate information gleaned from the media, understand the basic functions of government, and ideally become active participants in the American political system

Evaluation Procedures

Grade Categories	Description of the requirements	Weight toward final grade
Exam 1	Chapters 1 – 3, 5&6	15%
Exam 2	Chapters 7 – 10	15%
Exam 3	Chapters 11 – 16	15%
Final Exam	Cumulative	30%
Discussion	Team discussions of topics as assigned in class*	10%
Short essays	Analyze various topics/issues, 5 papers @ 3 points/each**	15%
	Total:	100%

GRADE	%
A	90 +
B	80 +
C	70 +
D	60 +
F	59 and below

***Discussions:** Class will be split into teams (approximately four students/team) during our first class meeting, and instructions on how to complete this in-class project will be delivered at that time. You are allowed to miss one (1) discussion session without it affecting this portion of your grade.

I do not take attendance; however, if you miss more than one group discussion, it will affect your grade, so it is important that you come to each class in order to receive full credit for this portion of the course grade.

**Short essay grading criteria:

	Relate to course material	Summary, analysis and critical thinking	Grammar and spelling	TOTAL
1 point per section	Clearly state how your choice of news article relates to course material	Summarize and analyze the article and explain rationale of your opinion; clearly state why you disagree/agree	Check punctuation, run-on sentences and proper use of grammar; **paper must include link AND copy of article**	3 points

Hand written, incomplete, or late reviews will not be accepted.

Assignments

1. **Information Literacy**

Students will be given a list of topics related to interest groups concerning a political issue, and asked to demonstrate their understanding of the position by the specific interest group chosen. The instructor will require that students utilize a variety of different sources, both online and traditional, in completing the assignment. It is the location, evaluation, and effective use of information from diverse sources that this particular assignment is designed to measure. The paper will be no more than 2 pages, double-spaced, type-written, 12 point font.

2. **Political Efficacy**

Students will be required to write a paper demonstrating their understanding of the effects government has on the lives of citizens when it comes to their pursuit of social, political and economic goals. The paper will be no more than 2 pages, double-spaced, type-written, 12-point font.

Choose one topic – social, political or economic – and describe five (5) ways in which the government (State or Federal) affects you in this particular area. Examples that may help:

Social: same sex marriage laws
Political: voting regulations (for instance, States regulate when/how citizens vote)
Economic: legalization of marijuana, commerce/business (what foods are safe, what cars/products are safe etc. and how they are regulated by legislation)

3. **Critical Thinking**

For this last part of your written assignments, you will be required to write three (3) papers as follows:

Each paper is to be two to three pages, typed (double spaced, 12 point font, standard margins); it will be a review from a current (past 24 months) article related to material discussed in class – this is your opportunity to choose a topic that interests you, as long as you follow the instructions herein.

The review must have the article or copy of the article stapled to the paper. You may use any of the articles I have posted on Blackboard/Webcourses.

Hand written, incomplete, or late reviews will not be accepted.

Activity Process: "How do I do the assignment?"

1. Pick an article and make sure you provide source citation
2. Describe what the article is about
3. How does the article and its content relate to class discussion/lecture/material (example: if you choose an article regarding the death penalty, provide examples from class discussions/chapters that relate to the content of the article)
4. What is your opinion on the subject/topic discussed in the article

Make sure you put your full name, course and section name at the top of the page.

In order to receive full credit, you must clearly follow instructions above and show that you have understood, analyzed and formulated your opinion, paying attention to grammar, correct spelling and sentence structure.

Only a well written, well thought out paper will receive full credit. You should not simply regurgitate the article's content; you must show how it relates to any topic/issue we discussed in class and clearly articulate your standing. Opinions, when backed by facts and analytical reasoning carry a great deal more weight than simply stating "talking points", and it will help support your opinion. Topics such as abortion, the death penalty, President's use of signing statements and executive orders, the current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, health care reform, debt and federal budget debate, are among topics which can be considered.

Hand written, incomplete, or late reviews will not be accepted.

Classroom and Course Policies

Email

Please use: POS 2041 – YOUR LAST NAME in the subject line when you send me email

WebCourses

Syllabus and Assignment instructions are all available to download as pdf documents online on your MyUCF WebCourses. I do not post my powerpoint or notes online.

Laptop Usage

ABSOLUTELY NO ELECTRONICS/LAPTOP/PHONES PERMITTED DURING LECTURES AND/OR EXAM PERIOD

Other communication devices

NO CELL PHONES/BLACKBERRY/iPad/LAPTOPS ETC. – MUST BE TURNED OFF DURING CLASS AND MAY NOT BE USED OR VISIBLE IN ANY WAY DURING EXAM

Grading and evaluation

SEE ABOVE

Attendance and participation

Attendance is important if you want to do well in the course, as exam questions will come from lecture notes, news articles that we may discuss in class, movies and other class discussions, in addition to your textbook.

Late and make-up work

No make-up exams – unless in case of an emergency (severe illness, injury, death in the family), you must speak with me prior to the exam and make arrangements for your exam; all emergencies must be documented.

Accepted documentations of emergencies: doctor note, obituary for a death in the family, police report (for accident), towing receipt etc.

An emergency can occur on the way to an exam (e.g. car breakdown or accident) making advanced notification impossible; in this case you must notify me as soon as possible and provide written proof of emergency prior to scheduling your make-up.

No make-ups will be given to students who are out of town on personal business/vacation. Acceptable reasons for leaving town are the following: participating in an official UCF event (e.g. sport's events, field trips); National Guard or Reserve duty, or a funeral of a close friend or relative. Be sure to notify me in advance and provide appropriate documentation. **No make-up exam without proper documentation.**

Documentation for absence/illness as stated above must be provided ASAP, and make-up exams are preferably given prior to regularly scheduled exam time. If you are away and wait more than one day to provide this documentation, I may deny a make-up exam.

Hand written, incomplete, or late reviews of papers will not be accepted.

Academic integrity

Plagiarism and Cheating of any kind on an examination, quiz, or assignment will result at least in an "F" for that assignment (and may lead to an "F" for the entire course) and may be subject to appropriate referral to the Office of Student Conduct for further action. See the UCF Golden Rule for further information.

Use of any electronics during exam time is strictly prohibited and could result in an "F" on the exam.

Accommodations for students with disabilities (alternate testing opportunities, support for signers, etc.)

Students who need accommodations must be registered with Student Disability Services, Student Resource Center Room 132, phone (407) 823-2371, TTY/TDD only phone (407) 823-2116, before requesting accommodations from the professor.

Week	Dates	ASSIGNMENTS/READING
1	**8/22**	**Introduction** Chapter 1 Political Ideology and the Political Landscape
2	**8/29**	Chapter 2 The Constitution Discussion #1
3	**9/5**	MONDAY SEPTEMBER 5 LABOR DAY – NO CLASS
4	**9/12**	Chapter 3 Federalism Discussion #2 Paper #1 DUE – Information Literacy
5	**9/19**	Chapter 5 Civil Liberties Discussion #3
6	**9/26**	Chapter 6 Civil Rights Discussion #4
7	**10/3**	**EXAM I - Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6** Paper #2 DUE – Political Efficacy
8	**10/10**	Chapter 7 Congress Discussion #5
9	**10/17**	Chapter 8 The Presidency Discussion #6
10	**10/24**	Chapter 9 The Executive Branch and The Federal Bureaucracy Discussion #7 Paper #3 DUE – Critical Thinking
11	**10/31**	Chapter 10 The Judiciary Discussion #8
12	**11/7**	**EXAM II - Chapters 7 through 10** Chapter 12 & 16 Political Parties and Interest Groups Discussion #9
13	**11/14**	Chapter 13 & 14 Voting, Elections and Campaigns Discussion #10 Paper #4 DUE – Critical Thinking
14	**11/21**	Chapter 11 & 15 Public Opinion and the News Media *Movie – Rich Media, Poor Democracy* (documentary) Discussion #11
15	**11/28**	**EXAM III - Chapters 12 & 16, 13 & 14, 11 & 15** Paper #5 DUE – Critical Thinking Review for final exam
16	**12/5 - 10**	**FINAL EXAM TBA** **Final exam period FINAL EXAM**