Political Science 2041.9: American National Government
University of Central Florida
Fall 2017
Instructor: John Hanley
Syllabus

Class Meetings: Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10:30-11:20, MSB 360
Office Hours: HPH 306, Mon. 1:30-2:30, Wednesday 12-2, Friday 9-10; or by appointment.
While I have always had an excellent record of holding class, my wife and I are expecting our first child in late March/early April, making it possible that at some point I will simply go missing from campus. If I have not arrived to class or an office hours appointment within 5-10 minutes of the scheduled time, please excuse yourself with my apologies.
Email via webcourses Phone: 407-823-3329

Overview

This is a survey course is designed to provide students with a foundation for understanding and critically assessing American political processes, institutions, and public policies. The course proceeds in four major sections: first, we will situate the institutions of American government in the context of their creation and understand the objectives of the Founders and the tradeoffs inherent in institutional design. Second, we will observe and evaluate the performance of governmental institutions. Third, we will examine the relationships between government and individuals, groups, and corporate entities. Finally, we will consider American public policy. Throughout the course, but with particular attention at the end, we will assess the outcomes generated by American government both at home and abroad.

Objectives

1. Understand and become conversant in the concepts, theories, institutions, programs that comprise and describe American government and politics.
2. Critically assess alternatives in institutional and policy design through thoughtful use of empirical data. *Especially*: (1) conceptualize and develop measurement strategies to describe and test hypotheses about social phenomena; (2) develop causal explanations for the operation of American politics in a manner that facilitates the understanding of other political systems.
3. Identify the appropriate venues and strategies for pressing claims in the political system. *Especially*: predict and explain the behavior of political actors with reference to their interests and environment.

Validation and Grading

Course assignments will be weighted on the following basis.

Attendance & Participation	12%	Group Project	10%
Syllabus Quiz	3%	Exams (3)	30%
Journal Entries (6)	15%	Final	30%

Students will be permitted two unexcused absences for purposes of the attendance grade. *Independent* of attendance statistics, students are responsible for generating a record of thoughtful participation.

The midterms and final will consist of multiple-choice and identification questions.

The plus/minus system will be used in calculating final grades.

A > $93\frac{1}{3}$	B+ > $86\frac{2}{3}$	C+ > $76\frac{2}{3}$	D > 60
A- > 90	B > $83\frac{1}{3}$	C > $73\frac{1}{3}$	F < 60
	B- > 80	C- > 70	

Text

Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. 2017. *American Government, Power & Purpose*. Norton. 14th brief edition. This is comprehensive, clear, and moderately priced. Reading it will allow you to follow more closely what's going on in lecture, and to understand other materials.

There are other readings, all of which will be available through webcourses. Readings in *AGP&P* should be done before the applicable lecture. Whether you do the other readings before or after lecture is up to you. All readings mentioned in lecture are fair game for examinations.

Additional Policies

Incomplete grades, changes in exam dates, and extensions of written assignments will be approved only by the instructor, and only upon evidence of extenuating circumstances.

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing access and inclusion for all persons with disabilities. This syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. Students with disabilities who need specific access in this course, such as accommodations, should contact the professor as soon as possible to discuss various access options. Students should also connect with Student Accessibility Services (Ferrell Commons, 7F, Room 185, sas@ucf.edu, phone (407) 823-2371). Through Student Accessibility Services, a Course Accessibility Letter may be created and sent to professors, which informs faculty of potential access and accommodations that might be reasonable.

Academic dishonesty will result in grade reduction or a failing grade for the course. Academic dishonesty includes cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, falsifying academic records, or any other act designed to avoid participating honestly in the learning process. In addition to the above, it constitutes cheating to provide false or misleading information to receive a postponement or extension on a test or assignment, or to submit essentially the same written assignment for two different courses (without prior permission) of faculty members.

Electronic devices—including laptops—are not allowed in class except by the special permission of the instructor. Aside from the more obvious evils of texting and online video, these devices affect note-taking and classroom participation. See http://nyr.kr/1i91izA for a recent discussion of this phenomenon.

Schedule of Material

Part I. Introduction and the Constitution. In recent years, the meaning of the Constitution has taken on increased relevance in political debates. We will study the problems which the Constitution was created to address, the struggles to reach agreement and achieve ratification, obvious and lurking defects in the document, and its legacy today.

Monday, January 8 Introduction – Logistics, what is politics and what we hope to gain by studying it.

Readings:
AGP&P, Chapter 1
Robert Dahl, "What is Politics"

1/10-17 Early America and the Constitution – How did our system of government come into being? We will look at the principal debates from the Constitutional convention and the explanations made in *The Federalist*; and we will look at what the Framers missed.

AGP&P, Chapter 2
AGP&P, Federalist 10 & 51 (James Madison) – *the language in these will take some time to digest*.
Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution*? Chapter 2

January 15 NO CLASS (MLK, Jr. Day)

1/19-24 Federalism – does "limited government" mean one with narrow powers, strictly enumerated; or with specific limits on broad powers? How has the operation of federalism changed over time?

AGP&P, Chapter 3
Martha Derthick. 2007. "Where Federalism Didn't Fail." *Public Administration Review*. pp 36-47.

Part II. The Elected Branches and the Electoral System. We examine the Framers' work in Articles I-II, the development of these institutions over time, how they appeal to the public, and how they are influenced by it.

1/26-31 Congress (Article I) –
Introduction to the legislative branch, and how it has changed over time.
The mechanics of legislating, starting with how a bill becomes a law.
Who ends up in Congress, and what motivates them.

AGP&P, Chapter 6
Jay Newton-Small, "The Last Politicians" *Time*, October 28, 2013.

Short Assignment #1 due 9/19

2/2-2/7 President and "the Presidential Branch" (Article II) – emergence of the President as a national leader despite limited institutional power; advisors and Cabinet as policy-makers

AGP&P, Chapter 7
Jeff Shesol, "Can President Trump Learn on the Job?" *New Yorker*, April 22, 2017.

2/9 Exam #1

2/12-14 Bureaucracy – growth of the executive branch over time; expertise, institutional loyalty and problems for democratic accountability; Congress's attempts to re-gain influence.

AGP&P, Chapter 8
James Q Wilson. 1975. "The Rise of the Bureaucratic State."

2/16-21 Judiciary (Article III) – the "least dangerous branch" is today the most respected branch of government. Introduction to the federal court system and the Supreme Court; the genius of *Marbury v. Madison*; the Court's struggles with legitimacy in the 19th and 20th centuries.

AGP&P, Chapter 9
Antonin Scalia. 2005. "Constitutional Interpretation the Old Fashioned Way."

2/23-26 Political Parties – Parties are important for linking elected officials and the public, organizing activity in the legislature, and structuring competition among aspiring politicians. The Founders tried—and failed—to prevent them. Here, we'll look at the emergence of American political parties and their importance to Presidential nominations.

AGP&P, Chapter 12
Ryan Lizza, "Occupied Territory," *The New Yorker*, June 20, 2016.

2/28-3/7 Public Opinion – In a republic, public opinion plays a critical role in what governmental institutions do. We will look at how public opinion is measured, and what it is like.

AGP&P, Chapter 10

Neil Irwin. 2016. "How Is the Economy Doing? Politics Will Probably Decide Your Answer" *The Upshot.*

3/9 Exam #2

3/12-16 NO CLASS - Spring Break

3/19-21 Campaigns and Elections – At first glance, political campaigns appear to respond very effectively to popular demands. However, specific choices of electoral institutions—in the US, plurality voting, primary elections, and private financing of campaigns—shape the political landscape.

AGP&P, Chapter 11

David Weigel, "Meet the Hip Geeks Who Beat Mitt Romney," *Slate*, December 3, 2012.

Part III. The Supporting Cast. Having set up the operations and interactions at the core of American democracy, we move to consider four institutions which greatly affect outcomes and which themselves frequently become the subject of debate and political struggle.

3/23-26 Interest Groups (Associations, lobbies, unions, and PACs) – the "seamier" side of political organizations, the "special interests." We will talk about how the U.S. political system facilitates interest group activity, theories about why groups form, and the history of campaign financing.

AGP&P, Chapter 13

Robert D. Putnam. 1996. "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America" *Policy*, pp. 3-15.

3/28-30 The Media – Political actors frequently complain about "media bias," but what basis is there to believe that journalists affect what people think? What drives changes in how we receive news?

AGP&P, Chapter 14

John Zaller, "Monica Lewinsky's Contribution to Political Science," *PS: Political Science and Politics*, June 1998, pp. 182-189.

Pew. "Newspapers Fact Sheet." June 1, 2017. http://www.journalism.org/fact-sheet/newspapers/

Part IV. Policy. Finally, we put together the pieces together in a few examples. What is the character of American politics and government? What changes might we consider?

4/2-6 Civil Rights – How does a democratic republic confront its own prejudices and end its mistreatment of others? We will reflect on how the Founding generation's deep ambivalence on human rights became embedded in the Constitution. We will examine the muddle of "the First Reconstruction," the rise of state-sanctioned segregation, and multiple factors behind the success of the Civil Rights Movement.

AGP&P, Chapter 5

Celia McGee, "Recalling 'Green Book,' Guide for Black Travelers", *NYT*, August 22, 2010

4/9 Exam #3

4/11-16 Public Policy and Current Challenges – Who wants what? Are they likely to get it? When? How? Where do you fit into the picture?

AGP&P, Chapter 14
Annie Lowrey, "Do Millennials Stand a Chance in the Real World?," *NYT*, March 26, 2013.

4/18-20 Group Presentations

4/23 Conclusion & Review

Monday 4/30, 10-12:50pm	Final Exam