POS 4603 - AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL LAW I

Section: 0W60

College of Sciences

School of Politics, Security, and Intl Affairs

Course Information

Term: Fall 2025
Class Meeting Days: ASC
Class Meeting Location: Online
Modality: WW
Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Name: John Hanley
Title: Associate Lecturer
Office Location: 302 I ("Eye") Howard Phillips Hall
Office Hours
Tuesday 1:15-2:45pm (in office)

Thursday 2:30-4pm (online office hours via Zoom)

Or by appointment
Email: John.Hanley@ucf.edu

Teaching Assistants

Hailey Donahue

Course Description

POS 4603 COS-POLS 3(3,0)American Constitutional Law I: PR: ENC 1102 or POS 2041 or C.I. Development of American federalism and national power, commerce clause, and nationalization of the economy. Fall.

America's system of government arises mainly from a set of institutional negotiations concluded at Philadelphia in the summer and early fall of 1787. Just as it did not slowly take shape over hundreds of years, neither was it the product of ethnic or linguistic nationalism, nor an invention of legal scholars, international organizations, or a foreign conqueror. As a result, we seek political guidance and national meaning from an 18th century document whose text has been lightly revised in the succeeding 226 years. To a greater extent than in probably any other country, the American constitution *matters* and its interpretation is the subject of vigorous debate. But it should not be forgotten that the Constitution failed to save the country from a horrible civil war. In substantial respects, it is not the Constitution we live under today. How do we balance the meanings and purposes of the Constitution of yore against those of the amendments and current-day society? How can we determine what the Constitution's answer is to a specific question, or whether there is an answer? Who gets to make these determinations? Who must follow them?

Student Learning Outcomes

After successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Analyze and assess judicial opinions and case outcomes, judicial philosophies and political and socio-economic theories more generally. Critical thinking will be engaged both *deductively*--identifying shortcomings in stated theories as well as *inductively*--organizing perspectives into coherent systems of belief.
- Call upon an greater and enriched substantive understanding of politics and political history, consistent with the centrality of the Constitution to American political culture and institutions.

Required Course Materials and Resources

Constitutional Law for a Changing America: Institutional Powers and Constraints

Subtitle: Institutional Powers and Constraints
ISBN: 9781071934470
Authors: Epstein, Lee, Kevin T. McGuire, and Thomas G. Walker
Publisher: Sage/CQ Press
Publication Date: 2024
Edition: 12
Notes: There is another volume in the series that is NOT for our course. Its title is "Constitutional Law for a Changing America: **Rights, Liberties, and Justice**"
Online Access: https://collegepublishing.sagepub.com/products/constitutional-law-for-a-changing-america-12-277301

Course Assessment and Grading Procedure

Grades will be based on review exercises, quizzes, and Yellowdig discussions. These will be weighted as follows:

Review exercises (20) -- 33% of grade

For each module there will be one or two short, web-based exercises such as crossword puzzles and matching activities to help you review reading material. These will be graded.

Module quizzes (13) -- 33% of grade

Each module will include a quiz with multiple-choice and true/false questions. The quiz will open on the last day of the module and be available for 24 hours for full credit, and 24 hours late with a ten-percent penalty. The quiz is open book and open notes, but you may not consult with others or use the Internet (including AI) to take the quiz. You may be required to provide written reasoning for your answers to one or more questions. The quiz will require you to understand and be familiar with the readings associated with the module, and any module supplemental material or videos.

Yellowdig (continual through term) -- 33% of grade

A group discussion will take place throughout the semester using the Yellowdig platform. Topics will be added to or removed from point-earning in response to participation and the present subject matter.

Course requirements and syllabus quiz -- 1% of grade

This is the federal/UCF financial aid validation exercise for the course. You may retake it as many times as you wish.

In computing the final grade, the two lowest review exercises and the lowest module quiz will be dropped. In addition to the dropped grades, two exercises and one module quiz may be replaced by the score on the optional final, as discussed below.

Optional Final, December 1-2

The optional final will consist of multiple-choice questions taken from Modules 1-13 and a short essay. If you take the optional final, the score will replace your lowest counting module quiz and lowest counting review exercise. If your grade on the optional final does not exceed your lowest counting quiz/exercise, the optional final will be disregarded—in other words, the optional final cannot hurt you.

Grading Scale

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage
A	93.334-100%
A-	90-93.333%
B+	86.667-89.999%
B	83.334-86.666%
B-	80-83.333%
C+	76.667-79.999%
C	73.334-76.666%
C-	70-73.333%
D	60-69.999%
F	0-59.999%

Policies for Course Grade

Makeup Work Policy

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. Students participating in religious observances or university-sanctioned activities may receive extensions on assignments consistent with UCF and state policy.

Missed/Late Assignments

Review exercises can be done up to one week late with no penalty. Quizzes can be taken up to one day late, for a penalty of 10%. Yellowdig permits students to exceed by 35%, each week, the week's point goal. Thus, you can work a little ahead on this assignment, or catch up a little.

By default, the "running" grade visible to students in Webcourses includes only assignments that have been completed or manually assigned a grade. Students are responsible for monitoring their completion of assignments and, by extension, for understanding the grade impact when missed assignments are ultimately entered as "0."

Attendance

This is an online course. There are no sessions to attend.

Special Note on Weather Disruptions

In the event that severe weather (i.e., tropical systems) is projected to impact the Orlando metro area, UCF administration may suspend due dates in online classes. If a deadline for our course is suspended by the University, it will generally be my practice upon reopening of classes to extend deadlines by the length of time that the original period for the assignment was interrupted by the suspension. For example, if an assignment is due Friday night, and UCF suspends online due dates from Wednesday night to Sunday night, the expected revised due date will be Tuesday night.

In the event that courses are suspended because of weather, students should assume that the suspension is continuing until UCF provides a notification that classes are resuming. To prevent confusion, I will likely wait until UCF has made its announcement before commenting on specific applications to this course.

Students who have been impacted more severely, or who are impacted by severe weather that does not affect the Orlando area, should contact me (when able) to arrange a timeline for catching up in the course.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Except as expressly authorized in the assignment instructions, all assignments are expected to consist of your own work. Should a submitted assignment be suspected of having been AI-generated, or should it exhibit clear indications of AI (such as erroneous references, failure to adhere to assignment guidelines, or heavy reliance on works and viewpoints external to our course), I reserve the power to use supplemental oral examinations to verify a student's comprehension of the assignment submitted and related module material. This examination will be conducted in person or via Zoom at a mutually convenient time, and the grade may be substituted for the overall grade for the module.

Disability Access & Accommodations

The University of Central Florida is committed to providing equal access to all students with disabilities (ADHD, learning disabilities, Autism, chronic medical conditions, physical disabilities, etc.). To receive consideration for reasonable disability-related course accommodations, disabled students must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and complete the steps required for SAS to review accommodation requests. More information can be found on the UCF Student Accessibility Services website under the Start Here tab or by contacting SAS directly (Ferrell Commons 185; sas@ucf.edu; Phone - 407-823-2371).

Approved accommodations are shared with course instructors via the SAS Course Accessibility Letter. Implementing certain accommodations may require discussion about specific considerations of the course design, course learning objectives, and the individual academic and course challenges experienced by the student. While students with disabilities or chronic health needs are also encouraged to discuss any course concerns with professors in addition to contacting SAS, professors are not required to

facilitate disability-related adjustments to the course unless the professor has received a Course Accessibility Letter from SAS that outlines approved accommodations.

Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with UCF's Code of Conduct at Student Conduct and Integrity Office. According to Section 1, "Academic Misconduct," students are prohibited from engaging in:

a. Academic misconduct is defined as any submitted work or behavior that obstructs the instructor of record's ability to accurately assess the student's understanding or completion of the course materials or degree requirements (e.g., assignment, quiz, and/or exam). Examples of academic misconduct include but are not limited to: plagiarism, unauthorized assistance to complete an academic exercise; unauthorized communication with others during an examination, course assignment, or project; falsifying or misrepresenting academic work; providing misleading information to create a personal advantage to complete course/degree requirements; or multiple submission(s) of academic work without permission of the instructor of record.

b. Any student who knowingly helps another violate academic behavior standards is also in violation of the standards.

c. Commercial Use of Academic Material. Selling of course material to another person and/or uploading course material to a third-party vendor without authorization or without the express written permission of the University and the instructor of record. Course materials include but are not limited to class notes, the instructor of record's slide deck, tests, quizzes, labs, instruction sheets, homework, study guides, and handouts.

d. Soliciting assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements. The solicitation of assistance with an assignment, lab, quiz, test, paper, etc., without authorization of the instructor of record or designee is prohibited. This includes but is not limited to asking for answers to a quiz, trading answers, or offering to pay another to complete an assignment. It is considered Academic Misconduct to solicit assistance with academic coursework and/or degree requirements, even if the solicitation did not yield actual assistance (for example, if there was no response to the solicitation).

Responses to Academic Dishonesty, Plagiarism, or Cheating

Students should also familiarize themselves with the procedures for academic misconduct in UCF's student handbook, *The Golden Rule*. UCF faculty members have a responsibility for students' education and the value of a UCF degree, and so seek to prevent unethical behavior and respond to academic misconduct when necessary. Penalties for violating rules, policies, and instructions within this course can range from a zero on the exercise to an "F" letter grade in the course. In addition, an Academic Misconduct report could be filed with the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, which could lead to disciplinary warning, disciplinary probation, or deferred suspension or separation

from the University through suspension, dismissal, or expulsion with the addition of a “Z” designation on one’s transcript.

Being found in violation of academic conduct standards could result in a student having to disclose such behavior on a graduate school application, being removed from a leadership position within a student organization, the recipient of scholarships, participation in University activities such as study abroad, internships, etc.

Let’s avoid all of this by demonstrating values of honesty, trust, and integrity. No grade is worth compromising your integrity and moving your moral compass. Stay true to doing the right thing: take the zero, not a shortcut.

Title IX

Title IX prohibits sex discrimination, including sexual misconduct, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and retaliation. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources available to support the victim, including confidential resources and information concerning reporting options at Let's Be Clear and UCF Cares.

For more information on access and community engagement, Title IX, accessibility, or UCF’s complaint processes contact:

- Title IX – ONAC – Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance & askanadvocate@ucf.edu
- Disability Accommodation – Student Accessibility Services – Student Accessibility Services & sas@ucf.edu
- Access and Community Engagement (including the Ginsberg Center for Inclusion and Community Engagement, Military and Veteran Student Success, and HSI Initiatives)
- UCF Compliance and Ethics Office – Compliance, Ethics, and Risk Office & complianceandethics@ucf.edu
- The Ombuds Office is a safe place to discuss concerns.

Reporting an Incident or Issue

If you believe you have experienced discrimination by any faculty or staff member, contact the Office of Nondiscrimination & Accommodations Compliance via the ONAC website or at 407-823-1336. You can also choose to report using the UCF Integrity Line either anonymously or as yourself at 1-855-877-6049 or by using the online form. UCF

cares about you and takes every report seriously. For more information see the Reporting an Incident or Issue Webpage.

Deployed Active-Duty Military Students

Students who are deployed active duty military and/or National Guard personnel and require accommodation should contact their instructors as soon as possible after the semester begins and/or after they receive notification of deployment to make related arrangements.

Campus Safety

At UCF Public Safety and Police, safety is the top priority. Emergencies on campus are rare, but if one should arise, it's important to be familiar with some basic safety and security concepts.

- In an emergency, always dial 911.
- Every UCF classroom has an **Emergency Procedure Guide** posted on a wall near the door, which will show you how to respond to a variety of situations. This guide can also be found online here.
- In the event of an active threat, remember **AVOID, DENY, DEFEND**. Choose the best course of action and act immediately. Watch the video here to learn more.
    - **AVOID**. Pay attention to your surroundings and have an exit plan. Get as much distance and as many barriers between you and the threat as quickly as possible.
    - **DENY.** When avoiding is difficult or impossible, deny the threat access to you and your space. Lockdown by creating barriers, turning the lights off and remaining quiet and out of sight. Make sure your cell phone is silenced, but do not turn it off.
    - **DEFEND.** When you are unable to put distance between yourself and the threat, be prepared to protect yourself. Commit to your actions, be aggressive and do not fight fairly. Do whatever it takes to survive.
- For emergencies on campus, UCF will utilize the UCF Alert system. All UCF students, faculty and staff are automatically enrolled to receive these email and text alerts, however, it's a good idea to frequently ensure your contact information is up to date.

Financial Aid Accountability

All instructors/faculty are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. In order to document that you began this course, please complete this activity by the end of

the first week of classes or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so may result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

Class Schedule

August 18-29

Module #1: The Constitution and the Supreme Court

Epstein et al., pp. 1-48

August 30-September 5

Module #2: The Judiciary

Epstein et al., pp. 49-117

September 6-September 12

Module #3: The Legislature

Epstein et al., pp. 119-179

September 13-19

Module #4: The Executive

Epstein et al., pp. 181-255

September 20-26

Module #5: Interbranch Relations

Epstein et al., pp. 257-316

September 27-October 3

Module #6: Federalism

Epstein et al., pp. 317-381

October 4-10

Module #7: Commerce, part the first

Epstein et al., pp. 383-437

October 11-17

Module #8: Commerce, part deux

Epstein et al., pp. 437-484

October 18-24

Module #9: The Power to Tax and Spend

Epstein et al., pp. 485-545

October 25-November 3 (note change of due date to Monday)

Module #10: The Contract Clause

Epstein et al., pp. 547-580

November 4-10

Module #11: Economic Substantive Due Process

Epstein et al., pp. 581-628

November 11-17

Module #12: The Takings Clause

Epstein et al., pp. 629-664

November 18-25

Tropical Storm Makeup (if necessary), Review

December 1-2

Optional Final