POS 4603 - American Constitutional Law I

Section: 0001

College of Sciences

School of Politics, Security, and Intl Affairs

Course Information

Term: Spring 2026
Class Meeting Days: MWF
Class Meeting Time: 12:30PM - 01:20PM
Class Meeting Location: BA2 0207
Modality: P
Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Name: Jeff Dambly
Title: Instructor
Office Location: HPH 305A
Office Hours
MW 11am-12pm
Email: jeffrey.dambly@ucf.edu

Office Hours

Office hours will be Monday and Wednesday, from 11am-12pm, in my office on the third floor of Howard Phillips Hall (305A). More generally, I will always make my best effort to

be available for questions. You may email me at jeffrey.dambly@ucf.edu at any time. I am almost always connected to email, so please don’t hesitate to follow up if I do not respond quickly. At a maximum, you should expect a response in no later than 1 business day. If designated office hours are problematic, we can also schedule time to meet in office or virtually on Zoom that is convenient for you.

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.

American Constitutional Law I examines the structure of the Federal Government, interactions between its respective branches, and interactions with states and foreign governments pursuant to the U.S. Constitution. This is an in-person course. The course material is organized into numbered modules to be completed sequentially.

Please read this syllabus carefully. When you've finished reading this syllabus, you can start with the "Syllabus Quiz" on Webcourses. You must score 5/5 on the Syllabus Quiz by Friday, January 16, 2026.

Student Learning Outcomes

The objective of this course is to introduce you to the important role that the United States Constitution has in orienting American politics and governance. With this end in mind, we will explore the Constitution, its various interpretations, and the role of the judiciary in constitutional application, examples of the influence it has had on the function of government, and the case law that has emanated from its interpretation. The objectives of this class include the following:

- Understand key constitutional terms and concepts
- Understand historically significant Supreme Court decisions
- Analyze historical trends in Supreme Court composition and decision making

- Evaluate and apply constitutional precedents
- Apply legal reasoning to complex hypothetical problems
- Engage in discussion and deliberation of constitutional issues
- Improve writing and critical thinking skills
- Build collaboration skills and practice professional work habits

Required Course Materials and Resources

Constitutional Law for a Changing America
Subtitle: Institutional Powers and Constraints
ISBN: 978-1071934470
Authors: Lee Epstein, Kevin T. McGuire, Thomas G. Walker
Publisher: CQ Press
Publication Date: March 26, 2025
Edition: 12th

Course Assessment and Grading Procedure

This is an entirely in-person course meeting Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays (MWF) each week. I break down the syllabus into modules. Since these modules align with chapters from our textbook, I only provide the general chapter to be covered in the module/week on the syllabus. Generally, you should read ahead and (ideally) complete the assigned textbook chapter prior to the week. However, it is your responsibility to stay up to date on where we are, as the schedule may change over time. I reserve the right to amend the syllabus as I deem necessary. Moreover, I want to emphasize the importance of class discussions; the assigned readings are meant to provide a baseline of relevant information. We'll draw out the "why" through in-class discussions. Lectures will also cover materials relevant to the broader conversation that aren't assigned reading (to save you from needing to spend more time prepping each week). Finally, you'll note below that participation matters towards your final grade. Thus, you should not expect to skip class and succeed in this course.

Please note that, traditionally, legal courses center around in-class discussions and professors frequently use a Socratic method of instruction based on asking students

questions. You should expect a Socratic method in this class. I use it to help moderate a discussion. I don't use it as a scare tactic, but instead I think of it more as a moderator's tool.

Grading - your final grade will be a composite of five factors:

1) Participation (15% of your grade)

- Students are expected to attend each class and should be prepared to participate in class discussions, engage in debates, and work collaboratively with their peers. Evidence to the contrary (absences, lack of participation in discussions, lack of preparedness, or lack of effectively supporting classmates) can significantly harm your participation score.

- Participation is distinct from attendance, but I strongly believe that you have to be present to participate. So, attendance will be taken at random throughout the semester and will contribute to your participation grade.

2) Module Quizzes (25% of grade)

- Each week, students will take a timed, online quiz via Webcourses. Each quiz will test students' understanding of the assigned reading and in-class discussions. Students will be provided approximately one week to complete the quiz once it is published, and students may take the quiz at their leisure within that time frame. Quizzes close at a specified time, so students will not be able to make up or take quizzes after that point without prior instructor approval.

- Quizzes will have questions presented in a variety of potential formats, to include (but not be limited to) multiple choice, true/false, best answer, short answer, and essay.

- Students must have access to a computer and webcam to take quizzes. Quizzes will operate through the Respondus LockDown Browser with webcam and screen monitoring. Should this be a problem for any student, they should discuss with the instructor at the beginning of the course.

3) Midterm (30% of grade)

- For your “midterm,” you will be provided a question based on course materials and asked to provide analysis based only on those materials. This will be an online essay exam, conducted like your module quizzes via Webcourses through the Respondus LockDown browser. We will dedicate a week of the course to the midterm, allowing you to take the midterm at your convenience during that week-long period. There will not be class that week, though I will be available to answer questions.

4) Final Exam (30% of grade)

- The final exam will be essay-based. You will receive a series of hypothetical facts and questions testing your cumulative knowledge developed throughout the course. You will need to apply your knowledge to answer the hypothetical questions presented. The exam will be during the designated exam period during finals week.

Course Behavior

Very simply, every student should be prepared engaged on a weekly basis. If you are not engaged, it may affect your grade. Your participation and engagement may well be the

deciding factor if your overall grade is on the fence to the next-highest grade range (up or down).

Be sure to understand this next point: this course will engage in discussions meant to provoke thoughtful conversation on potentially controversial legal and policy topics. I may include an array of viewpoints in reading materials so that we can critique and debate in class. All viewpoints are to be respected in an academic discussion. In expressing arguments and analysis, please be considerate and mindful of your classmates; please also have the same consideration when listening to the viewpoints of your fellow classmates, regardless of if they are consistent with your political or ideological leanings. I anticipate (and, indeed, expect) engaging, vigorous, and professional discussions. I also expect reasoned, measured, and (again) professional discussions. Those who act contrary to these expectations may lose the right to participate in class discussions and earn the associated course points.

Grading Scale

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Letter Grade	Percentage
A	94-100%
A-	90-93%
B+	87-89%
B	84-86%
B-	80-83%
C+	77-79%
C	74-76%
C-	70-73%
D+	67-69%
D	64-66%
D-	61-63%
F	0-60%

Policies for Course Grade

Makeup Work Policy, Missed/Late Assignments, and Attendance

Make-ups for writing, quizzes, the midterm, or the final exam will only be allowed for official University activities or personal emergencies. Written documentation is required. Make-up assessments may be different. See UCF Policy 4.401. and UCF Regulation 5.020.

Excused absences include documented illnesses, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Considerations will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Incomplete grades are given only in situations where unexpected emergencies prevent a student from completing the course and the remaining work can be completed the next semester. Your instructor is the final authority on whether you qualify for an incomplete.

Technology in the Classroom

Students may, without prior notice, record video or audio of a class lecture for a class in which the student is enrolled for their own personal educational use. A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach students about a particular subject. Recording classroom activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to lab sessions, student presentations (whether individually or part of a group), class discussion (except when incidental to and incorporated within a class lecture), clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, and private conversations is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation and class attendance, and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the University's Student Code of Conduct as described in the Golden Rule.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) is governed on an assignment-by-assignment basis. For each assignment, you must carefully review the instructions to determine whether AI-generated content is permitted. In some cases, you may be permitted (though not required) to use GenAI. When using GenAI, you must disclose specifically where and how it was used in the process of completing the assignment. Unless explicitly allowed, all components of your work must be fully prepared by you. Any attempt to represent GenAI output inappropriately as your own work will be treated as plagiarism. Ultimately, students are responsible for the accuracy and veracity of submitted work whether AI-generated or not. There is significant value in many AI tools, but when authorized they should at most supplement, not replace, your own efforts, to include creative and critical thinking skills.

Using LockDown Browser and Webcam for Online Quizzes and Exams

This course requires the use of LockDown Browser and a webcam for online quizzes and exams. The webcam can be built into your computer or can be the type that plugs in with a USB cable. Watch this short video to get a basic understanding of LockDown Browser and the webcam feature. A student Quick Start Guide (PDF) is also available.

Then download and install LockDown Browser from this link:

https://download.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=472413933

To ensure LockDown Browser and the webcam are set up properly, do the following:

- Start LockDown Browser, log into this course.
- Locate and select the Help Center button on the LockDown Browser toolbar.
- Run the Webcam Check and, if necessary, resolve any issues.
- Run the System & Network Check. If a problem is indicated, see if a solution is provided in the Knowledge Base. Troubleshooting information can also be emailed to our institution's help desk.
- Exit the Help Center and locate the Practice Quiz.
- Upon completing and submitting the practice quiz, exit LockDown Browser.

When taking an online exam that requires LockDown Browser and a webcam, remember the following guidelines:

- Select a location where you are comfortable having a video recording taken of yourself and your workspace environment. This area should also be free of distractions and interruptions.
    - Turn off all other devices (e.g., tablets, phones, second computers) and place them outside of your reach.
    - Clear your desk of all external materials not permitted — books, papers, other devices, etc.
    - Before starting the test, know how much time is available for it, and that you've allotted sufficient time to complete it.
    - Remain at your device for the duration of the test.
    - If the device or networking environment is different than what was used previously with the Webcam Check and System & Network Check in LockDown Browser, run the checks again prior to starting the test.
    - To produce a good webcam video, do the following:
        - Avoid wearing baseball caps or hats with brims.
        - Ensure your device is on a firm surface (a desk or table). Do NOT have the device on your lap, a bed or other surface where the device (or you) are likely to move.
        - If using a built-in webcam, avoid tilting the screen after the webcam setup is complete.
        - Take the exam in a well-lit room and avoid backlighting, such as sitting with your back to a window.
    - Remember that LockDown Browser will prevent you from accessing other websites or applications; you will be unable to exit the test until all questions are completed and submitted.

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:

1. 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 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 assessment, 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.

2. Any student who knowingly helps another violate academic behavior standards is also in violation of the standards.
3. 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 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.
4. 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" designated 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 arrangements.

Campus Safety

At UCF's 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 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 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

	Course Schedule
1	Dates: January 12, 14, 16 Topic: The U.S. Constitution and the Supreme Court Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 1-48, Federalist Papers 41, 42, 43, 48, 49, 51
2	Dates: January 21, 23 (Note: no class on Jan. 19) Topic: The Judiciary Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 49-118, Federalist Papers 78, 80, 81
3	Dates: January 26, 28, 30 Topic: The Legislature Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp.119-180
4	Dates: February 2, 4, 6 Topic: The Executive Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp.181-256, Federalist Paper 69, 70, 77
5	Dates: February 9, 11, 13 Topic: Interbranch Interactions Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 257-316
6	Dates: February 16, 18, 20 Topic: Case Study on Interbranch Issues and National Security Reading Assignment: Oral argument recording/transcripts, briefs, and opinion from Tik Garland (provided via Webcourses)
7	Dates: February 23, 25, 27 Topic: Federalism Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 317-382, Federalist Papers 39, 45, 46
8	Dates: March 2, 4, 6 Topic:The Commerce Power Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 383-484
9	Date: March 9, 11, 13 Topic: Midterm Exam (Online) (no in-person class this week) Reading Assignment: none

10	Date: March 16, 18, 20 Topic: Spring Break Reading Assignment: none
11	Dates: March 23, 25, 27 Topic: The Taxing Power Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 485-546
12	Dates: March 30, April 1, April 3 Topic: The Contract Clause Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 547-580
13	Dates: April 6, 8, 10 Topic: Economic Substantive Due Process Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 581-628
14	Dates: April 13, 15, 17 Topic: The Takings Clause Reading Assignment: Epstein et al, pp. 629 - 664
15	Dates: April 20, 22, 24 Topic: Interbranch Case Study on the Tariff Cases Reading Assignment: Excerpt oral argument recording/transcripts and briefs from Lear Inc. v. Trump (provided via Webcourses)
16	Date: April 27 Topic: Review Session Reading Assignment: none