POS 2041 - American National Government

Section: 0005

College of Sciences

School of Politics, Security, and Intl Affairs

Course Information

Term: Spring 2026
Class Meeting Days: TR
Class Meeting Time: 01:30PM - 02:50PM
Class Meeting Location: CB2 O105
Modality: P
Credit Hours: 3.00

Instructor Information

Name: Christopher Spinale, Ph.D.
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Learner Centered Design

This course has earned the College of Science's Learner-Centered Design Badge

[What is the Learner-Centered Design Badge?](#)

The College of Sciences' Learner-Centered Design designation recognizes individual courses and the COS faculty who teach them. It identifies a faculty member's commitment to creating a learning environment that promotes educational best practices, which accommodate a wide range of student needs, foster a less stressful learning environment, and help students better understand and meet faculty expectations.

Learner-Centered Design Best Practices

I. ***Practices designed to create a welcoming environment for students with a variety of communication and learning style preferences:***

   A. ***Students will have the ability to demonstrate their learning in multiple ways. For example, a variety of assignment types will be assigned such as written work, projects, videos, audio files, Prezi, etc.***

   B. ***Students working in a group will be given the option of choosing their own group or being assigned to a group. The method of communicating that choice should be clearly stated.***

   C. ***Students will have access to recorded lectures with transcripts or closed captioning or class notes.***

D. ***Students will have access to all assignments with due dates in the first week of the semester so students can work ahead or plan ahead. The assignments do not need to be open for submission but should be accessible to students to review requirements.***

E. ***Students will have at least 5 opportunities for in-class or interactive learning activities during the semester.***

F. ***Students will have options, beyond simply posting office hours, of how they can communicate with the instructor and other students including in-person, virtually, or via email/Inbox or other written communication.***

G. ***Faculty posts or presents information about themselves (beyond their academic background) so students can get to know them as a 'real person' and not merely as their professor. This presentation can take many forms (e.g., module page, video introduction, in-class presentation, etc.).***

II. ***Practices designed to create a welcoming environment for students with a variety of personal and academic needs:***

A. ***Students will be able to use non-electronic earplugs for testing. If a test is being proctored online with video feed (i.e., Respondus Monitor), students may also use non-electronic earplugs.***

B. ***Students taking a synchronous class that is over 75 minutes will be provided with at least one announced break; no instruction will take place during the break.***

C. ***The instructor will offer flexibility for students' personal and academic needs following careful consideration of its impact on the learning environment for the entire class. The method for requesting such flexibility will be clearly stated in the syllabus. Note: This is separate from the course accessibility options that Student Accessibility Services provides.***

D. ***No timed in-class assessments, such as planned quizzes and writing activities or unannounced pop quizzes or notecard responses, will occur during the class period. Timed assessments followed by or embedded in instruction or other activities pose challenges in meeting accommodations for students who receive extra time.***

III. ***Creating a less-stressful environment for students:***

- ***A. The instructor will spend 5 minutes on the first day of class discussing different learning strategies and encourages students to communicate their needs to the instructor. This could take the form of a video, module page, or other posted resource.***
- ***B. No single item in the class (assignment or test) will be worth more than 20% of the final grade.***
- ***C. Students will not be required to speak or present in-person or in virtual environments. For example, students are provided the option of submitting a pre-recorded presentation in lieu of a live presentation. This criterion is not applicable to asynchronous courses without a presentation component.***
- ***D. Students will be provided with an agenda and/or class outline for each class period. For online modules, students will be provided with an agenda for each module.***
- ***E. Students are allowed two options to complete an assignment. For example, students may submit a weekly reflection on their learning either in writing or via video. Some students process information and express their ideas better in speech than in writing.***

IV. ***Helping students understand and meet faculty expectations:***

- ***A. Students will be provided access to curated background information or relevant knowledge for the class (from earlier in the semester or from prerequisite courses). Examples of such resources are paper-writing tips, background information, math knowledge needed for the class and other relevant information or techniques/strategies.***
- ***B. Students will be provided with granular learning objectives and a list of important concepts covered on each test. For example, module or unit study guides are provided.***
- ***C. A rubric will be provided for each graded assignment.***
- ***D. Students will be provided with a one-page executive summary of the syllabus with all due dates and assignments. For example, a grading summary, list of modules/topics, related assignments, and due dates are presented in a single table.***

E. ***Students will be able to resubmit some assignments to be regraded. The syllabus will clearly indicate which assignments are eligible for resubmission and under what conditions.***

F. ***Students will have at least weekly self-assessment opportunities such as non-graded practice assessments, non-graded concept checks etc.***

Course Description

POS 2041 COS-POLS 3(3,0)American National Government: In this course, students will investigate how the national government is structured and how the American constitutional republic operates. It covers the philosophical and historical foundations of American government, including but not limited to the declaration of independence, the United States constitution and all its amendments, and the federalist papers. The course examines the branches of government and the governments laws, policies, and programs. It also examines the ways in which citizens participate in their government and ways their government responds to citizens.Student Learning Outcomes: Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and practices of Americas constitutional republic. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the nations founding documents, including the declaration of independence, the U.S. constitution and its amendments, and the federalist papers. Students will demonstrate knowledge of landmark U.S. supreme court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions. Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the American federal government and its impact on law and society. Students will demonstrate an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates. Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view. Fall, Sum, Spr.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and practices of America's constitutional republic.

- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and its amendments, and the Federalist Papers.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation and landmark executive actions.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the American federal government and its impact on law and society.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

Required Course Materials and Resources

American Government
ISBN: 13: 979-8-385190-66-9
Authors: Glen Krutz & Sylvie Waskiewicz
Publisher: OpenStax/Rice University and Lumen Learning
Publication Date: July 23, 2025
Edition: 4e
Notes: Your textbook for this class is available for free online, as a web view (embedded in the course modules) and as a downloadable PDF. The web view is recommended -- the responsive design works seamlessly on any device. The link for each chapter is included in each week’s module. To access each chapter you just have to click on the link provided in each module. To navigate through the chapter, you may use the "Next" or "Back" buttons located at the top and bottom of each chapter's screen.

Course Readings and Lectures

Students are responsible for completing all reading assignments prior to the class meeting for which the readings are assigned.

Primary sources will also be used to augment the text book. Most of the readings will be excerpts from the U.S. Constitution, speeches, executive orders, veto messages, articles

of impeachment and U.S. Supreme Court syllabi (syllabi are short case opinion summaries written by justices' law clerks). Students will also read legal analyses of various aspects of the U.S. Constitution, along with a few other readings of varying lengths. All assigned readings are provided as weblinks.

The Canvas course modules are set up as an outline of topics that will be covered during the semester. The modules are laid out in weeks of study, so from the main modules page, you will always know the content topics that will be discussed prior to coming to class by clicking the introduction and assignments link. Here you will find a list of learning objectives that highlight the specific content that will be covered during each class.

As taking notes can be fast and furious during lecture, a fill-in-the-blank outline (word document) is posted at the beginning of each module. Further, PowerPoint slides of my lecture notes are provided in the Canvas course. Consider comparing the posted notes to what is discussed in class as material/information will be shared during lecture that is not included in the posted material. This helps ensure you attend class regularly.

Course Assessment and Grading Procedure

Assignment Type	Description	Possible
Interactive Discussions	Students will share ideas about assigned readings with course colleagues. Discussions are completed in three parts where students will respond in substantive paragraphs to a question posted by the instructor as well as two responses to that same initial course by course colleagues.	100 x 4 interactiv 400 points 20 x 1 introductor post = 20 points
Case Studies	Students will address current issues included and reflect on the impact of those issues in an 800-word evaluation.	300 x 3 case stud points
Mini-Quizzes	In person, consists of multiple-choice questions.	200 x 6 = 1200 p 30 x 1 Political Ty 30 points

Final	In person, consists of multiple-choice questions.	650 x 1 = 650 poi
Attendance/ Participation	Come to class, participate in questions to check for understanding, and get the points. Don't come to class and lose the points.	50 x 1 = 50 points unexcused abser lost for every une absence
Total		3250 points

All case studies are done in groups. The written submission must be double-spaced and typed in Times New Roman 12- point font. Furthermore, all assignments require your name, name of the assignment, and the due date. Points will be deducted for spelling, punctuation, grammatical, and format errors for all typewritten work. Scoring rubrics for the case studies are provided, so be sure to read them to know what is expected.

The discussion boards are used to deepen understanding and reflect on various course topics. Prompts, guidelines and due dates are provided in the modules. Be sure to read the directions and scoring rubrics for each discussion board assignment.

Access to assignments, except for the mini quizzes and final exam, is available ten days or more before the assignment is due. Assignments are found under the assignments tab in Canvas, as well as the course modules.

Class Schedule

Tentative Course Calendar Topics (subject to change)

Week	**Topic**	Assignment/Notes
1-Jan. 12	Introduction What is Government	Week 1 Module
2-Jan. 19	The Constitution and its Origins	Week 2 Module
3-Jan. 26	The Constitution and its Origins	Week 3 Module
4-Feb. 2	The U.S. Constitution and Federalism	Week 4 Module
5-Feb. 9	The Politics of Public Opinion	Week 5 Module
6-Feb. 16	Voting, Elections, Political Parties, and Interest Groups	Week 6 Module

7-Feb. 23	Voting, Elections, Political Parties, and Interest Groups	Week 7 Module
8-March 2	The Congress	Week 8 Module
9-March 9	The Congress	Week 9 Module
March 16	Spring Break	No Class
10-March 23	The Presidency & The Bureaucracy	Week 10 Module
11-March 30	The Presidency & The Bureaucracy	Week 11 Module
12-April 6	The Courts, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights	Week 12 Module
13-April 13	The Courts, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights	Week 13 Module
14-April 20	The Courts, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights/Final Exam Review	Week 14 Module
15-April 27	Study Day	No Classes starting Tue April 28
16-May 5	Final Exam	5/5-(1:00pm-3:50pr Regular Classroor

Grading Scale

The plus/minus system will be used for calculating final grades. Final grades are determined based on the total number of points accumulated (**Note: Percentages are not rounded**):

Final Grade	Total number of Earned Points	Percentage of Earned Points
A	3055-3250	94-100%
A-	2925-3054	90-93%
B+	2828-2924	87-89%
B	2698-2827	83-86%
B-	2600-2697	80-82%
C+	2503-2599	77-79%
C	2373-2502	73-76%

C-	2275-2372	70-72%
D+	2178-2274	67-69%
D	2048-2177	63-66%
D-	1950-2047	60-62%
F	1949 and below	59% and below

Policies for Course Grade

Makeup Work Policy: Per university policy, you are allowed to submit make-up work (or an equivalent, alternate assignment) for authorized university-sponsored activities, religious observances, military service, or legal obligations (such as jury duty). If this participation conflicts with your course assignments, I will offer a reasonable opportunity for you to complete missed assignments and/or exams. The make-up assignment and grading scale will be equivalent to the missed assignment and its grading scale. In the case of an authorized university activity, it is your responsibility to show me a signed copy of the Program Verification Form for which you will be absent, prior to the class in which the absence occurs. In any of these cases, please contact me ahead of time to notify me of upcoming needs. No grading penalty will be applied to students requesting these accommodations when made in accordance with the university's policies.

Missed/Late Assignments: All assignments are due no later than the day and time posted; late assignments may be submitted with permission from the instructor and submission of documentation explaining why submitting the assignment on time was not possible. The instructor must be notified as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours of the missed assignment to be eligible to submit that assignment late. Missing the mini quizzes and/or final exam without a valid excuse will incur a penalty of no less than 30 percent of the point value of said exam.

Note: The mini quizzes and the final will assess the material covered during the term. Study guides and review questions are included at the end of each module to support your learning. Further, you will never have an

unannounced assessment. I will always share the date, time, and content to be assessed so you may prepare adequately for your academic success.

Attendance: Attendance for each class is expected. Because you cannot participate when you are not present, poor attendance may adversely affect your Class Preparation and Participation grade. Additionally, missing three (3) or more classes without approval from the instructor may result in a failing grade for the course. Late arrivals are distracting, so please be on time to class.

To ensure compliance, I will be using the iClicker system to take attendance. You are required to check into class using the iClicker student app on your smartphone, tablet, or laptop. It is your responsibility to set up an iClicker account and properly register in my course (instructions for doing so are located in the canvas). It is also your responsibility to regularly check your iClicker records for any discrepancies and bring them to my attention by the following class meeting.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Policy

Use of GenAI tools via website, app, or any other access, is not permitted in this class. All components of assignments in this course must be independently and originally completed by the student. Representing work created by GenAI as your own will be treated as plagiarism.

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.