

## Political Science 2051: American Government (Spring 2018)

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**Instructor:** Steven Brailsford; 309 Stubbs Hall

**Email:** sbrail2@lsu.edu

**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 12:30–1:30 pm,  
Thursdays 12:30–1:30 pm,  
or by appointment.

**Time:** TTH 1:30–2:50

**Place:** 129 Tureaud Hall

### Introduction and Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to provide you with an overview of American government. Discussion will center on how the American system of government came to exist and the various forces that have shaped its subsequent development. Thus, much of our focus will be on the structure of our government including executive, judiciary, legislative, and electoral institutions, among others. Throughout the course I will contrast the American system with other systems around the world. Additionally, I will be attempting to integrate discussions about how the phenomena discussed in theories of rational choice and collective action may influence or constrain the way our government was formulated and the way it works.

As a general education elective in the social sciences, this course is designed to prepare students to meet the following competency requirements: *“LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global independence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic differences.”*

### Required Texts:

- Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere, *American Government: Power and Purpose*, 14th Edition (Brief) (2017) [ISBN: 978-0393283778].
- David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Second Edition (2004) [ISBN: 978-0300105872]
- All other required readings will be posted to Moodle

### Course Requirements:

Students should read the selected text for the class **prior** to the class meeting so that they can participate and engage with the course material. These readings are provided on the reading schedule at the end of this syllabus.

The lectures I give during our class meetings are intended to prepare you for the exams, and material may be presented in the lecture that is **not** in the textbook and will be on the exam. Students should come to class prepared and be attentive and responsive during the lecture. Students are **expected to attend class regularly, punctually, and for the duration of class meeting**. I reserve the right to penalize students who engage in disruptive behavior, such as using electronic devices, or those who arrive late or leave class early without clearing it with me before hand. (More information on disruptive behavior and recourse can be located in the Academic Honesty section of this syllabus)

Throughout the semester there will be a series of six **quizzes**, which will be taken on Moodle. These will all be open for 24 hours and you will be given two attempts, with the highest score out of the two being recorded. There are absolutely no makeups for missed quizzes; however, if you miss one, extra credit will make up for those lost points, if you choose to do so.

There will also be four short **writing assignments** in which you will choose from a selection of the readings on Moodle that have been assigned up to that point. For these assignments, you will read your selection

and in 300–500 words, **briefly** summarize it and, more importantly, critically analyze it. So for these writing assignments, I want to see that you did the reading, followed by you essentially telling me what you thought of it; what you liked/didn't like/agreed with/disagreed with, but most importantly, you must explain *why*.

The course consists of two in-class **exams** and a **final exam**. The in-class exams will not be cumulative and could consist of a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions. The dates of all of these are provided in the "important dates" section of the syllabus, as well as on the reading calendar. I will make it abundantly clear that short of a real conflict (familial or personal harm), there are absolutely **no makeups for exams**. If you do end up having an emergency and miss an exam, you will be required to provide a doctors note, funeral notice, or some form of documentation pertaining to a family, or other, emergency.

### Extra Credit:

You will be given at least two chances for extra credit throughout the semester. This will likely come in the form of attendance at a lecture or presentation of my choosing outside of class hours. You will check in with me if I'm there or if I'm not, you will write a single-page response regarding what you took from it. Each one of these will be rewarded with extra credit in the form of 1% of your final grade, equivalent to a quiz grade.

### Attendance Policy:

In order to receive a passable grade, students are **required** to attend class. I will conduct four(4) attendance checks randomly throughout the semester and if you're present, you will receive full credit but if you are not... you don't. Since these are random, university-excused absences will be honored, but you must provide documentation to me. Examples of excused absences, which will not endanger your grade, are familial emergencies and duties (e.g. a sudden death, attending a wedding, etc.), university-sponsored events (athletic, club-affiliated, etc) and severe illness.

### Students with Disabilities:

For students who have special needs or require accommodations, that student must ensure that they register with the Office of Disability Services and advise me of their situation as early in the semester as possible so arrangements can be made to ensure that their needs are met. Note that the website for the Office of Disability Services is posted on the Moodle page.

### Important Dates:

Quiz #1 .....	January 25, 2018
Writing Assignment #1 .....	February 1, 2018
Quiz #2 .....	February 6, 2018
Exam #1 .....	February 8, 2018
Writing Assignment #2 .....	February 22, 2018
Quiz #3 .....	March 1, 2018
Writing Assignment #3 .....	March 13, 2018
Quiz #4 .....	March 15, 2018
Exam #2 .....	March 20, 2018
Quiz #5 .....	April 12, 2018
Writing Assignment #4 .....	April 19, 2018
Quiz #6 .....	April 26, 2018
Final Exam .....	April 30, 2018

**Grading Policy:**

Participation .....	10%
Quizzes .....	10%
Writing Assignments .....	15%
Exams .....	40%
Final Exam .....	25%

**Grading Scale:**

A+ .....	97–100
A .....	93–96.99
A- .....	90–92.99
B+ .....	87–89.99
B .....	83–86.99
B- .....	80–82.99
C+ .....	77–79.99
C .....	73–76.99
C- .....	70–72.99
D+ .....	67–79.99
D .....	63–66.99
D- .....	60–62.99
F .....	0–59.99

**Academic Honesty:**

Academic misconduct is defined by the Code of Student Conduct. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the LSU policy on academic misconduct, particularly regarding plagiarism. The LSU Code of Student Conduct can be found on the web site for the LSU Dean of Students:

<http://www.lsu.edu/students/deanofstudents/files/lsu-code-of-conduct.pdf>

Academic misconduct is a serious violation of university policy. This can come in the form of plagiarism, cheating, collusion, classroom disruptions, or phone use. Academic misconduct will in no way be tolerated in this course and charges of such will be turned over to the Dean of Students for appropriate disciplinary action. This class has a zero tolerance policy about plagiarism, i.e. no “second chances.” In order to avoid this, please make sure to cite accurately and appropriately your sources. If a student is unsure of the proper ways to do this, they should contact me rather than taking the risk.

**Reading Schedule and Topic Outline:****Section I: The Philosophy and Constitution of the United States**

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>The Gang Goes to College</b>
January 11	Syllabus Day/Introduction <i>No Readings</i>
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>The Gang Gets Constitutional</b>
January 16	Intro to American Government and the Philosophy of the Declaration of Independence <i>Read: Chapter 1; pgs. 1–10</i> <i>Chapter 2; pgs. 22–27</i> <i>Declaration of Independence, pgs. A3–A6</i>
January 18	The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution <i>Read: Chapter 2; pgs. 27–50</i> <i>Articles of Confederation; pgs A7–A12</i> <i>The Constitution of the United States; pgs. A13–A23</i> <i>James Madison, Federalist #10; pgs. A34–A39</i>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>The Gang Makes Amends</b>
January 23	Origin of the Bill of Rights <i>Read: Chapter 4; pgs. 84–93</i>
January 25	Civil Liberties <i>Read: Chapter 4; pgs. 93–107</i> <i>Amendments to the Constitution; pgs. A24–A25</i>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>The Gang Gets Civil</b>
January 30	Civil Rights <i>Read: Chapter 4; pgs. 107–117</i> <i>Challenging the Status Quo, Frederick Douglass [Moodle]</i>
February 1	Federalism: What Makes America America <i>Read: Chapter 3; pgs. 58–77</i> <i>Defending A Republican Form of Government, James Madison [Moodle]</i> <i>The "Marble Cake" Theory of Federalism, Mortin Grodzins [Moodle]</i>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>The Gang Goes America All Over Everybody's Butt</b>
February 6	The Separation of Powers and Exam Review <i>Read: Chapter 3; pgs. 77–82</i>
February 8	EXAM 1 <b>No Readings</b>

**Section II: The Structure of the American Government**

<b>Week 6</b>	<b>The Gang Watches Goes Bureaucrazy</b>
February 13	Mardi Gras Break (NO CLASS)
February 15	Bureacracy <i>Read: Chapter 7, pgs. 206–221</i> <i>Bureaucracy and the Public Interest, E. Pendleton Herring [Moodle]</i>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>The Gang Actually Reads a Book</b>
February 20	Congress: The Electoral Connection, Part 1 <i>Read: Pages 1–77</i>
February 22	Congress: The Electoral Connection, Part 2 <i>Read: Pages 81–180</i>
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>The Gang Goes to Court</b>
February 27	The President: King of Democracy <i>Read: Chapter 6, pgs. 170–197</i> <i>Theories of the Presidency [Moodle]</i> <i>The Presidential Power to Persuade, Richard Neustadt [Moodle]</i>
March 1	The Judicial Branch: It Rules <i>Read: Chapter 8, pgs. 240–253</i> <i>Defending the Judiciary, Alexander Hamilton [Moodle]</i>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>The Gang Runs for Office</b>
March 6	Campaigns <i>Read: Chapter 10; pgs. 344–349</i>
March 8	Elections <i>Read: Chapter 10; pgs. 314–334</i>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>The Gang Discusses Her Emails</b>
March 13	How Voters Decide <i>Read: Chapter 10; pgs. 355–344</i> <i>Selling Candidates as Products, Joe McGinniss [Moodle]</i>
March 15	Review/Catch-Up Day <i>No Readings</i>
March 20	EXAM 2 <b>No Readings</b>

### Section III: Democratic Politics

<b>Week 11</b>	<b>The Gang Parties</b>
March 22	Political Parties <i>Read:</i> Chapter 11; pgs. 360–369 <i>Electoral Basis of the Two-Party System, Maurice Duverger</i> [Moodle] <i>Urban Political Machines, Harold Gosnell</i> [Moodle]
March 27 & 29	Spring Break (NO CLASS)
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>The Gang Gets Opinionated</b>
April 3	Public Opinion <i>Read:</i> Chapter 9; pgs. 276–280 <i>The Pseudo-Environment of Public Opinion, Walter Lippmann</i> [Moodle] <i>Leaders Mold and Influence Public Opinion, V. O. Key, Jr</i> [Moodle]
April 5	The Media <i>Read:</i> Chapter 9; pgs. 299–309 <i>Language and Politics, George Orwell</i> [Moodle]
<b>Week 13</b>	<b>The Gang Talks About Mass Incarceration</b>
April 10	Documentary – 13th <i>No Readings</i>
April 12	Documentary – 13th <i>No Readings</i>
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>The Nightman Cometh</b>
April 17	Domestic and Economic Policy <i>Read:</i> Chapter 13; pgs. 428–446 <i>The Case for Liberalism, Franklin D. Roosevelt</i> [Moodle] <i>The Case for Conservatism, Milton Friedman</i> [Moodle]
April 19	Domestic and Economic Policy, cont'd.
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>The Gang Wrestles for the Troops</b>
April 24	Foreign Policy <i>Read:</i> Chapter 14; pgs. 458–469 <i>The Case for the Cold War, Harry S. Truman</i> [Moodle] <i>The Case for Preemptive War, George W. Bush</i> [Moodle]
April 26	Review/Catch-Up Day <b>No Readings</b>
April 30	FINAL EXAM, 3:00–5:00