

PSCI 216
Fall 2021
Online

3 credit hours

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American National Government College of Arts & Sciences Syllabus

Description and analysis of national political institutions and processes. Current issues and problems of American government.

Required Texts

There are two required texts for this course. (Purchase older editions at your own risk.)

- Cal Jillson, *American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change* (10th edition, 2019)
- Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson, eds., *Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System* (4th edition) (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2019).

Course Learning Objectives

Besides imparting substantive material regarding American politics, this course aims to assist students in developing other skills. By the end of the semester, students should be able to identify political arguments and make arguments of their own on critical policy questions; explain key concepts about American government; clearly and effectively communicate ideas in writing; and be able to critically examine claims made by different authors on political topics.

Academic Integrity Policy

By enrolling in this course, you are bound by the NEIU Student Code of Conduct: <http://www.neiu.edu/university-life/student-rights-and-responsibilities/student-code-conduct>. You will be informed by your instructor of any additional policy specific to your course regarding plagiarism, class disruptions, etc.

ADA Statement

Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To request accommodations, students with special needs should make arrangements with the Student Disability Services (SDS) office, located on the main campus in room D104. Contact SDS via (773) 442-4595 or <http://www.neiu.edu/university-life/student-disability-services>.

Campus Safety

Web links to Campus Safety: Emergency Procedures and Safety Information can be found on NEIUport on the MyNEIU tab or as follows:

http://homepages.neiu.edu/~neitutemp/Emergency_Procedures/MainCampus/.

Course Requirements

1) This is an online course. Assignments will all be submitted through the Desire2Learn platform, and you will earn participation points through discussion on the D2L discussion board. Be aware that online does not mean easier! This course is the equivalent to any other American National Government course offered.

2) Complete all readings on schedule.

3) There will be regular quizzes. At the end of each chapter of the Jillson textbook is a list of key terms. After you have read the chapters, I will quiz you on some of those terms. These will be administered through D2L.

4) Actively participate in class discussions. As this is an online course, our work will occur online, and discussions will happen on the D2L discussion board. You are expected to regularly contribute to the discussions. **At minimum**, you must make one original post per unit, and comment twice per unit on your classmates' posts. Your participation grade will be determined by the **quality** of the posts you make, not just meeting the minimum posting requirement.

5) Keep up with the news. We will frequently relate current events to the concepts we discuss in class. This way, we will be able to connect what can be abstract ideas to real-world outcomes. Read a newspaper, visit cnn.com, or do anything that helps makes you an informed citizen.

6) Take the three required exams. I will give you the questions ahead of the test. Make-up exams will only be given in the event of an emergency, verified with proper documentation.

7) Write **four** short papers on controversial topics in American politics. Each paper will focus on one particular issue that we will also be discussing in class. Relevant readings and due dates are noted **in bold** on the schedule below. **Late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade for each day they are late** (barring serious emergencies, which must be documented). *For the purposes of this course, "late" is defined as submitted through D2L after the relevant deadline. I will not accept submissions via email or in hard copy.* Do not wait to the last moment to submit assignments. (Note that I reserve the right to reject your submission if it does not meet the assignment criteria.)

Once you have received a grade on your paper, I will give you the option of revising it, if you wish. All revisions are due within one week of when you receive your grade.

Do not simply tell me your opinion on the subject; rather, consider both sides of the argument carefully before stating your own view. Provide evidence for your views, whether it is in the form of statistics, logical reasoning, or quotations from others. You **must** use outside sources besides those on the syllabus - **at least 3 for each paper – and you must cite them appropriately.** (The Ellis and Nelson book does not count as one of the sources). Each paper must be **at least 2 pages in length.**

All written assignments must be typed in a 12-point font, double spaced, with one-inch margins, and have page numbers. Papers not meeting these criteria will be penalized.

Grading

Work conducted towards the end of the semester will be more heavily weighted in my mind when dispensing final grades; in other words, *improvement counts.*

Participation: 25%
Quizzes: 10%
Short Papers: 20%
First Exam: 15%
Second Exam: 15%
Final: 15%

90-100 A
80-89 B
70-79 C
60-69 D
Below 60 F

Incompletes will only be given for valid, documented emergencies.

NOTE ON PLAGIARISM: Any student found plagiarizing work will receive a grade of **zero** for that assignment and an **F** for the course. You will also be reported to the University for violating the academic integrity policy. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to: direct copying of material that is not your own, copying the material even while providing a citation, or copying ideas without proper attribution. **It is your responsibility to avoid plagiarism; if you are uncertain about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask!**

Schedule of Classes and Exams

Unit 1: American Political Culture

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 1
- The Declaration of Independence (Jillson, Appendix A)
- Thomas Jefferson's unedited version of the Declaration
- Abigail Adams, "Remember the Ladies"
- The Declaration of Sentiments, Seneca Falls Conference (1848)

WATCH:

- Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream"

DO:

- Discussion post: The Declaration and American Politics (**due August 30th**)

Unit 2: The Constitution

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 2
- The Constitution (Jillson, Appendix C)
- *Federalist* #10 and #51 (Jillson, Appendix D)

WATCH:

- A helpful explanation of *Federalist* #10 and #51
- "Alexander Hamilton"

DO:

- Discussion post: What We Argue About (**due September 6th**)

Unit 3: Federalism

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 3
- Marijuana Legalization
- State-by-state marijuana policies
- *Library*: Introduction to the Library / Searching for Articles / Evaluating Sources

DO:

- Discussion post: *Library Discussion - Your Sources* (**due September 12th**)
- **FIRST PAPER: Should marijuana policy be set by the states or the federal government? (Due September 13th)** - Readings for this paper: Sam Kamin and Robert A. Mikos, in E&N, pp. 43-60.

Unit 4: The Media

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 5
- Nate Silver, “How Trump hacked the media”
- Seth Masket, “The Media and Institutional Failure”
- “Media Bias 101”
- “How to Detect Bias in the News Media”
- “A Measure of Media Bias”

DO:

- Discussion post: Media Bias (**due September 19th**)
- **FIRST QUIZ: Due September 20th**

FIRST EXAM – due September 21st

Unit 5: Interest Groups

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 6
- Jonathan M. Ladd, “Don’t worry about special interests”

DO:

- Discussion post: Special Interests or Your Interests? (**due September 28th**)

Unit 6: Political Parties

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 7
- Ezra Klein, “The single most important fact about American politics”

DO:

- Discussion post: Parties in History (**due October 4th**)
- **SECOND QUIZ: Due October 5th**

Unit 7: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 8
- “Texas Elector Threatens Not to Vote for Trump”

DO:

- Discussion post: Does Voting Matter? (**due October 11th**)
- **SECOND PAPER: Should the Electoral College be abolished? (Due October 12th)** --
Readings for this paper: George C. Edwards III and Gary L. Gregg II, in E&N pp. 265-284.

Unit 8: Congress

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 9
- Andrew Prokop, “Beating the odds: Why one bill made it through a gridlocked Congress – and so many don’t”
- “The Longest Filibuster”

WATCH:

- “I’m Just a Bill”
- “The Room Where It Happens”
- Hamilton’s America – The Room Where It Happens
- Ted Cruz reads “Green Eggs and Ham”

DO:

- Discussion post: “I’m Just a Bill” or “The Room Where It Happens”? (**due October 19th**)

Unit 9: The Presidency

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 10
- Lincoln's letter to Albert Hodges
- Lincoln and Executive Power
- Lincoln, War President
- FDR's 1st Inaugural Address
- Every Executive Order – A Chart

WATCH:

- Capitol Hill Cold Open

DO:

- Discussion post: Presidential Power – How Much is Too Much? (**due October 25th**)

SECOND EXAM – due October 26th

Unit 10: The Bureaucracy

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 11
- Tim Mak, "Meet the Beer Bottle Dictator"

WATCH:

- Ron Swanson on Government

DO:

- Discussion post: Explain How Government Works (**due November 1st**)
- **THIRD QUIZ: Due November 2nd**

Unit 11: The Judiciary

READ:

- *Federalist* #78 (Jillson, Appendix D)
- Jillson, chapter 12
- Oyez.org

WATCH:

- John Oliver on the Supreme Court

DO:

- Discussion post: Dangerous or Not?? (**due November 8th**)
- **THIRD PAPER: Should the terms of Supreme Court justices be limited to 18 years? (Due November 9th)** -- Readings for this paper: David Karol and Ward Farnsworth, in E&N pp. 320-340.

Unit 12: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

READ:

- Jillson, chapters 13 and 14
- *Brown v. Board of Education* – PBS' The Supreme Court

DO:

- Discussion post: Can the Courts Protect Our Rights? (**due November 15th**)
- **FOURTH QUIZ: Due November 16th**

Unit 13: Government, the Economy, and Domestic Policy

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 15

DO:

- Federal Budget Challenge *OR* Stabilize the Debt
- Discussion post: How Much Government Do We Need? (**due November 22nd**)
- **FOURTH PAPER: Should Americans receive 4 more years of free public education? (Due November 23rd)** -- Readings for this paper: Robert Samuels and Neal McCluskey, in E&N pp. 341-357.

Unit 14: America's Place in a Dangerous World

READ:

- Jillson, chapter 16
- The Massive U.S. Defense Budget
- Trends in U.S. Military Spending

WATCH:

- Why does the U.S. have 800 military bases around the world?

DO:

- Discussion post: Does the U.S. do too much overseas? (**due November 30th**)

FINAL EXAM: due December 2nd