

COURSE OBJECTIVES

POS 101 is an introduction to the study of American politics. The course will provide a broad and critical examination of the ideas, processes, institutions, and public policies that are central to the American political system. Students will not only learn the essential mechanics and facts pertinent to American politics; more important, they will be presented with the concepts, issues, and debates that foster comprehension of the deeper dynamics of American politics. The course will provide a foundation for the further study of American politics and political science. Equally important, and of particular relevance for students who do not intend further study in political science, it will supply an understanding of American politics that will facilitate informed citizenship in the democratic process.

The course will ask you to pay attention to current events. One of the assignments will require you to read about American politics online and write a paper based on that reading.

POS 101 satisfies General Education requirements for both United States Historical Perspectives and Social Science. As a United States Historical Perspectives course in the General Education program, it will present an account of American political and constitutional development since the period of the American Founding. As a social science course in the General Education program, it has the following learning objectives:

1. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate an understanding that human conduct and behavior more generally are subject to scientific inquiry.
2. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the difference between rigorous and systematic thinking and uncritical thinking about social phenomena.
3. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the kinds of questions social scientists ask and the ways they go about answering these questions.
4. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate knowledge of the major concepts, models, and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences.
5. Social science courses enable students to demonstrate an understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, such as observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, employment of mathematical analysis, employment of interpretive analysis.

REQUIRED BOOKS

The following books are available at both the campus bookstore and Mary Jane Books:

Bruce Miroff, Raymond Seidelman, Todd Swanstrom, and Tom De Luca, *The Democratic Debate: American Politics in an Age of Change*, Fifth Edition (Wadsworth, 2010)

Bruce Miroff, Raymond Seidelman, and Todd Swanstrom, editors, *Debating Democracy: A Reader in American Politics*, Seventh Edition (Wadsworth, 2012)

COURSE OUTLINE

Aug. 30	Introduction to the Course
Sept. 1	NO CLASS
Sept. 6 8 13	The Revolution, the Constitution, and American Political Theory Reading: <i>The Democratic Debate</i> (TDD), Ch. 1, 2; <i>Debating Democracy</i> (DEB), Ch. 1
Sept. 15	Federalism Reading: TDD, Ch. 15
Sept. 20 22	The American Political Economy Reading: TDD, Ch. 3, 17; DEB, Ch. 12
Sept. 27 Oct. 4	Public Opinion and Political Participation Reading: TDD, Ch. 4, 5
Oct. 6	Media and Politics No assigned reading
Oct. 11	FIRST EXAMINATION
Oct. 13	Media and Politics (continued) Reading: DEB, Ch. 9
Oct. 18 20	Campaigns and Political Parties Reading: TDD, Ch. 6, 7; DEB, Ch. 11
Oct. 25 27	Congress Reading: TDD, Ch. 11; DEB, Ch. 13
Nov. 1 3	The Presidency and the Executive Branch Reading: TDD, Ch. 12; DEB, Ch. 14
Nov. 8	U.S. Foreign Policy Reading: DEB, Ch. 17
Nov. 10	SECOND EXAMINATION

Nov. 15 17	The Federal Judiciary Reading: TDD, Ch. 14; DEB, Ch. 15
Nov. 22 29	Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Reading: TDD, Ch. 16; DEB, Ch. 7
Dec. 1 6	Citizens and Mass Movements Reading: TDD, Ch. 10

Dec. 16 FINAL EXAMINATION (8:00am—10:00 am)

Grades for the course are on an A-E basis, but the course can be taken on an S-U basis. Grades will be based on three examinations, a short paper on current politics, debates and debate reports in discussion sections, and attendance and participation in discussion sections. The exams will be combinations of short-answer topics and essays. The paper (4-5 pages) will be based on your Internet research. In your discussion section, you will take part in three group debates and will write two 3-4 page papers that recount the major arguments in these debates. You will also be evaluated for your attendance and participation in the weekly discussions. Your grade for the course will be computed as follows:

- Midterm examinations – 20 percent each
- Final examination – 25 percent
- Short paper – 15 percent
- Debate reports and discussion section grade – 20 percent

Please note the following:

- 1. All assignments must be completed before you can receive a grade for the course.**
- 2. Students are reminded that all work handed in must be their own. Cheating on exams or plagiarism on papers or reports will be severely punished.**
- 3. Twenty percent of your course grade comes from discussion sections. You cannot pass the course unless you attend your discussion section!**

My office hours on the main campus are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:45 – 12:45 in the Rockefeller College Contact Office, located in Humanities 16. I am also available at the downtown campus; my office there is Milne 216 and my hours there are Wednesdays from 2:00-3:30. My email is miroff@albany.edu

Your teaching assistant's office hours will be announced in your discussion section.