

POLS 1100 Introduction to American Government

Tue/Thu: 9:30 AM–10:45 AM, Room: Xavier Hall G08

Department of Political Science

Saint Louis University

Fall 2023

Instructor

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Office hours: Tuesday 2:00 PM–3:00 PM, or by appointment

Ways of Thinking: Social and Behavioral Sciences

This course is part of the Saint Louis University Core, an integrated intellectual experience completed by all baccalaureate students, regardless of major, program, college, school or campus. The Core offers all SLU students the same unified approach to Jesuit education guided by SLU's institutional mission and identity and our nine undergraduate Core Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).

Ways of Thinking: Social and Behavioral Sciences is one of 19 Core Components. The University Core SLO(s) that this component is designed to intentionally advance are listed below:

University Core Student Learning Outcomes

The Core SLO(s) that this component is intentionally designed to advance are:

- SLO 2: Integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines to address complex questions
- SLO 3: Assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions

Additionally, the Core Component-level Student Learning Outcomes are listed below:

Component-level Student Learning Outcomes

Students who complete this course will be able to:

- Understand a range of social or behavioral theories and principles

- Use these theories and principles to acquire knowledge about individual, cultural, political, economic, or social events/processes
- Describe competing paradigms of knowledge (from the dominant discipline or field)
- Draw reasoned conclusions through the use of evidence and theories
- Apply social and behavioral knowledge to better understand contemporary issues and challenges

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to politics and government in the U.S. The course will focus primarily on political institutions (the rules and constraints placed upon political actors operating in the three branches of government) and mass behavior (how citizens behave and interpret the political world).

Course Materials

Ginsberg, Benjamin, Theodore J. Lowi, Margaret Weir, Caroline J. Tolbert, Andrea L. Campbell, Megan Ming Francis, Robert J. Spitzer. (2022). *We the People*. Fourteenth Essentials Edition. W. W. Norton & Company.

An ebook will suffice this course. Once obtaining your book, please use the registration code associated with the book to register with Norton's online resources so that you can access InQuizitive assignments. For instructions on the registration, please watch a video at <https://youtu.be/EgNkg9Yl6cg>.

Additionally, we will use some examples from another book entitled *American Government: Stories of a Nation* by Scott F. Abernathy. It is not required for this course.

Format and Assignments

Because the course covers substantial material in a concentrated time period, each module will be broken into segments that involve different kinds of learning activities: lectures, in-class discussions and online quizzes. We will often refer to current events in American politics. Students are encouraged to follow American current events by reading the news online or in a print newspaper. I especially encourage students to read reputable newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, or the

Wall Street Journal. Students should be current with reading assignments to participate regularly in class discussions.

1. Attendance (5%). Attending class on a regular basis is highly important. I will take attendance randomly throughout the semester. Each missed class (without the instructor's permission) will result in some point loss toward the final grade. I will allow 3 unexcused absences before I take points off.
2. Bill-writing group project (15%). This is a group project involving simulating legislative activities in the U.S. House of Representatives. Students will be randomly selected to serve a variety of roles such as the President, Speaker, committee members and ordinary legislators. Ordinary legislators will be divided into two groups that resemble two political parties. They will try their best to propose a bill that has the highest probability of being passed. This project involves various parts throughout the semester, with each part worth some points. Altogether, the project is worth 100 points.
3. InQuizitive assignments (35%). Students are supposed to complete 11 InQuizitive assignments to enhance their understanding of the lecture materials. These InQuizitive assignments are provided by the textbook *We the People*. Each InQuizitive assignment is focused on a chapter. Students can purchase either an Ebook or a hardcopy to get access to InQuizitive. I will drop one InQuizitive assignment in which a student obtained the lowest grade. Eventually, the 10 InQuizitive assignments collectively make up 35% of the final grade.
4. Midterm exam (20%). The midterm exam is scheduled on October 19. It is close-book and composed of 60 multiple-choice questions. Students must complete the exam within an hour. I will review the scope of the exam before it takes place.
5. Final exam (25%). The final exam is scheduled on December 14. It is cumulative and covers all content introduced in this course. Similar to the midterm exam, I will review the final exam in advance so that you can better prepare for it.
6. Extra credit paper: only required for students who are taking this course for an honor program. The paper should be 3-5 pages long and double spaced. It must examine a key contemporary issue facing the states. The author should demonstrate his or her own understanding of the issue and pose some solutions.

Grading Policy

Depending on the overall performance of the class, I may decide to curve the final grades. The specific curving method will be announced at the end of the semester.

Although curving may slightly boost a student's grade, he or she should not rely on it to secure a decent academic standing.

Final grade percentages ending in a decimal of .5 or greater will be rounded up to the next whole number. The grading scale is as follows.

A	∈	[93, 100]
A-	∈	[90, 92]
B+	∈	[87, 89]
B	∈	[83, 86]
B-	∈	[80, 82]
C+	∈	[77, 79]
C	∈	[73, 76]
C-	∈	[70, 72]
D	∈	[60, 69]
F	∈	[0, 59]

Assignments and Deadlines

- InQuizitive assignments: deadlines are shown in the InQuizitive system. Generally speaking, an InQuizitive assignment is due on the next Tuesday after a chapter is covered on Tuesday and/or Thursday.
- October 19th: the midterm exam is scheduled between 9:40 AM and 10:40 AM.
- December 14th: the final exam is scheduled between 9:40 AM and 10:40 AM.
- December 15th: the extra credit paper is due at noon for students who are seeking honors credit.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is “the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity.” Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service through which SLU fulfills its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern. The full University-level Academic Integrity Policy can be found on the Provost's Office website at: <https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/academic-integrity-policy.pdf>.

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites.

Disability Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must formally register their disability with the University. Once successfully registered, students also must notify their course instructor that they wish to use their approved accommodations in the course.

Please contact the Center for Accessibility and Disability Resources (CADR) to schedule an appointment to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Most students on the St. Louis campus will contact CADR, located in the Student Success Center and available by email at accessibility_disability@slu.edu or by phone at 314.977.3484. Once approved, information about a student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors by email from CADR and within the instructor's official course roster. Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one also are encouraged to contact CADR. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Title IX

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, stalking, domestic or dating violence, we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident that involves a Title IX matter, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX Coordinator that you shared an experience relating to Title IX. This is true even if you ask the faculty member not to disclose the incident. The Title IX Coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

Anna Kratky is the Title IX Coordinator at Saint Louis University (DuBourg Hall, room 36; anna.kratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886). If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK or make an anonymous report through SLU's Integrity Hotline by calling 1-877-525-5669 or online at <http://www.lighthouse-services.com/slu>. To view SLU's policies and for resources, please visit the following web address: <https://www.slu.edu/about/safety/sexual-assault-resources/index.php>.

Student Support Resources

University Counseling Center

The University Counseling Center (UCC) offers free, short-term, solution-focused counseling to Saint Louis University undergraduate and graduate students. UCC counselors are highly trained clinicians who can assist with a variety of issues, such as adjustment to college life, troubling changes in mood, and chronic psychological conditions. To make an appointment, call 314-977-8255 (TALK), or visit the clinic on the second floor of Wuller Hall. For after hours needs, please press #9 after dialing the clinic number.

Wellness

All students experience stressors and challenges at some point, and seeking support is beneficial. Such challenges may be the result of academic concerns (such as those related to particular assignments or content in a course), or they may be more personal in nature (such as concerns related to relationships, mental health, loss, identities, alcohol or drugs, housing or food security, or finances, among other things). If you experience these or other difficulties, please consider seeking support from the resources available to you.

- For concerns related to this course, please contact me. I am invested in your success and will support your success in the ways I can.
- Additionally, you have access to the many resources SLU provides in support of your personal wellness. You will find a list of available resources on the Well-being page of the SLU website.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis: please consult the Crisis Support and Warning Signs on the University Counseling Center website.

In the spirit of *cura personalis*, the University sees your academic success as connected to your health and well-being and provides resources to support your holistic wellness.

Basic Needs Security

Students experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, and any other challenges that are impacting their personal and/or academic wellbeing are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office for support. Students can submit an intake form, email deanofstudents@slu.edu, or call 314-977-9378 to connect with their office. Students

may also communicate directly with their instructors about any challenges they are experiencing to receive support and resource referrals.

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Chapter	InQuizitive	Bill-Writing	Exam
Week 1 08/23–08/25	Course Overview				
Week 2 08/28–09/01	Americans & Their Political Values	1	✓		
Week 3 09/04–09/08	The Founding & the Constitution	2	✓		
Week 4 09/11–09/15	Congress	10	✓		
Week 5 09/18–09/22	Federalism	3	✓	Simulation Setup	
Week 6 09/25–09/29	Civil Liberties	4			
Week 7 10/02–10/06	Civil Rights	5	✓	Decide Topics	
Week 8 10/09–10/13	Public Opinion	6	✓		
Week 9 10/16–10/20	Midterm Exam				✓
Week 10 10/23–10/27	The Media & Political Information	7	✓	Write Bills	
Week 11 10/30–11/03	Political Parties & Interest Groups	8			
Week 12 11/06–11/10	Participation, Campaigns & Elections	9	✓	Committee Review	
Week 13 11/13–11/17	The Presidency	11			
Week 14 11/20–11/24	The Bureaucracy	12	✓	Bill Reconciliation	
Week 15 11/27–12/01	The Federal Courts	13	✓		
Week 16 12/04–12/08	Domestic Policy	14	✓	Presidential Approval	
Week 17 12/11–12/15	Final Exam				✓

¹ There is no class on **October 26 (Thursday, Week 10)** because it is the Fall Break.

² There is no class on **November 23 (Thursday, Week 14)** because it is the Thanksgiving Holiday.

³ InQuizitive assignments are due by noon on next Tuesday. For instance, Chapter 2 is covered on Tuesday and Thursday in Week 3. Thus, the InQuizitive for this chapter is due by noon of Tuesday in Week 4.

⁴ In-class discussions pertaining to the bill-writing project will take place on Thursdays.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes

See the Modules on Canvas for the learning objectives for each week/Module. In general, the course is designed to achieve the following broad course objectives and CORE Student Learning Outcomes.

This course is designed to help students broaden their knowledge, skills, and values so that they will be able to:

- Identify the institutions, structures, practices, processes of the U.S. government and politics including the three branches of government, the U.S. Constitution, role of public opinion and media, public participation, and political campaigns and elections.
- Understand the factual and historical background relating to the development of government and politics in the United States.
- Understand the structures of the United States government, the three branches, and its history as it pertains to institutional powers and constraints.
- Understand the processes and structure of the United States elections and political system and its history.
- Analyze the role of public participation and the media in the political process and American government and how they shape public policy in the U.S.

In addition, students taking this course will develop the following CORE components:

CORE Student Learning Outcomes:

- SLO 2: Integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines to address complex questions regarding governmental powers and constraints and the role of the public in American democracy.
 - Understand a range of social or behavioral theories and principles.
 - Use these theories and principles to acquire knowledge about individual, cultural, political, economic, or social events/processes.
 - Describe competing paradigms of knowledge (from the dominant discipline or field).
 - Apply social and behavioral knowledge to better understand contemporary issues and challenges.
- SLO 3: Assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions.

- Draw reasoned conclusions through the use of evidence and theories.
- Use conceptual tools and methodologies to analyze and understand their social world in the context of the American politics and government.
- Think, speak, and write critically about human behavior and community in the context of American governmental powers and constraints.
- Discuss and defend ideas orally, as part of in-class and online discussion.
- Engage in meaningful and productive dialogue with others.

Course Protocol

Technology

Put everything on mute. You do not need to use your laptop for this course. Please take notes the old-fashioned way. This will dissuade the trend of college students to browse the web, check email, and frequent social networking sites during lectures. I will upload to Canvas all lecture PowerPoints.

Communication

I will post grades, send class emails, etc., through the SLU Banner and Canvas systems. Be sure that you can access the email address listed. I will only send email out to your SLU e-mail accounts listed on the course roster in Banner. I will not keep track of any other email addresses you may use.

I am teaching multiple courses. **When you email me, please make sure to indicate your name and class to ensure the timely handling of your case.**