



AMERICAN GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

POLS 122 · Sect 102 · Fall, 2022

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Student Hours: Tues & Thurs, 11 am – noon (MG 424 – just stop by!)
Weds, noon – 2 pm (Zoom – email for link!)
& by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Development, organization, powers, limitation, and practical problems of the governmental and political system of the United States. (3 semester hours, General Education/Social Sciences)

INTRODUCTION

In this course, we'll be examining the philosophical and constitutional underpinnings of our democracy, the institutions of contemporary American government, and the links between people and government. Our objective, however, is not just academic; rather, the end goal of this course is to help each member of the class become a more well-informed, critical, and thoughtful participant in American political life.

As part of this overall goal, the course is designed to help you develop a number of skills that are central to democratic citizenship. At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- relate underlying concepts in American politics to current political events.
- identify and examine your own political beliefs.
- express your beliefs clearly and persuasively.
- interpret the political beliefs of others, including those with whom you may disagree.

By the end of the semester, you will have a better understanding of the American political process and, more importantly, the importance of and avenues for your own engagement in this process!

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Text

Keeping the Republic (Brief 9th Edition), ISBN 9781544393896

Additional material may be available in Western Online.

Technology

Because this course takes place in Western Online, you are responsible for ensuring that you have access to the necessary technology to complete the course requirements. To learn what software you will need, please visit the following URL:

http://www.wiu.edu/CITR/resources/wo_tech_requirements.php

After reviewing the software requirements, ensure that your system is compatible by clicking the **Complete the D2L System Check** button. Technical questions may be directed to the University Computer Support Services (ucss@wiu.edu or 309-298-2704). **Technical difficulties will not be accepted as an excuse for late, incomplete, or poorly done work.** I encourage you to complete all work in advance to avoid last-minute technical problems.

Supplemental Resources

The university provides additional resources that may be helpful as you complete the course. Please visit the following URLs to learn more about these services.

Writing Center – wiu.edu/uwc

The University Writing Center (UWC) offers online (real-time) and e-tutoring (asynchronous) appointments. The UWC supports writers across disciplines at any stage of the process. The UWC is not an editing service, but provides extensive feedback as well as help with writing challenges such as citation style formats, grammar, research development, and organization.

University Libraries – wiu.edu/libraries

Being a WIU student gives you access to a wide range of scholarly and popular full-text articles, and thousands of online e-Books, as well as personal, one-on-one reference assistance through the Ask a Librarian feature.

Software – www.wiu.edu/university_technology/student_resources/

Though this course can be completed without additional word processing or other specialized software, your status as a Western Illinois University student means you automatically have free access to a Microsoft 365 account, as well as Google docs.

REQUIREMENTS & GRADING

The course material is divided into three units, with the first unit comprising the first six weeks, the second unit comprising the middle five weeks, and the third unit comprising the last five weeks. Weeks run Monday through Sunday, with the weekly material going live on Western Online on Mondays at 12:01 am. The assignments for each week are due by 11:59 on Sunday. See the course schedule on page six for specific dates.

Reading

Since we are learning the course material without the benefit of traditional in-class lectures, reading is especially important. Each week (with the exception of the first week and exam weeks) we will cover one chapter from the textbook. Keeping up with this reading is one of the best ways to ensure your success in the course!

Quizzes – 210 points

At the end of each week, you have the opportunity to display your mastery of the material by taking a fifteen-point quiz. Each quiz includes fifteen questions worth one point each. Quizzes are open-book and open-note, but have a time limit of twenty minutes. This means that there won't be time to look up all the answers, so you should prepare for these quizzes as you would for a quiz in a traditional course.

No late quizzes will be administered and there will be no make-up quizzes available. You will earn zero points on any quizzes that you miss.

Writing and Discussion – 280 points

There are two related types of writing and discussion assignments for this course that build upon each other to allow you to have an ongoing conversation with me and your classmates through each unit of the course.

Some weeks, you will **WRITE** and **POST** an answer to the Discussion Board in response to a question that I provide. Your answer, which is worth twenty points, is required to be a minimum of 500 words, and will be graded using the Writing Rubric, which is available to view in Western Online. Please note that you will not be able to see your classmates' posts until **after** you have made your initial post.

Other weeks, you will **DISCUSS** additional questions that I ask with your classmates by posting **at least twice** on the Unit Discussion Board. The total number of responses you write is up to you, but you are required to write **a minimum of two posts** totaling **a minimum of 500 words** of response altogether. For example, this requirement could be met by writing five 100-word responses, two 250-word responses, one 200-word response and two 150-word responses, or any other configuration of two or most posts that adds up to at least 500 words. Your responses will be worth twenty points and will be graded using the Discussion Rubric, which is available to view in Western Online.

Discussion posts and responses are due by the dates listed in the course schedule. No late posts will be accepted, and you will earn a zero on any posts or discussions you miss.

Two Exams – 110 points

There are two exams, one halfway through the semester covering Chapters 1 through 7 and the other during final exam week covering Chapters 8 through 13. Each exam consists of 55 multiple-choice questions worth one point each. **No late exams will be administered.**

You may use your textbook and notes while taking the exams. However, the exams have a time limit of 75 minutes, which means that it will be impossible to look up every answer; you should study for the exam just as you would for an exam in a traditional course.

Grading

Final grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

A	558 points and above	C	438-461 points
A-	540-557 points	C-	420-437 points
B+	522-539 points	D+	402-419 points
B	498-521 points	D	378-401 points
B-	480-497 points	D-	360-377 points
C+	462-479 points	F	359 points and below

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME

Student Hours

My in-person student hours are held in my office (MG 424) on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 am until noon—please just stop by! My virtual student hours are held on Zoom on Wednesdays from noon until 2 pm--email (e-taylor@wiu.edu) me to let me know you would like to meet during this time, and I will send you a Zoom link. I am also happy to make appointments if these times don't work with your schedule. During student hours, I meet with students to answer questions, discuss assignments, assist with problems in the course, or even just say hello; I truly love getting to see your faces and hear your voices, so please do not hesitate to take advantage of these hours!

Email: e-taylor@wiu.edu

Email is the best and quickest way to contact me. During the workday (from 8 am to 5 pm), I almost always respond to email within hours, but it does take me longer in the evenings and on weekends, when I am off-duty and trying to spend time away from screens. For this reason, you should assume that a) if you email me in the evening, you will hear back from me the next day and b) if you email me over the weekend, you will hear back from me on Monday. Please make sure to plan accordingly! It will help me get back to you more quickly when you include the number or name of the course (POLS 122 or American Government) in your email subject heading.

Grading & Feedback

I will grade assignments and provide feedback within one week after assignments are due.

WHAT I EXPECT FROM YOU

Participation

As a student in this online course, you are expected to actively participate in order to ensure a meaningful learning experience. Participation includes completing quizzes, writing, and discussion assignments by the time they are due, as well as engaging with me and your classmates in online discussions and activities.

If there are circumstances that require you to be "absent" (offline) and that will prevent you from completing work, you need to contact me **ahead of time** so that we can make arrangements for you to keep up with the course work.

This is **NOT** a self-paced course, and there are firm deadlines for the completion of all work. You should budget a minimum of five to seven hours a calendar week to successfully complete the work for the course.

Communication

Because this course is delivered completely online, communications among students enrolled in the course will take place via Western Online discussion boards. Please keep in mind that communications in our online classroom are not done in real-time, so you should not expect instant responses from your classmates or from me as your instructor.

Online communication is an excellent way to share our experiences, ideas, and opinions. Unfortunately, it also has downsides. It can be easy to misunderstand the intent of what others write without the non-verbal gestures and expressions that help us interpret meaning during in-person discussions. Please make sure to think about this when you are writing a message to me or a post to share with your classmates so you can make an extra effort to maintain a friendly tone and avoid sarcasm. No matter how you typically feel about emojis, they can go a long way in this regard! 😊

Finally, part of what makes politics and government so interesting is the wide variety of perspectives and opinions that people bring to both. Disagreement is encouraged, but all of us share the responsibility to convey basic respect for each other and to treat each other politely in our course communications. For this reason, any **discussion posts that I judge to display incivility or personal attacks against others will automatically earn a zero.**

Grading & Feedback

It is your responsibility to check your grades regularly and to read the feedback that I provide on your assignments carefully so that you can use that feedback to improve future assignments. If you ever have a question about grading, my feedback, or how to improve your work, please reach out via email or (even better!) use student hours to meet with me.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Student Rights and Responsibilities & Academic Integrity

You are required to familiarize yourself with the Student Rights and Responsibilities and Academic Integrity Policies, which are available at the following URLs:

<http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students> <http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php>

It is your responsibility to strictly follow these policies. Any and all violations of these policies will be penalized according to the guidelines they describe.

Students with Disabilities

In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact Disability Resources at 309-298-1884, sdsc@wiu.edu or in 125 Memorial Hall. Please notify me as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner. The full university policy on students with disabilities can be found at:

<http://wiu.edu/policies/disability.php>

Sex Discrimination and Sexual Assault or Misconduct

University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offenses, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at:

http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php.

If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator, no matter when or where the incident occurred. The complete Title IX policy is available at: <http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php>.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Readings from our required text Keeping the Republic (Brief 9th Edition), ISBN 9781544393896. All assignments are due by 11:59 pm central time.

Unit 1: FOUNDATIONS OF GOVERNMENT			
	TOPICS	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 1: Mon, Aug 22 – Sun, Aug 28	Course Introduction	Course Syllabus	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet Your Classmates <input type="checkbox"/> Syllabus Quiz <i>due Aug 28</i>
WEEK 2: Mon, Aug 29 – Sun, Sep 4	Power and Citizenship in American Politics	Chapter 1, pp. 1-47	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 1 Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 1 Quiz <i>due Sep 4</i>
WEEK 3: Mon, Sep 5 – Sun, Sep 11	The Politics of the American Founding	Chapter 2, pp. 48-83	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 2 Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 2 Quiz <i>due Sep 11</i>
WEEK 4: Mon, Sep 12 – Sun, Sep 18	Federalism	Chapter 3, pp. 84-107	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 3 Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 3 Quiz <i>due Sep 18</i>
WEEK 5: Mon, Sep 19 – Sun, Sep 25	Fundamental American Liberties	Chapter 4, pp. 108-145	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 4 Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 4 Quiz <i>due Sep 25</i>
WEEK 6: Mon, Sep 26 – Sun, Oct 2	The Struggle for Equal Rights	Chapter 5, pp. 146-186	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 5 Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 5 Quiz <i>due Oct 2</i>

Unit 2: INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT			
	TOPICS	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 7: Mon, Oct 3 – Sun, Oct 9	Congress	Chapter 6, pp. 187-227	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 6 Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 6 Quiz <i>due Oct 9</i>
WEEK 8: Mon, Oct 10 – Sun, Oct 16	The Presidency	Chapter 7, pp. 228-265	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 7 Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 7 Quiz <i>due Oct 16</i>
WEEK 9: Mon, Oct 17 – Sun, Oct 23	Exam 1		<input type="checkbox"/> Exam 1 <i>due Oct 23</i>
WEEK 10: Mon, Oct 24 – Sun, Oct 30	Bureaucracy	Chapter 8, pp. 266-294	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 8 Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 8 Quiz <i>due Oct 30</i>
WEEK 11: Mon, Oct 31 – Sun, Nov 6	The American Legal System and the Courts	Chapter 9, pp. 295-327	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 9 Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 9 Quiz <i>due Nov 6</i>

Unit 3: POLITICS OF ORDINARY CITIZENS

	TOPICS	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 12: Mon, Nov 7 – Sun, Nov 13	Public Opinion	Chapter 10, pp. 328-359	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 10 Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 10 Quiz <i>due Nov 13</i>
WEEK 13: Mon, Nov 14 – Sun, Nov 20	Parties and Interest Groups	Chapter 11, pp. 360-400	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 11 Writing <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 11 Quiz <i>due Nov 20</i>
BREAK WEEK: Mon, Nov 21 – Sun, Nov 27	Have a Relaxing Break!		
WEEK 14: Mon, Nov 28 – Sun, Dec 4	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	Chapter 12, pp. 401-440	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 12 Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 12 Quiz <i>due Dec 4</i>
WEEK 15: Mon, Dec 5 – Sun, Dec 11	Media, Power, and Political Communication	Chapter 13, pp. 441-474	<input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 13 Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 13 Quiz <i>due Dec 11</i>
FINALS WEEK: Mon, Dec 12 – Thu, Dec 15	Exam 2		<input type="checkbox"/> Exam 2 <i>due Dec 15</i>