

POL 165: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Spring 2014
MWF 8:30 – 9:35 am
Rohr Hall 109

Dr. Linda Beail
Office: 116 Colt Hall, 849-2408
Office Hours: Monday 1-4 pm, Wednesday 1 – 3 pm, and by appointment

Course overview:

This class serves as an introduction to American political processes and governmental structures, focusing on national institutions, practices and values. Beginning with the Constitutional period, we will discuss the underlying motives and processes by which our governmental system was founded and how it has changed over time. We will examine the role of individuals in American politics through public opinion, electoral participation, political socialization and the rights individuals have under the law. We will also discuss the role of intermediary groups that connect individuals to our political institutions -- the media, political interest groups, and political parties. We will identify the rules, structure and processes of our electoral system, and analyze how they work in light of the 2012 presidential campaign. Finally, we will examine the role that our major governmental institutions -- Congress, the President, the bureaucracy and the Supreme Court -- play in the political system. This course aims to further your development as scholars by requiring you to read and think critically about American government; to increase the depth and breadth of your knowledge of both current and historically important events in American politics; and to write analytically about the structures, processes and products of political systems.

Student Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, you will be able to

- Identify the political ideals that influenced the framers of our American governmental system, and discuss how they are structured into our political processes.
- Describe and explain the fundamental institutions and processes of American politics.
- Apply political science research and theories to assess the operations of American political institutions (such as federalism, political socialization, interest groups, elections, and Congress).
- Evaluate the effectiveness of our political system in providing democratic representation.
- Write and communicate more clearly, persuasively and insightfully.

Course policies:

1. **Academic Honesty:** The Point Loma Nazarene University community holds the highest standards of honesty and integrity in all aspects of university life. Any violation of the university's commitment is a serious affront to the very nature of Point Loma's mission and purpose. Violations of academic honesty include cheating, plagiarism, falsification, aiding academic dishonesty, and malicious interference. Please see the full policy in the undergraduate catalog at [Academic Honesty](#). You are responsible for familiarizing yourself with all of these policies. Please be aware that I take any sort of academic dishonesty very seriously: **Academic dishonesty in any form, including cheating and plagiarism, are grounds for failing the course and disciplinary action by the dean.**

2. **Academic Accommodation** – My main goal is to help you learn and engage with the material of this course, and I am happy to help meet unique learning needs when I am notified of them. While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation

with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual needs of the student. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

3. Citations and Inclusive Language – In political science, the most common form of citations is the “author-date” format from the Chicago Manual of Style. Please use this style in any work for this class. Examples can be found at: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. Because of the changing standards of English usage, language that refers appropriately to both men and women inclusively should be used whenever possible. Some simple guidelines include replacing "man" or "mankind" with "humanity," "humankind," "persons," or "people." "He," "him" and "his"--when not referring to an actual male person --should be avoided by alternate sentence constructions or replaced with "he or she," "him or her," or "hers or his." Gender specific terms may be replaced by their current alternatives: for example, "Congressman" has been correctly replaced by "Congressperson" or "member of Congress," etc.

4. Classroom behavior – While coming to this class will hopefully be an enjoyable experience, it is not like attending a movie, viewing a sporting event, or watching television; your respectful behavior and engaged attention is expected at all times. Class time is precious. It is our opportunity to interact, discuss, and create knowledge together. It is not a passive experience, but one that you should be ready to participate actively in.

In that spirit, here are some basic expectations for class time: Please be on time to class each day. Cell phones should be turned off during class time, and no electronic devices (including laptop computers, smart phones or iPads) may be used to surf the web, check email, text, network on Facebook/Twitter/etc., play games, or engage in other multi-tasking activities during class; this is disrespectful and distracting to your classmates and the instructor. Please do not leave the room (for a drink, to use the restroom, etc.) unless it is absolutely necessary; no one is allowed to leave the classroom for ANY reason whatsoever during exam periods. My expectation is that we will all strive to treat one another with respect, kindness and professionalism, which includes listening carefully and responding thoughtfully and with grace to the thoughts and opinions of our colleagues. These behaviors will lead to a more fruitful learning environment for all of us.

Course requirements:

There are a variety of assignments and activities required for successful completion of this course. The most basic, but most important, is regular attendance and participation in class sessions. Regular attendance is probably the single best predictor of success on exams, and much of what you learn in this course will be as a result of discussion and interaction with your peers; thus it is in your own best interest to come to class well-prepared each day. As an added incentive, class attendance and participation – including any in-class writing assignments, group work, or pop quizzes -- are worth a significant portion (10%) of your final grade. You are allowed to miss only two class sessions without your absences negatively affecting your grade; please note that the university drop policy (missing more than 8 total class sessions during the semester leads to withdrawal as failing the course) will be strictly enforced.

Course requirements include:

Midterm exam one	15%
Midterm exam two	15%

Cumulative final exam	15%
Five writing assignments throughout semester	45% (9% @ paper x 5 papers)
Attendance & participation	10%

Exam dates are noted on the syllabus, and writing assignment due dates will be given with ample notice in class. Please make special arrangements with the instructor ahead of time if you have a problem completing any of the requirements at the scheduled time, as absolutely no make-up exams will be given. Any written assignment turned in late will be penalized one letter grade (10% of the assignment's worth) for each calendar day that it is late.

Grading Scale:

A	93-100%	C	73-76%
A-	90-92%	C-	70-72%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	83-86%	D	63-66%
B-	80-82%	D-	60-62%
C+	77-79%	F	0-59%

Required Texts:

Joseph Losco and Ralph Baker, ***Am Gov 13/14***, McGraw-Hill, 2013.
The New York Times, daily (digital) subscription
 Articles as assigned, available via our POL165 eclass site.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments (subject to adjustment by instructor):

I. The Framework of American Democracy

January 14	Introduction
January 15	Defining our democratic republic -- <i>Am Gov</i> ch. 1
January 17	United States Constitution -- <i>Am Gov</i> ch. 2
January 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday – no class meeting
January 22	
January 24	<i>Federalist Papers</i> 10 and 51 (in <i>Am Gov</i> appendix)
January 27	Federalism -- <i>Am Gov</i> ch. 3
January 29	“Debating the Issues: Immigration Reform and State Power” (on eclass)
January 31	
February 3	Civil Liberties – <i>Am Gov</i> ch. 4
February 5	*FEDERALISM PAPER DUE*
February 7	Readings on religious freedom (on eclass)
February 10	Civil Rights – <i>Am Gov</i> ch. 5
February 12	
February 14	
February 17	*MIDTERM EXAM ONE*

II. Democratic Participation: Individuals and Groups

- February 19 Political Socialization – *Am Gov* ch. 6
February 21 Public Opinion
- February 24 Fiorina, “Culture War” (on eclass)
February 26 ***POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION PAPER DUE***
“Election Day” documentary (in class)
- February 28 Political Participation – *Am Gov* ch. 7; Samuel Popkin, “The Reasoning Voter” (eclass)
- March 3 Jill Lepore, “Rock, Paper, Scissors: How We Used to Vote,” *New Yorker* 10/13/08 (eclass)
March 5 “Debating the Issues: Voter Identification” (eclass)
March 7 Political Parties and Campaigns -- *Am Gov* ch. 9

March 10-14 Spring Break, no classes

- March 17 Larry Bartels, “Partisanship and Voting Behavior” (eclass)
March 19 Presidential Elections – *Am Gov* ch. 12 (pp.300-307)
March 21 ***ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION REFORM PAPER DUE***

- March 24 Interest Groups – *Am Gov* ch. 8
March 26
March 28 Media -- *Am Gov* ch. 10

- March 31 ***INTEREST GROUP ANALYSIS PAPER DUE***
April 2 ***MIDTERM EXAM TWO***

III. Institutions of American Governance – Three Branches Sharing Power

- April 4 Congress – “Run Granny Run” documentary, watch at
http://www.snagfilms.com/films/title/run_granny_run-002
- April 7 Congress – *Am Gov* ch. 11
April 9 David Mayhew, *Congress: the Electoral Connection* (excerpt on eclass)
Richard Fenno, “US House Members in Their Constituencies” (on eclass)
April 11 Steven S. Smith, “Congressional Trends” (on eclass)
- April 14 The Presidency – *Am Gov* ch. 12
April 16 ***CONGRESS PAPER DUE***
Samuel Kernell, *Going Public* (excerpt on eclass)
- April 18 Easter Break – no class meeting
- April 21 Easter Break – no class meeting
April 23
April 25 The Bureaucracy – *Am Gov* ch. 13
- April 28 The Courts – *Am Gov* ch. 14
April 30
May 2

***FINAL EXAM: Monday May 5, 7:30-10 am ***