

POL 1065: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
Dr. Linda Beail
Spring 2021
MWF 10:55 am – 12:05 pm, Colt Hall 120

Getting in touch with me: For short questions – email me at lbeail@pointloma.edu. As a general rule, I answer emails during the work day (9-4), and I try to answer emails within 24 hours, except on weekends. If I happen to miss your email, please follow up again with me. I want to make sure I get back to you! For everything else – come to office hours or make an appointment. Office hours are a chance for you to get help on class assignments; go over material covered in class; talk about connections between class material and other ideas; talk about the political science major/possible careers/vocation; and so on. I would love to get to know each of you better and help you succeed in this course, so I encourage you to take advantage of this time.

This semester, school policy prohibits face-to-face meetings in faculty offices. However, I am more than happy to meet with you via Zoom or phone.

To [make an appointment](#) with me, see my appointment calendar in Google.
To Zoom with me for that appointment, use my [personal meeting link](#).

PLNU MISSION: To Teach – To Shape – To Send. Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

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 historical context, philosophical ideals 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 recent election cycles. Finally, we will examine the role that our major national governmental institutions -- Congress, the President, 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 and events 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.
- Assess your own political socialization process, an interest group's political effectiveness, and your own member of Congress using theories and research in political science.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of our political system in providing democratic representation.

PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will develop an appreciation of the field of politics (short applied writing assignments).
- Develop and express ideas in written communication in an effective and scholarly manner (short writing assignments).

COURSE CREDIT HOUR INFORMATION

In the interest of providing sufficient time to accomplish the stated Course Learning Outcomes, this class meets the PLNU credit hour policy for a 4 unit class delivered over 15 weeks. It is anticipated that students will spend a minimum of 37.5 participation hours per credit hour on their coursework. For this course, students will spend an estimated 150 total hours meeting the course learning outcomes.

INCOMPLETES AND LATE ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments are to be submitted/turned in by the beginning of the class session when they are due (or the due date specified on Canvas & the syllabus)—including assignments posted in Canvas. Incompletes will only be assigned in extremely unusual circumstances.

PLNU COPYRIGHT POLICY

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU ACADEMIC HONESTY POLICY

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

PLNU ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

While all students are expected to meet the minimum standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic adjustments, modifications or auxiliary aids/services. At Point Loma Nazarene University (PLNU), these students are requested to register with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center (DRC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). The DRC's policies and procedures for assisting such students in the development of an appropriate academic adjustment plan (AP) allows PLNU to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Section 504 prohibits discrimination against students with special needs and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities. After the student files the required documentation, the DRC, in conjunction with the student, will develop an AP to meet that student's specific learning needs. The DRC will thereafter email the student's AP to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester. The AP must be implemented in all such courses.

If students do not wish to avail themselves of some or all of the elements of their AP in a particular course, it is the responsibility of those students to notify their professor in that course. PLNU highly recommends that

DRC students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester about the applicability of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not desire to take advantage of some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

PLNU ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY

Regular and punctual attendance at all **synchronous** class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions (virtual or face-to-face), the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive the appropriate grade for their work and participation. In some courses, a portion of the credit hour content will be delivered **asynchronously** and attendance will be determined by submitting the assignments by the posted due dates. See [Academic Policies](#) in the Undergraduate Academic Catalog. If absences exceed these limits but are due to university excused health issues, an exception will be granted.

Asynchronous Attendance/Participation Definition

A day of attendance in asynchronous content is determined as contributing a substantive note, assignment, discussion, or submission by the posted due date. Failure to meet these standards will result in an absence for that day. Instructors will determine how many asynchronous attendance days are required each week.

FINAL EXAM POLICY

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination **on its scheduled day**. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. No requests for early examinations or alternative days will be approved.

SPIRITUAL CARE

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact the [Office of Spiritual Development](#).

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

In order to be successful in the remote or hybrid environment, you'll need to meet the minimum technology and system requirements; please refer to the [Technology and System Requirements](#) information. Additionally, students are required to have headphone speakers compatible with their computer available to use. If a student is in need of technological resources please contact student-tech-request@pointloma.edu.

Problems with technology do not relieve you of the responsibility of participating, turning in your assignments, or completing your class work.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

The [PLNU Tutoring Center](#) offers support with everything you need to succeed — whether it's learning study strategies and test-taking techniques, getting help from a tutor, using technology to read and write, or editing a research paper. They also offer individual or small group tutorial sessions and special review sessions before exams for several courses. These services are **free** for PLNU undergraduate students. Some helpful **study strategies** that may assist you in this course can be found [here](#).

Research librarians are available to help you with your research papers and projects in Ryan Library. You can reach them by phone at (619) 849-2337, by text at (619)592-8884, or by [email](#). To search the library's databases for books and articles, or to find quick and easy reference to our citation style guide and resources in political science, please visit our department's excellent [research guide](#) from Ryan Library.

[The Wellness Center](#) is available for medical, counseling and nutrition services to students. Many college students experience strained relationships, stress, anxiety, depression, physical health challenges, and other barriers to learning. The Wellness Center offers help and resources to deal with these kind of issues. T

Title IX at PLNU: As an instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. It is my goal that you feel able to share information related to your life experiences in classroom discussions, in your written work, and in our one-on-one meetings. I will seek to keep any information you share private to the greatest extent possible. You should know that I have a mandatory reporting responsibility under PLNU policy and federal law, and am required to share any information I receive regarding sexual harassment, discrimination, and related conduct with PLNU's Title IX Coordinator.

PLNU strives to provide a learning and living environment that promotes safety, transparency, personal integrity, civility, mutual respect, and freedom from unlawful discrimination or sexual harassment. [Detailed information on discrimination, harassment, and sexual assault policies](#) and processes for getting help are available this link. PLNU's Title IX Coordinator is Dr. Caye Smith, Vice President for Student Development (619-849-2479, Room 303 Nicholson Commons). The Title IX office will seek to maintain your privacy to the greatest extent possible, but cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Students can receive *confidential* support (with the exception of a few critical situations) from the Wellness Center (619-849-2574) or campus pastors in the Office of Spiritual Development (619-849-2655).

STYLE GUIDELINES

In political science, the most common form of citations is the **"author-date" format** from the [Chicago Manual of Style](#). Please use this style if using citations in this class – examples are available at the hyperlink. For our short response papers and in-class exams, if you are referring to something from our shared syllabus, simply indicate the author's name or title as you are writing – you do not need formal footnotes or works cited. (For example: "As Karen Brodtkin explains in her essay, 'How Jews Became White Folks,' racial categories changed meaning over the course of the twentieth century.")

Language can be tricky, as it is always evolving in its usage. Some observations might be helpful. Because of the changing standards of English usage, language that refers appropriately to all persons (inclusive of gender) 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--can be replaced with "he or she," "him or her," or "hers or his," or the singular "they," "them," and "their" is also grammatically appropriate. Gender specific terms may be replaced by their current alternatives: for example, "Congressman" has been correctly replaced by "Congressperson" or "member of Congress," etc. As it is becoming more prevalent and considerate to refer to persons by the gender pronouns they prefer, I appreciate your kindness in using gendered language that feels respectful and hospitable to each person when possible.

CLASS EXPECTATIONS

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. Whether face-to-face or via

Zoom, I hope our time together will be lively, valuable, energizing and irreplaceable. In this spirit, I'd ask for your respectful behavior and engaged attention at all times during class, in person or virtually.

There is a lot of polarization, controversy, miscommunication and misunderstanding involved in discussions of American politics these days. We all bring different backgrounds, experiences and opinions with us into this semester. You are each situated at different places across the political spectrum – or may not be sure where you fit on that spectrum of issues, ideologies and partisanship! That's normal and good. My hope is that you enter this class with an open heart and mind, curious about the experiences and opinions of others even as you value and think through your own. My goal is to share historical information and political science research that can help you become more knowledgeable and better able to understand, evaluate and form opinions on political issues and policies. I want to give each of you the context and background to enter these conversations wisely and well.

Given all of the polarization, fear, anger and mistrust in our civic discourse right now, I want to remind you that our goal this semester is not to debate or demonize one another's partisanship, but to learn more about how American politics works & why. Our political system has, from its inception, been one of continually contested ideas – about the size and scope of government, who counts as a citizen, what equality and freedom mean in practice, the role of religion in public life, and more. It is important to hear and understand this unfolding conversation, to know how we have ended up at this moment and think about how we want our system to look moving forward, shaped by our own voices and contributions. I want you to see how none of these issues has been "settled" or taken for granted, but always critiqued & debated. I also want you to understand how many of our current dilemmas and conflicts could be better addressed and resolved by putting them into some context – where these conflicts come from, what's been tried before, why certain ideas/policies/alliances are trusted or mistrusted by political actors today.

I don't want any of you to feel silenced – or to dominate the conversation – but to collaborate in gaining knowledge and insight. There is much to learn by wrestling with ideas, but not from attacking or belittling one another on a personal level. We are not here to doubt one another's intelligence, morality, or good faith. 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. Our opportunity and privilege this semester is to help one another grow intellectually, hold one another accountable in love, and emerge with more knowledge, tools and practice at speaking & thinking about divisive but important topics.

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 in completing the assignments, 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 participation – including any in-class writing assignments or group work – along with reading assignments are worth 10% of your final grade. Please note that your participation grade will reflect the quality of your participation – the goal is not mere quantity. Your contributions to discussion should be thoughtful and relevant. Sometimes a good question is far more helpful and appreciated than a statement trying to be profound or that shuts the conversation down. Everyone should make an effort to take up their fair share of the endeavor: some of you will need to resist the urge to speak too much and some of you will need to gather your courage to speak more than you normally do. We should all make space for one another's voices, perspectives and experiences. We may

disagree and challenge one another’s ideas, but we will strive to be respectful, kind, patient, and not engage in personal attacks, modeling the civility most useful to political debate and to learning.

Course requirements include:

Weekly 3-2-1 Reading Responses – due every Tuesday evening by 11:59 pm in Canvas	10% of final course grade
Five short “Analyzing American Politics” papers	50% (5 at 10% each)
Attendance/Class Participation –class discussion, group work, discussion boards, etc.	10%
“Government in the News” – paper and presentation/discussion	10%
Final Project/Exam	20%

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:

Losco and Baker, *AmGov 2021* (7th edition), McGraw-Hill.
 Ari Berman, *Give Us the Ballot*, Picador, 2016.
 Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*, Crown, 2018.
 Articles, podcasts and films as assigned, available online via links in syllabus.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS (subject to revisions as semester unfolds):

	DATE	PREPARATION FOR CLASS	ASSIGNMENTS DUE
WEEK 1 Introduction – The Roots of Our Democratic Republic	March 1	Log in to our class Canvas site, become familiar with how our class modules will work, and read through syllabus. Please pay special attention to the course description & learning outcomes; class expectations; and course requirements.	Bring any questions to our first “live” class session on Wednesday March 3 at 11 am on Zoom.
	March 3	Before class time: Read Levitsky and Ziblatt, <i>How Democracies Die</i> , Introduction	

	March 7	Read Levitsky and Ziblatt, <i>How Democracies Die</i> , chapters 1-2	
WEEK 2 The United States Constitution	March 8	Read Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 2 Listen to the Constitutional Podcast, Framed (60 minutes)	
	March 10	Read Levitsky and Ziblatt, <i>How Democracies Die</i> , chapters 5-6	
	March 12	Federalist #10 and Federalist #51	Paper #1: Democratic Values Analysis due in Canvas no later than 11:59 pm on Sunday, March 14
WEEK 3 Federalism	March 15	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 3 Watch Crash Course Federalism (9 minutes)	
	March 17	Brookings Institution, Why Federalism Matters Watch http://www.pbs.org/tpt/constitution-usa-peter-sagal/watch/a-more-perfect-union/ on federalism (53 minutes)	
	March 19	Badger, Emily, " Blue Cities Want to Make Their Own Rules. Red States Won't Let Them. " <i>New York Times</i> 7/6/2017 Mallory SoRelle & Alexis N. Walker, <i>MonkeyCage</i> , " Both Dems & Reps care about 'states rights'—when it suits them "	"Government in the News" Presentation (Group 1)
WEEK 4 Civil Liberties	March 22	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 4	
	March 24	Watch Korematsu and Civil Liberties (26 minutes)	

	March 26	Green, Emma, " Gay Rights May Come at the Cost of Religious Freedom ," <i>The Atlantic</i> (2015)	"Government in the News" Presentation (Group 2) Paper #2: Federalism Analysis due in Canvas no later than 11:59 pm on Sunday, March 28
WEEK 5 Civil Rights	March 29	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 5	
	March 31	<i>*Wednesday March 31 – Mental Health Break – No Class Meeting*</i>	
	April 2	Read Berman, <i>Give Us The Ballot</i> , Prologue and chapters 1-2 (pp. 3-64) and be prepared to discuss in class	
WEEK 6 Political Socialization and Public Opinion	April 5	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 6	
	April 7		
	April 9	Khan Academy, Measuring public opinion CBS This Morning, How polling works and what it says about America	"Government in the News" Presentation (Group 3)
WEEK 7 Political Participation	April 12	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 7	
	April 14	Whose Vote Counts , Netflix Explained Heather Ondercin, SSN, Exploring the Trends That Have Shaped America's Growing Partisan Gender Gap Public Policy Institute of CA, California's Exclusive Electorate, A New Look at Who Votes and Why it Matters	
	April 16	Berman, <i>Give Us the Ballot</i> chapters 3-4	"Government in the News" Presentation (Group 4)

			Paper #3: Political Socialization and Family Tree due in Canvas no later than 11:59 pm, Sunday April 18
WEEK 8 Parties and Elections	April 19	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 9	
	April 21	Lilliana Mason, The Ezra Klein Show podcast, The age of "mega-identity" politics	
	April 23		"Government in the News" Presentation (Group 5)
WEEK 9 Interest Groups	April 26	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 8	
	April 28	<i>This American Life</i> , " Take the Money and Run for Office " (about 60 minutes)	
	April 30	Berman, <i>Give Us the Ballot</i> chapter 5	"Government in the News" Presentation (Group 6)
WEEK 10 Media	May 3	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 10	
	May 5	<i>*Wednesday May 5 – Mental Health Break, No Class Meeting*</i>	
	May 7	Berman, <i>Give Us the Ballot</i> chapters 6-7	Paper #4: Interest Groups Analysis Due in Canvas no later than 11:59 pm, Sunday, May 9
WEEK 11 Congress	May 10	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 11	
	May 12	Watch A Day in the Life of Congressman John Carney Introduction to the Legislative Process in the US Congress , Congressional Research Service, November 2020 Find your home Congressional district's House Member and	

		research their committee assignments – bring that info to class with you	
	May 14	The legislative process and the Senate filibuster: Benjamin Wallace-Wells, “ Examining the Case Against the Filibuster ,” The New Yorker, February 4, 2021 Politifact, The History of the Filibuster as Jim Crow Relic	“Government in the News” Presentation (Group 7)
WEEK 12 Presidency	May 17	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 12	
	May 19		
	May 21	Berman, <i>Give Us the Ballot</i> chapter 8	“Government in the News” Presentation (Group 8) Paper #5: US House Member Analysis due in Canvas no later than 11:59 pm on Sunday, May 23
WEEK 13 Courts	May 24	Losco and Baker, <i>AmGov</i> chapter 14 Watch Eugene Kim, Overview of the Federal Court System (9 minutes)	
	May 26	Seth Masket, Pacific Standard, The Supreme Court Nomination that Tore the Country Apart Listen to “ The Roots of Judicial Activism ” All Things Considered, 2009 (4 minutes)	
	May 28	Berman, <i>Give Us the Ballot</i> chapter 9	
WEEK 14 Future of Democracy	May 31	Berman, <i>Give Us the Ballot</i> chapter 10 Voting Rights in 2021 – updates	
	June 2	Read Levitsky and Ziblatt, <i>How Democracies Die</i> , chapters 7-8	

	June 4	Read Levitsky and Ziblatt, <i>How Democracies Die</i> , chapter 9	
WEEK 15 Final Exam	Friday, June 11 10:30 am – 1 pm		Berman Synthesis/Reflection and Voting Rights Project due in Canvas no later than 10:30 am, Friday June 11