

# POS 2041: American Federal Government

(Class Number 14585-95)

Fall Semester, 2018

Class: MW 9:35-10:25AM, various TA sessions

Location: MCCC 0100

**Instructor:** Dr. Chase B. Meyer  
**Email:** chase.meyer@ufl.edu  
**Office:** Anderson Hall 317  
**Office Hours:** Wed. & Thurs. 11:00-1:00PM  
**Course Website:** www.chasebmeyer.com  
**Department:** Department of Political Science  
**Department Contact:** <https://polisci.ufl.edu> (352) 392-0262

## Course Description:

This introductory course is designed to examine the role that American government and politics plays in our lives and provide a better understanding of the functions and responsibilities of our governmental system. To learn more about the nature of American political institutions, we will examine features of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches as well as the role of political parties, election laws, the media and the bureaucracy in our political system, as well as how the Founders envisioned such a system. We will also discuss each of these topics from a historical perspective while simultaneously placing them in the context of contemporary political debates.

## Goals of this Course:

By the end of this course you should understand the basic principles of our democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government. Understand the US Constitution, its origins, and why certain provisions were included. Gain knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance such as the Federalist Papers. Understand major Supreme Court cases and their impact on law and society. Understand how we elect officials to lead our country in our republican form of government and how they differ from the methods of other nations.

## Required Texts:

*The Logic of American Politics*. 7th edition. by Samuel Kernell, Gary Jacobson, Thad Kousser and Lynn Vavrek. CQ Press.

Other readings will be posted on my website [www.chasebmeyer.com](http://www.chasebmeyer.com) and on Canvas.

## Course Structure:

On Mondays and Wednesdays of this semester we will meet in MCCC 0100 for a lecture about the assigned topic for the day. While these Monday/Wednesday classes are more lecture than discussion based, I am happy to answer any questions students may have during class. Students also must go to their assigned TA-led discussion sessions on

Thursday or Friday. These sessions will be more discussion based with focus on the readings and the recent assignments.

**Course Expectations:**

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. I will not tolerate disruptive behavior in the classroom, including (but not limited to) talking during lectures, reading newspapers, the ringing of cell phones or pagers, leaving class early, inappropriate or offensive remarks, and personal attacks against other students or the instructor. I expect students to come to class ready to learn and having completed the assigned readings on time.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

1. Participation/Attendance (10%)
2. Assignments (10%)
3. Exam #1 (15%)
4. Exam #2 (15%)
5. Exam #3 (15%)
6. Final Exam (35%)

**A+:** 97-100

**B+:** 87-89

**C+:** 77-79

**D+:** 67-69

**A:** 93-96

**B:** 83-86

**C:** 73-76

**D:** 63-66

**A-:** 90-92

**B-:** 80-82

**C-:** 70-72

**D-:** 60-62

**F:** 0-59

***Attendance and Participation:***

Attendance for this course is mandatory, so I strongly urge you to come to class, both the main lecture and the smaller TA sessions. It will be incredibly difficult to do well in this course without showing up and paying attention. A full 10% of your grade will be determined based on participation in your TA sessions, I will keep track of how often each student participates. Attendance will be taken occasionally in the main lecture and will be taken during every TA session. The only way to guarantee your points is to come to class every day. Exceptions will be made for excused absences (with documentation). Also there will be occasional home works assigned throughout the semester, these will be added in to the participation grade.

***Assignments:***

Throughout the semester you will be assigned different assignments, usually in the form of a short 1-2 page paper to write. These assignments will be due at the beginning of your TA sessions on their due date, so be sure to come to your scheduled TA session on time.

**Exams:**

There will be four exams in this course, including a final exam given during the scheduled examination period at the end of the semester. Examinations will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. While the first three exams are non-cumulative, the final exam will cover material from the lectures and the assigned readings for the *entire* course. The exam dates are:

Exam 1: Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>

Exam 2: Oct 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>

Exam 3: Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup>

Final Cumulative Exam: Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>

**Grade Appeals, Make-up Policy, and Incompletes:**

Formal grade appeals must be made in writing, and in the case of an exam, I will re-grade your entire test. Therefore, your grade can go up or down. However, you should talk to your TA about your grade BEFORE you make a formal appeal to me. A final grade of “Incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. If an incomplete is given, it is the student’s responsibility to complete the necessary requirements as early in the following semester as possible. Legitimate excuses for absence from an exam (e.g., religious holiday, medical emergency, or illness) must be presented to me and accepted prior to the exam when feasible and be sure to have verifiable documentation of why your absence should be excused.

**Miscellaneous:** Extra credit opportunities will be assigned throughout the semester, if you want extra points or to do extra work, these will be your opportunities to do so. Do not come to me at the end of the semester and ask for more extra credit chances, by that time you will have missed your chance.

**Instructor Availability:** I will hold office hours every week on Wednesday and Thursday from 11:00AM to 1:00PM in my office located in Anderson Hall, room 317. These office hours are subject to change and if any changes are made to my scheduled office hours I will inform the class. If you would like to meet with me outside of my normal office hours please email me at [chase.meyer@ufl.edu](mailto:chase.meyer@ufl.edu). Your TA will also hold office hours, contact your instructor for your Thursday/Friday session for their specific office hour times and locations.

**Special Needs and Academic Honesty:** The University of Florida is committed to providing academic accommodations for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, a student should present his/her accommodation letter to me supporting a request for accommodations. The University encourages students with disabilities to follow these procedures as early as possible within the semester.

Academic honesty is of the utmost important in an academic setting like UF. You are

welcome to study together but make sure the work you hand in is your own. I will not tolerate plagiarism or deception in any form. All work in this class is to be your own. Students who fail to abide by this policy, or who plagiarize, will receive a failing grade on the assignment.

**Course Schedule:**

*(Subject to change)*

Wed. Aug. 22<sup>nd</sup>: Syllabus Day and Class Introduction

*Readings: None*

Thurs./Fri. Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup>/24<sup>th</sup>: Introductions to your TA's, Why This Course?

*Readings: None*

Mon. Aug. 27<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to the Logic of American Politics

*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 1*

Wed. Aug. 29<sup>th</sup>: Logic of American Politics cont. and the U.S. Constitution

*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapters 1 & 2, The Articles of Confederation*

Thurs./Fri. Aug. 30<sup>th</sup>/31<sup>st</sup>: Discussion of the Articles on Confederation

*Readings: The Articles of Confederation*

Mon. Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup>: Holiday, NO CLASS

*Readings: None*

Wed. Sept. 5<sup>th</sup>: The U.S. Constitution

*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 2, the U.S. Constitution*

Thurs./Fri. Sept. 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup>: Discussion on the Constitution

*Readings: The Federalist Papers*

Mon. Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>: Federalism

*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 3*

Wed. Sept. 12<sup>th</sup>: Civil Liberties

*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 5*

Thurs./Fri. Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup>: Discussion on Civil Liberties and Censorship

*Readings: TBD*

Mon. Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>: Civil Rights

*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 4*

Wed: Sept. 19<sup>th</sup>: Supreme Court Cases on Civil Rights/Liberties  
*Readings: TBD*

Thurs./Fri. Sept. 20<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup>: Exam #1  
*Readings: None*

Mon: Sept. 24<sup>th</sup>: The U.S. Congress  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 6*

Wed: Sept. 26<sup>th</sup>: Law-making in the Congress  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 6 cont.*

Thurs./Fri. Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup>: Discussion on Congress  
*Readings: TBD*

Mon. Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>: Congressional Elections  
*Readings: TBD*

Wed. Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>: The Judiciary  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 9*

Thurs./Fri. Oct 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>: Discussion on Elections  
*Readings: TBD*

Mon. Oct. 8<sup>th</sup>: The Bureaucracy  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 8*

Wed. Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>: The Presidency  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 7*

Thurs./Fri. Oct 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup>: Discussion on the Presidency  
*Readings: TBD*

Mon. Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>: Presidential Elections  
*Readings: TBD*

Wed. Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>: Public Opinion  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 10*

Thurs./Fri. Oct 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup>: Discussion on Presidential Elections  
*Readings: Bread and Peace Voting in the 2012 Election*

Mon. Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup>: Voting and Campaigns  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 11*

Wed. Oct. 24<sup>th</sup>: Who Runs and Wins Public Office?  
*Readings: Why Are Women Still Not Running for Public Office?*

Thurs./Fri. Oct 25<sup>th</sup>/26<sup>th</sup>: Exam #2  
*Readings: None*

Mon. Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>: Political Parties  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 12*

Wed. Oct. 31<sup>st</sup>: Political Parties Continued  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 12 cont.*

Thurs./Fri. Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>: NO CLASS, HOMECOMING  
*Readings: None*

Mon. Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>: Election Day 2018 Primer  
*Readings: TBD*

Wed. Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>: International Relations/Foreign Policy  
*Readings: TBD*

Thurs./Fri. Nov. 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>: Discussion on the 2018 Election  
*Readings: TBD*

Mon. Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>: Holiday, NO CLASS

Wed. Nov. 14<sup>th</sup>: The Media  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 14*

Thurs./Fri. Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>: Discussion on Media and Politics  
*Readings: News Coverage Conveys Strong Momentum for Same Sex Marriage*

Mon. Nov. 19<sup>th</sup>: DISTRICT WORK PERIOD, NO CLASS  
*Readings: Watch Assigned Documentary*

Wed. Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>: Holiday, NO CLASS  
*Readings: None*

Thurs./Fri. Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup>: Holiday, NO CLASS  
*Readings: None*

Mon. Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>: Interest Groups  
*Readings: Kernell et al. Chapter 13*

Wed. Nov. 28<sup>th</sup>: Lobbying  
*Readings: TBD*

Thurs./Fri. Nov. 29<sup>th</sup>/30<sup>th</sup>: Exam #3

*Readings: None*

Mon. Dec.. 3<sup>rd</sup>: American Government Today

*Readings: TBD*

Wed. Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>: Conclusion and review for final exam

*Readings: None*

**FINAL EXAM: Dec. 12<sup>th</sup>, 12:30-2:30PM**

**TA-led Discussion Sections:**

When you registered for this course you registered for one of the specific TA-led discussion sections. Look at your class number and this will be the section you should attend every week. Below is the class number for each discussion session, as well as the day, time, instructor, and location.

14587--Thursday, 10:40-11:30 (Brandon) MAT 0118

14586--Thursday, 11:45-12:35 (Brandon) MAT 0151

14585--Thursday, 12:50-1:40 (James) MAT 0151

14592--Thursday, 1:55-2:45 (James) MAT 0151

14593--Friday, 9:35-10:25 (Ningxin) MAT 0251

14595: Friday, 9:35-10:25 (Kelly) MAT 0151

14589--Friday, 10:40-11:30 (Kelly) MAT 0151

14590--Friday, 11:45-12:35 (Ningxin) MAT 0102