POS 2401: American Politics (Online)

Instructor: Tamara Hawes, (Substituting for Dr. Melissa Stewart)
E-Mail: thawes@uwf.edu
Virtual Office Hours: scheduled appointment via the chat functions of Gmail and/or E-learning

**Objectives and Goals**

This course provides you with a basic introduction to the workings of American government and politics. This course consists of the study of the Constitution, government, and federal structure of the United States. We consider federal, state, and local problems in the context of American political culture and history.

Special emphasis will be placed on the United States Constitution, its underlying political principles, the context in which it was framed, and contemporary interpretations. By the end of the course, you should gain insight into the political forces and institutions that shape our society and, reciprocally, the social forces that influence our government.

By the end of this course, at the very least you will be able to:

- Discuss the workings of the three branches of the government
- Analyze ways in which separation of powers and checks and balances work among the branches of government
- Analyze the many outside forces at work on the actors in government (e.g., the media, interest groups, etc.)

**Topics Covered** include: federalism, the Constitution, the three branches of government, the bureaucracy, opinion and participation, the media in politics, political parties, campaigns and elections, interest groups, and how the government deals with issues such as personal liberty, the economy, and national security.

**Course Materials**

ISBN: 9780205791347

Americans Governing access, available through [www.americansgoverning.com](http://www.americansgoverning.com) (You can purchase access online with a credit/debit card or with cash, check, or charge through the UWF bookstore)

**Methods of Evaluation and Grading Policy**

*Exams:* There will be three (3) examinations on the dates listed in the course outline. Exams will be available to you on-line from *8:00 am Sunday until 11:59 pm Saturday on the weeks that they are given*. That time frame is your only opportunity to take the exam. Because the first exam in any class is generally the most difficult, the first exam counts for 5% less than
Exams 2 and 3. If you take longer than the time allotted to you to take the exam, points will be taken off of your exam grade (2 points per minute late). There are no exceptions to this policy.

Questions will be randomized, so no one will receive the same test questions in the same order. Please do not refer to your book, notes, or any other class material while taking the exam. Do not take the exam with others from the class. The exams are timed. If you try to look up every answer, you will run out of time. You must take the test in the same sitting on the same day. Any deviation from this policy will result in a zero on the exam.

**Reading Quizzes:** Quizzes will be given as outlined in the course schedule. Quizzes are to be taken on-line and will be available to you from 8:00 am Sunday until 11:59 pm Saturday on the weeks they are due. If you do not take the quiz during that time, you will be given a zero. If you take longer than the time allotted to you on a given quiz, points will be taken off of that quiz. Habitually taking longer than the time given to you will result in a zero on the quiz after two (2) late quizzes. Each quiz is made up of ten randomly chosen questions from the chapter(s) indicated. No two quizzes will be the same. The quizzes are to be taken individually. Please do not refer to your textbook, notes, or other class materials; each quiz has a time limit to help you avoid the temptation to look up answers in your text.

**Weekly Online Activities:** In order to complete the weekly interactive activities, you must register with www.AmericansGoverning.com. You'll return to this site to complete your activities. You can also purchase an access code through the UWF bookstore. Please log on to the site for instructions on how to register using this code. Please do so within the first few days of the semester.

Each week you will complete a series of activities based on what you are learning in your text that week. The assignments are listed in the Course Schedule, and are also listed for you under “Things to do this week” in each week of the course. Please refer to your course schedule for a more detailed description of which specific activities are required for each week. Each of these assignments is accompanied by a quiz to test your understanding of the project. Twenty percent of your grade depends on your thoughtful participation in each of these projects and will be determined by your assignment quiz grades.

Just like the chapter content quizzes, each of these projects will be available to you beginning Sunday at 8:00 am and ending Saturday at 11:59 pm. Any participation in these projects must be done during that time or you will not receive credit. Because some of these exercises only have a few quiz questions, I do not want to punish you for missing one question. So, if you make at least a 65% on the assignment, your grade for that assignment will be 100%. Grades of 64% or lower will be given the grade earned (for example, if you receive a 65% your grade will be a 100% for that assignment. However, if you earn a 48%, your grade will be a 48%). These exercises will make up 15% of your grade.

**Letter to the Editor:** Fifteen (15) percent of your grade will be composed of your completion of a “letter to the editor” identifying a particular problem in the contemporary conduct of American politics and offering a critique of the problem in terms of the material studied in the course. You will be required to choose a subject from one of four topics (see the Course Content page for
Your letter should be submitted via email to the syndicated journal/newspaper of your choice by April 13. Please copy me on these emails, as well as place a copy of the letter in the dropbox. Letters accepted for publication by April 23 will receive a perfect score. Those not accepted for publication will be graded based on the rubric provided on the Course Content page.

Course materials available to you on-line: For each week of the course you will have access to several items to help you learn and study the material. You will have access to chapter summaries to help you prepare for your quizzes and tests. Please take advantage of every resource available to you. Since this is an online course, your active participation is very necessary in order for you to do well on the quizzes and tests.

Grading:

Exam 1: 15%
Exam 2: 20%
Exam 3: 20%
Reading Quizzes: 15%
Interactive Activities & Quizzes: 15%
Letter to the Editor: 15%

Grading Scale: 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+: 67-69; D: 63-66; D-: 60-62; F: 59 and below.

There is no extra credit for this course. I view the interactive activities and their associated quizzes as “easy A’s,” and your opportunity to bring up your average class grade.

Additional Information

Communication: If you have problems with the class, contact me as soon as possible. Since I do not have an office on campus, e-mail is the best way to contact me. I will generally respond to e-mails within 12 hours, and no later than 24 hours.

I may respond more slowly to emails received on holidays or weekends. Please know that emails you send are time-stamped, so if you have an issue that you address in a timely fashion, even if it takes me a day or so to respond, I will know that you acted in the time allotted and will consider that when dealing with your concern.

In the event of an emergency, please contact the Department of Government at (850) 474-2929 and they will get a message to me.

At any time you have a concern or question regarding the class, please feel free to contact via e-mail me. We can address your issues within an e-mail exchange or by utilizing one of two chat functions available to students and instructors. If you prefer to have a ‘chat’ with me, we will establish a ‘meeting’ time that works for both of our schedules.
**Expectations and Strategies for Success:** While this course is taught in a completely online environment, you will need to keep up on a weekly basis with your readings, assignments, and quizzes. **Absolutely no make-up quizzes will be given, and no late assignments will be accepted.** Furthermore, there is no extra credit available for this course.

As with all learning, your performance is a direct result of your abilities, your prior knowledge, and the effort that you apply towards completion. Read the prescribed materials. Watch the videos. Ask yourself how they concepts relate to each other. Be proactive. If you don’t understand a concept, or don’t understand how it may apply (its context) then ask. Don’t wait until the closeout of the quizzes/exams to start. Again, this course will require you to be very self-motivated, and because it is completely online, it requires you to initiate emails or discussion board posts to me if you are confused or concerned about any aspect of the course.

**Special Technology Requirements:** This course requires the use of email, word processing, and the University’s eLearning system. **You are responsible for any e-mails that I send to you or to the class. Please do not forward your University e-mail to any other e-mail server because if your server goes down or your mailbox is full, you will still be responsible for any information I may send you.** Please check your University e-mail several times a week so as not to miss important information.

If you have a technical problem, please contact Information Technology Services by any of the following contact points on their website ([http://uwf.edu/helpdesk/](http://uwf.edu/helpdesk/)). You may also call the ITS Help Desk at (850-474-2075).

**Academic Integrity:** Misrepresenting someone else’s work as your own is a violation of the standards of this class and the University. The University of West Florida provides clear guidance on academic dishonesty and misconduct. Please refer to the University’s policies available at [http://uwf.edu/catalog/acadmis.htm](http://uwf.edu/catalog/acadmis.htm) or [http://uwf.edu/govt/studentresources.cfm](http://uwf.edu/govt/studentresources.cfm) for more detailed information regarding these policies.

**Special Accommodations:** Students with special needs who require specific examination-related or other course-related accommodations should contact the Student Disability Resource Center (850-474-2387). DSS will provide the student with a letter for the instructor that will specify any recommended accommodations. I will work with the SDRC to make the appropriate accommodations to the course.

**Syllabus Change Policy:** This syllabus and the course schedule are guides for the course and are subject to change. Changes will be posted on eLearning.

**About Your Instructor:** This course is normally taught by Dr. Stewart, but since she is not available, I am filling in this semester. I have taught both online and traditional classes in Political Science for two universities over the last five years and am currently work as a Congressional Staffer. I am looking forward to an interesting and academically challenging class that will provide you with an understanding of American politics and its place in our society.