

POLS 1013 PA - WM - INTRO TO US GOVERNMENT

Revised

Course Syllabus

OVERVIEW

America truly has been blessed more than any other nation in history. Americans have enjoyed an unprecedented level of freedom, prosperity, opportunity, and stability. America has had only one Constitution since 1789. For Americans who are used to living in this kind of stability, this may not seem very impressive.

However, when you realize that throughout history, the average length of a nation's constitution's lifespan is only 17 years, you begin to get the sense that there is something special about this 230+ year-old American Constitution. In fact, it has outlasted every other national written constitution in history.

America's uniqueness doesn't stop there. With only 4% of the world's population, every year America produces more inventions, medical cures, and technological discoveries than the other 96% of the world combined. In 1831, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville traveled to the United States to discover what made America so different. After traveling across America for several months, he wrote of how the condition of America was the "exception" to the rule. This became known as American Exceptionalism, which is simply to say that America is not like other nations. She truly is extraordinary, meaning EXTRA-ordinary, or not ordinary, not the norm.

But why? If we are to study the American system of government, we must study what made this system so unique and produce such unique results. What caused the United States of America to become the freest, most powerful, and most benevolent nation in the history of the world? In this course, you will learn the secrets to America's founding formula, the way our government works, and your role as a citizen in this nation.

The course is a thorough study of the political theory of the American founding. Topics include America's Founding Documents; the current debate over nullification, D.C. Statehood, impeachment, the Electoral College, the 1st Amendment, and individual God-given rights versus group government-given rights; the biblical view of government, and citizenship, and the different spheres of life and its contributions to American founding documents and their basic principles (specially freedom); the types of law (ceremonial, moral, judicial, and social impact); Public Law; the Law and the Courts; the American Legislative Branch and Political Parties; and Electoral Behavior in America.

TEXTS AND ACTIVITIES

A Republic If You Can Keep It course

Additional assigned readings and activities

UNIT 1: COURSE INTRO (CLASS 1)

Theme(s): Building Blocks of Society, Laws, and Liberty; Government and Civil Laws; America's political history; and Citizen Responsibilities

Readings for CLASS 1:

1. Course Intro
2. Glossary of Terms

Assignments for CLASS 1:

1. Watch Course Intro Videos 1, 2, & 3
2. Read: *Government in Biblical Perspective* by Grace to You (<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-363/government-in-biblical-perspective>)
3. Read Course Intro
4. Read the Glossary of Terms
5. After reading the Glossary of Terms, list 5 to 20 terms that were new for you and have called your attention the most.
6. Discussion board:
 - a) post a 250-300 word reflection of what you found was the most interesting content present in Course Intro and the Glossary, associating them with the Biblical perspective of government and laws
 - b) provide thoughtful responses to the posts of two other classmates

Readings for next class (CLASS 2):

1. The Declaration of Independence
2. The Virginia Declaration of Rights

UNIT 2: MOVEMENTS LEADING TO INDEPENDENCE (CLASSES 2 - 3)

Theme(s): Events leading to independence and the building of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, the principles and types of laws reflected on them; the elements of the New Republic

Readings for CLASS 2:

1. Chapter 1 Intro, Topic 1.1, Topic 1.2, Topic 1.3, and Topic 1.4

Assignments for CLASS 2:

1. Watch Video 4
 3. Read Chapter 1 Intro
 4. Watch Video 5
 5. Watch Video 6
 6. Read Topic 1.1
 7. Watch Video 7
 8. Read Topic 1.2
 9. Watch Videos 8 & 9
 10. Read Topic 1.3
 11. Watch Videos 10 & 11
 12. Read Topic 1.4
 13. Listen to Audio 1
 14. Take Topic 1.1 to 1.4 Quiz
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Readings for CLASS 3:

1. Topic 1.6 to 1.9
2. Fragment on the Constitution and the Union Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)
3. The Articles of Confederation
4. Northwest Ordinance
5. US Constitution

Assignments for CLASS 3:

1. Watch Video 12
2. Watch Video 13

3. Read Topic 1.6
4. Read Topic 1.7
5. Watch Videos 14 & 15
6. Watch Video 16
7. Read Topic 1.8
8. Watch Video 17
9. Read Topic 1.9
10. Take Topic 1.5 to 1.9 Quiz
11. Discussion board:
 - a) after reading “Fragment on the Constitution and the Union“ by Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)”, post a 250-300 word summary of Topics 1.6 to 1.9 linking it to what Lincoln asserts is the most relevant principle that undergirds the Constitution and the American Union and is responsible for its prosperity
 - b) provide thoughtful responses to the posts of two other classmates

Readings for next class (CLASS 4):

1. Read The Constitution Made Easy by Michael Holler (from Constitution Alive! course)

UNIT 3: GOVERNING UNDER THE CONSTITUTION (CLASSES 4-6)

Theme(s): Creation of the New Constitution; Legislative and Executive Branches; Military powers.

Readings for CLASS 4:

1. Topic 2.1 and 2.2
2. John Jay, Federalist 2 (1787). Available at: https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed02.asp
3. James Madison, “Vices of the Political System of the United States” (1787). Available at: <https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-09-02-0187>
4. Thomas Jefferson, Notes on the State of Virginia, Query XIII (1784). Available on <https://constitution.hillsdale.edu/document.doc?id=235>

5. George Washington, Letter to John Jay (1786). Available at:
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/04-04-02-0199>
6. Alexander Hamilton, Federalist 15 (1787). Available at:
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-04-02-0168>
7. Alexander Hamilton, Federalist 9 (1787). Available at:
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-04-02-0162>
8. James Madison, Federalist 10 (1787). Available at:
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Madison/01-10-02-0178>
9. James Madison, Federalist 51 (1787). Available at:
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Hamilton/01-04-02-0199>

Assignments for CLASS 4:

1. Watch Ch. 2 Intro Video
2. Read Topic 2.1
3. Watch Videos 19 & 20
4. Read Topic 2.2
5. Watch Video 21
6. Take Topic 2.1 and 2.2 Quiz
7. Discussion board:
 - a) post a 250-300 word reflection that describes the two sides of the debate between Federalists and Anti-Federalists, given that Federalists supported a stronger central/national government while the Anti-Federalists desired stronger state governments
 - b) provide thoughtful responses to the posts of two other classmates

Readings for CLASS 5:

1. Topic 2.3 to 2.5

Assignments for CLASS 5:

1. Read Topic 2.3
2. Watch Video 22
3. Watch Video 23

4. Read Topic 2.4
 10. Watch Video 24
 11. Read Topic 2.5
 12. Watch Video
 13. Take Topic 2.3 to 2.5 Quiz
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Readings for CLASS 6:

1. Topic 2.6 to 2.8

Assignments for CLASS 6:

1. Read Topic 2.6
2. Watch Videos 26 & 27
3. Read Topic 2.7
4. Watch Video 28
5. Read Topic 2.8
6. Take Topic 2.6 to 2.8 Quiz
7. Study for Midterm Exam (Units 1 to 3)

MIDTERM EXAM (CLASS 7)

The idea is to use the chapter tests available to build a unique midterm exam, graded 25 (for example), and composed of 25 to 50 questions.

UNIT 4: FEDERAL COURTS, CIVIL LIBERTIES, & CIVIL RIGHTS (CLASSES 8-10)

Theme(s): Judicial System, the Bill of Rights (1st to 10th Amendments), Amendment Process, and Civil Justice.

Readings for CLASS 8:

1. Topic 3.1 to 3.3

2. Read *Limiting an Overreaching Federal Government: Is State Nullification the Solution? A Constitutional Analysis* by David Barton (from Constitutional Defense course)

Assignments for CLASS 8:

1. Watch Videos 29 & 30
 2. Read Topic 3.1
 3. Watch Video 31
 4. Read Topic 3.2
 5. Read Topic 3.3
 6. Watch Video 32
 7. Take Topic 3.1 to 3.3 Quiz
 8. Discussion board:
 - a) post a 250-300 word reflection on the paper *Limiting an Overreaching Federal Government: Is State Nullification the Solution? A Constitutional Analysis*, associating it with the discussion from Topic 3.1 to 3.3
 - b) provide thoughtful responses to the posts of two other classmates
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Readings for CLASS 9:

1. Topic 3.4 to 3.6
2. The Second Amendment by David Barton
3. Ex parte Milligan, 1866

Assignments for CLASS 9:

8. Watch Video 33
9. Watch Video 34
10. Read Topic 3.4
11. Watch Video 35
12. Read Topic 3.5
13. Read *The Second Amendment* by David Barton (from Constitutional Defense course)

14. Watch Video 36
 15. Watch Video 37
 16. Read Topic 3.6
 17. Take Topic 3.4 and 3.6 Quiz
 18. Discussion board:
 - a) post a 250-300 word reflection on the case Ex parte Milligan, 1866 that discusses the First and Second Amendments in light of the Supreme Court decision on that case
 - b) provide thoughtful responses to the posts of two other classmates
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Readings for CLASS 10:

1. Case Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896 Available at:
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/163/537> and
<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/plessy-v-ferguson>
2. Case Lochner v. New York, 1905 Available at:
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/198/45>
3. Case Schechter Poultry v. U.S., 1935 Available at:
<https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/295/495>

Assignments for CLASS 10:

1. Watch Video 38
2. Read about the case Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896
3. Read about the case Lochner v. New York, 1905
4. Read about the case Schechter Poultry v. U.S., 1935
5. Discussion board:
 - a) post a 300-450 word reflection that discusses the Constitution amendments in light of the Supreme Court decision on the following cases: Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896; Lochner v. New York, 1905; and Schechter Poultry v. U.S., 1935
 - b) provide thoughtful responses to the posts of two other classmates

UNIT 5: POLITICAL PARTIES & INTEREST GROUPS (CLASSES 11-12)

Theme(s): Political parties; interest groups in America.

Readings for CLASS 11:

1. Topic 4.1
2. *Political Parties and Democracy* by S. C. Stokes (1999) Available at: www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.polisci.2.1.243
3. *A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics* by Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel and John Zaller
Available at: www.vanderbilt.edu/csdi/TheoryofParty.pdf

Assignments for CLASS 11:

1. Watch Videos 39 to 42
 2. Read Topic 4.1
 3. Take Topic 4.1 Quiz
 4. Read the paper *Political Parties and Democracy* by S. C. Stokes (1999)
 5. Read the paper *A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics* by Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel and John Zaller
 6. Discussion board:
 - a) post a 250-300 word reflection on the main theories of political parties based on the papers suggested
 - b) provide thoughtful responses to the posts of two other classmates
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Readings for CLASS 12:

1. Topic 4.2

Assignments for CLASS 12:

1. Watch Videos 43 to 47
2. Read Topic 4.2
3. Take Topic 4.2 Quiz

4. Watch the videos: *How's Socialism Doing in Venezuela* by PragerU Available at: <https://www.prageru.com/video/how-socialism-doing-in-venezuela> and *How Socialism Ruined My Country* by PragerU Available at: <https://www.prageru.com/video/how-socialism-ruined-my-country>
5. Discussion board:
 - a) post a 250-300 argument comparing the socialist influence on the U.S, Brazil, and Venezuela politics
 - b) provide thoughtful responses to the posts of two other classmates

UNIT 6: POLITICAL BELIEFS & BEHAVIOR (CLASSES 13-14)

Theme(s): Political ideologies, citizenship duties, and voting

Readings for CLASS 13:

1. Topic 5.1 to 5.3

Assignments for CLASS 13:

6. Watch Videos 48 & 49
7. Read Topic 5.1
8. Watch Videos 50-54
9. Read Topic 5.2
10. Watch Videos 55 & 56
11. Read Topic 5.3
12. Take Topic 5.1 to 5.3 Quiz
13. Final Paper: Choose one of the recurring issues discussed in topic 5.3 and write a three-page persuasive essay defending it in the light of Constitutional rights.

Readings for CLASS 14:

1. Topic 5.4 and 5.5

Assignments for CLASS 14:

1. Watch Videos 57 -59

2. Read Topic 5.4
3. Watch Video 60
4. Read Topic 5.5
5. Watch Video 61
6. Take Topic 5.4 and 5.5 Quiz
7. Watch PragerU playlist: Left vs. Right, composed of 5 videos
8. Study for Final Test (Units 4 to 6)

FINAL TEST / FINAL WEEK OF CLASS (CLASS 15)

The idea is to use the chapter tests available to build a unique final exam, graded 25 (for example), and composed of 25 to 50 questions.

INTRODUCTION TO US GOVERNMENT

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POLS 1013 - INTRODUCTION TO US GOVERNMENT

This course provides a comprehensive exploration of the American system of government, focusing on its unique characteristics, exceptionalism, and founding principles. Students will delve into the significance of the American Constitution as the longest-lasting national written constitution in history, and examine the foundational documents that shaped the American government. Through the lens of political theory, students will analyze and evaluate ongoing debates on various topics, including nullification, D.C. Statehood, impeachment, the Electoral College, individual rights, and government-given rights. The course will also explore the biblical view of government, citizenship, and the contributions of different spheres of life to the American founding principles, with a special emphasis on freedom. Additionally, students will study different types of law, the structure of the American Legislative Branch, political parties, and electoral behavior in America. By the end of the course, students will gain a deep understanding of the American political system, their role as citizens, and the factors that have contributed to America's exceptionalism and success.

Credits: 3