

# PoliSci 120: U.S. Government

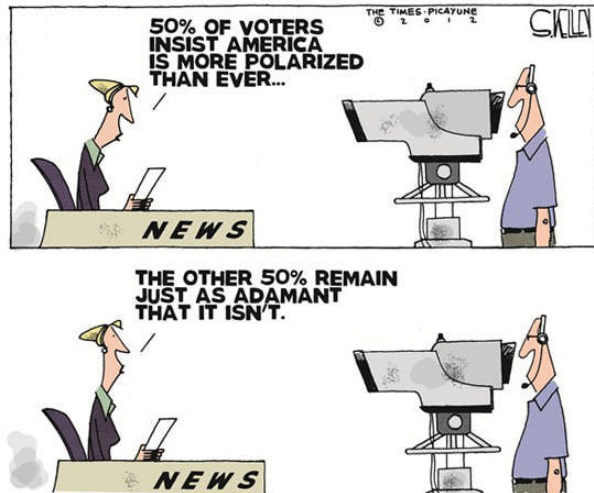
Dr. Jessy Defenderfer  
Political Science Department  
Office: 213A Bakeless

Spring 2018  
MW: 3-4:15  
Bakeless 211

Office hours: MW 1-2:00,  
Tu 12-3:00, and by appt  
jdefende@bloomu.edu

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to provide an introduction to the key themes and concepts in American politics. You will quickly see that the study of politics is about a power struggle of “who gets what, when, and how” (Lasswell 1936). We will discuss controversial issues and the role of government in our private lives. We will explore fact and perception as demonstrated in this cartoon. We will do all this through three major themes:



1. American Political Foundations—the construction of our political culture, the conflicts and compromises that arose during the nation’s founding, the balance between federal and state governments, and civil rights and liberties.
2. American Politics in Practice—the formation of political preferences, the media, voting behavior, and the role of political parties, elections, and interest groups in shaping politics.
3. American Political Institutions—the lawmaking process and key institutions that drive our system: Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the federal judiciary.

Throughout the course, you will see a clear overarching theme: politics matter and your participation is important. In this class, you will be asked to think critically about controversial issues and apply political science concepts to real-world events. We will explore American politics in a safe and respectful classroom where all view points are welcome.

## STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

*By the end of this course, students will be able to:*

1. Express the philosophical and historical foundations of the U.S. political system
2. Describe the significance of each Article in the U.S. Constitution
3. Identify the importance of our federal structure of government
4. Detail the major civil liberties and civil rights cases that contribute to our personal freedoms
5. Outline the institutional and non-institutional actors involved in U.S. politics
6. Evaluate the importance of political participation in the American political system
7. Explain the U.S. lawmaking process and executive decisions
8. Demonstrate critical thinking, reading, writing, and presentation skills

<u>Student Learning Objective</u>	<u>General Education Goal with GEP</u>	<u>Related Value Rubric Elements</u>
i. Students will describe and summarize the forces that led to the independence of the United States.	GEP 4: Cultures and Diversity	Rubric: Inquiry and Analysis Element: Existing knowledge and analysis
ii. Students will compare and contrast varying governmental forms.	GEP 4: Cultures and Diversity	Rubric: Civic Engagement Element: Diversity of Communities and Cultures
iii. Students will identify the major articles of the United States Constitution.	GEP 10: Citizenship	Rubric: Civic Engagement: Element: Analysis of Knowledge
iv. Students will explain the structure and complexity of United States government	GEP 10: Citizenship	Rubric: Civic Engagement Element: Civic Context/Structures
v. Students will identify and interpret policymaking and citizen participation	GEP 10: Citizenship	Rubric: Inquiry and Analysis Element: Limitations and Implications

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

Ginsberg, B., Lowi, T.J., Weir, M., Tolbert, C.J., & Spitzer, R.J. (2015). *We the People* (11th Essentials Ed.). New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

The Eleventh Essentials Edition of the textbook is required, and you can choose the format that works best for your learning style and budget: new, used, rented, e-books, paperback, or hardback. You can purchase the text on-line and at the university bookstore.

## ASSIGNMENTS\*\*

- 1. Four Exams (60% of total grade).** There will be four BOLT-based, online examinations. It will be necessary for you to use a computer to complete the exams. All exams may consist of matching, multiple-choice, essay, and short answer items. Everything from the textbook, in-class videos, guest speakers, and discussion in class is fair game. The final exam is comprehensive.

Exam 1:	10%	Exam 3:	15%
Exam 2:	15%	Final:	20%

2. **Voter Registration Paper (10% of total grade).** Students will write a comparison of the voter registration and election day procedures between two states. One state must be Pennsylvania (or the student's home state) and the other state must differ on **two** of the following: election-day registration, in-person early voting, or strict photo identification on election day. The paper must be 2-3, double-spaced pages. It is due Mon, April 9. Detailed assignment procedures to follow in separate document.
3. **Group Policy Presentation (15% of total grade).** Each student will work in a group to conduct research on a policy issue related to the current social and political environment. The group will present the topic to the class and offer a recommendation—what should government do about this issue? Presentations will be the length of approximately 3-minutes for each group member and require a demonstration of good research and presentation skills. Detailed assignment procedures will be available on BOLT.
4. **Class Participation (15% of total grade).** Class participation requires attendance. I will take attendance at each class. In addition, for each textbook chapter there will be a reading quiz that must be completed before the start of class on that new topic. The quiz will be on BOLT, and you can take it at your leisure, but it must be completed before we start discussing the chapter in class. Other in-class activities, pop quizzes, or assignments may be included in the participation grade at the discretion of the instructor.

### Grading Scale

A: Outstanding understanding/application with very few errors, if any

B: Above average knowledge/application with some errors

C: Basic knowledge/application with a number of notable errors

D: Some amount of knowledge/application with significant shortcomings

F: Minimal knowledge, if any, of course material

A = 93 – 100%

B = 83 – 86.9

C = 73 – 76.9

D = 60 – 66.9

A- = 90 – 92.9

B- = 80 – 82.9

C- = 70 – 72.9

F = 59.9 and below

B+ = 87 – 89.9

C+ = 77 – 79.9

D+ = 67 – 69.9

### COURSE POLICIES\*\*

You are expected to check your university email account daily and utilize the BOLT features of the course on a regular basis. In an effort to be fair to all class members, please take note of my detailed course policies below.

During class, refrain from using all forms of social media. No phones and no laptops. You may write an email to me requesting permission to use a laptop during class for note-taking purposes. I will grant permission on a case-by-case basis.

Class attendance is critical to your success; without your presence, you cannot receive credit for quizzes or in-class activities. You do not need to email me if you will miss a class period with no assignments due. As adults, I expect that there will be moments when you may have to prioritize life circumstances over class. If your absence is a university authorized absence, you must bring the proper documentation to me the very **next class period** you are present. I will then remove that absence from the attendance calculation. When missing a class, you need to take upon yourself the

responsibility of acquiring missed notes and announcements from another student in the class. Not being prepared for class or for an assignment due as a result of a previous absence will not excuse you from that activity.

Class absence is not an excuse for missing any graded assignment. Due to the nature of *pop* quizzes and group activities, I do not offer make-up opportunities for these missed assignments. For all other missed assignments, I apply a letter grade reduction to late or missed assignments, and this letter grade reduction continues for every 24-hour period past the due date and time. Please note: passing the class is contingent on your completion of *each* graded assignment. For example, it may be possible to receive a passing grade and not hand-in the paper; however, I consider this failure to complete the class, which will result in a failing grade.

The unexpected can happen, and I want to be sensitive to a variety of situations when major course assignments are missed. The Bloom attendance policy provides an avenue for students to make up an assignment due to an **authorized** absence (What's an authorized absence? see: [http://bloomu.edu/policies\\_procedures/3506](http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3506)). I will consider late assignments with prior permission or a written excuse from a medical professional. Health center notes are subject to my discretion, and employment and family vacations do not count as extenuating circumstances. **The number one rule is to contact me in advance of class with any serious situation that may arise.** I can only make honest judgments of unexpected events if I am aware of the situation, so email as soon as possible. All considerations of rescheduled assignments must be placed in writing (email is fine), and I reserve the right to consider special requests before responding. If you are at all unsure of the attendance policy, please see me.

I will take inquiries about the grades of assignments by appointment. However, specific disputes or issues with the graded assignment must first be placed in writing prior to our meeting (email is fine). Please note: When you ask me to review a grade, I review the whole assignment, meaning that I review the grade for accuracy throughout the document, not just in the area of your concern. Additionally, I will consider disputes for one week after the class has received the graded assignment (e.g., I will not discuss the merits of your midterm grade during the final week of class).

In general, expect a response to your questions and e-mails within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over the weekend. As most of you are new to the college experience, I strongly encourage you to read the following guide to academic **e-mail etiquette**: <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>. Remember, you are writing to me as your instructor not texting your best friend. I grant each student one inappropriately addressed email. I will gently remind you in that email to write in proper letter form. After the midterm of the semester, I will stop responding to emails written inappropriately.

Overall, I ask for conscientious students—those who are prepared and can manage their course requirements and personal lives. Displays of responsibility go a long way in my book. Finally, enrollment in this course implies understanding and acceptance of the aforementioned policies.

**Academic Integrity:** Academic dishonesty includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed. Illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, misrepresentation in connection with examinations and course assignments, and recycling whole or partial papers or assignments to be used a second time without prior approval. Informal and formal avenues of sanction are available to instructors and some penalties are severe. I do not overlook

instances of academic dishonesty. Please read: [http://bloomu.edu/policies\\_procedures/3512](http://bloomu.edu/policies_procedures/3512). It is your responsibility to write original papers for every class, use your own words, and properly cite published works as appropriate for assignments. Please note that all assignments loaded to BOLT Dropbox are screened through Turnitin.

## **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

The **WALES** (Writing and Literacy Engagement Studio) supports students' growth as writers and readers. We enjoy both easing the writing process for all students of every major and also helping students develop strategies to help them read and make sense of course and research material. We are a free resource for undergraduate and graduate students. Our diverse staff of WALES consultants represent a variety of majors and share the common goal of working with students to develop skills and strategies that help them grow as readers and writers. Students set the agenda for each appointment - whether they're concerned about getting started on a writing project, or about improving clarity, grammar, organization, citations or any other aspect of writing or the English language. Appointments are highly recommended, but walk-ins are welcome.

WALES consultants are also available to conduct sessions **online**. Commuting students or any student who wants to work with a consultant but cannot get to one of our locations will be able to reach us online through a link we will provide. Students will be able to speak with consultants and share their documents, usually without having to download any new software.

You can drop in to Bakeless 206 or request an appointment through email: [wales@bloomu.edu](mailto:wales@bloomu.edu). Visit their website (<http://www.bloomu.edu/wales>) for hours in Bakeless, Elwell, and Andruss and more information.

**Accommodative Services:** Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Students with Disabilities Center will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Students with Disabilities Center is located in Warren Student Services Center 043 and reachable by telephone at 570-389-4491.

An additional note to **student athletes** and **students certified with accommodative services**: Multiple class absences can significantly lower your grade. I hold all students to the same standard. If you are on a university sports team or have a disability that impacts your attendance, you must talk to me in the first week of class, regardless of when your athletic season starts or if you believe you will not be impacted by your disability this term. It is much more difficult for me to make fair arrangements in the middle of the term when I had no knowledge of the potential for your absences.

**\*\*Changes to the assignments or policies outlined above may occur at the Instructor's discretion. Please take note of all in-class announcements, BOLT communications, and emails that may describe a necessary change to this syllabus.\*\***

## TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Adjustments to this schedule may occur and will be communicated clearly in class

American Political Foundations	
<b>Week: 1/22</b> Chapter 1 Citizens and Government Quiz 1	
<b>Week: 1/29</b> Chapter 2 Founding and the Constitution Quiz 2 (Due Mon before class)	
<b>Week: 2/5</b> Chapter 3 Federalism Quiz 3 (Due Mon before class)	
<b>Week: 2/12</b> Mon, 2/12: Exam 1 (Includes Chapters 1-3) Wed, 2/14: Chapter 4 Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	
Politics in Action	
<b>Week: 2/19</b> Chapter 4 Cont'd Quiz 4 (Due Mon before class)	
<b>Week: 2/26</b> Chapter 5 Public Opinion Quiz 5 (Same for all quizzes)	
<b>Week: 3/5</b> Chapter 7 Parties, Participation, & Elections Quiz 7 Wed, 3/7: Voter Registration Paper Due	
<b>Week: 3/12 Spring Break</b>	
<b>Week: 3/19</b> Mon, 3/19: Exam 2 (Includes Chapters 4, 5, & 7) Wed, 3/21: Chapter 6 The Media (the quiz is due next week)	
Political Institutions	
<b>Week: 3/26</b> Chapter 8 Interest Groups Quiz 6 (Two quizzes this week; both due on Mon) Quiz 8	
<b>Week: 4/2</b> Chapter 9 Congress Quiz 9	
<b>Week: 4/9</b> Chapter 10 The Presidency Quiz 10	

<b>Week: 4/16</b> Mon, 4/16: Exam 3 (Includes Chapters 6, 8-10) Wed, 4/18: Group Policy Presentations
<b>Week: 4/23</b> Chapter 11 The Bureaucracy Quiz 11 Wed, 4/25: Group Policy Presentations
<b>Week: 4/30</b> Chapter 12 Federal Courts Quiz 12
<b>Final: 5/7 1-3pm</b> The exam is comprehensive. However, material from Exam 1 will account for a few questions. Material from Exam 2 will account for a few more questions. Material from Exam 3 will account for even more questions, and the focus of the Final will be on Chps. 11-12 which have yet to be tested.