

**POS 2041 – 81077**  
**Introduction to American Government (Fall 2014)**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 1:40pm – 2:55pm**  
**Building 39, Room 1009**  
**No Prerequisite**

Dr. Michael Binder

**Office Hours:** 9:30am to 10:40am Tuesday and Thursday or by appointment

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**Objectives:**

This is an introductory course to familiarize students with the basic structure and processes of government and politics in the United States. To adequately understand the contemporary American political process, students will examine the historical and philosophical context within which the political institutions were formed and how those institutions have functioned from the nation's founding to the present media age. This course looks at decision making by political leaders, effects of those decisions on ordinary citizens, the coverage by media, and the political behavior of political leaders as well as the American public. In short, every American is a political actor. Throughout the semester concepts will be introduced that will aid the student in recognizing and understanding the political, economic, and social forces that shape public policy in America.

**Learning Outcomes:**

Communication

- Possess the skills needed to communicate clearly and effectively, make persuasive academic arguments and convey information essential to the discipline in an orderly and understandable manner.

Content

- Understand the various forms of structure in government and relate specific governmental forms to political and policy outcomes.
- Understand the role of public policy, the policy-making process, the political and environmental factors which affect its development and its effects on political events, actors, and institutions.
- Understand the general types of political behaviors and the factors that cause them and relate those behaviors to specific political actions and outcomes.

Critical Thinking

- Be able to effectively apply critical thinking and problem solving skills to political issues.
- Understand and be able to use normative and empirical analysis tools in the study of political science.
- Explain, illustrate, and evaluate different kinds of argumentation and evidence.
- Examine behavioral, social, and cultural issues, including human social behavior and its consequences, from various points of view.

Respect Others

- Demonstrate civic knowledge and engagement.

**Professional Interactions:**

Be respectful and professional when you communicate with me, especially through email. Use this general “professional rule” when you email anyone in a professional setting (anyone that is not your friend or family member). General Rule: Use a greeting and address the person with their formal name (based on education) and conclude with a closing and your full name. In a university setting, you should address your instructors as “Dr.” or “Professor” and then last name. You can call me “Dr. Binder” or “Professor Binder.” You should also always spell check, edit for grammar and punctuation, etc. I suggest you use these guidelines for all of your courses at UNF and other professional experiences. Additionally, your professors at UNF teach more than one course, so you should specify (either in the subject or the body of the email), which course your question is in regard to.

**Required Texts:**

Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser and Lynn Vavreck, *The Logic of American Politics*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition, Washington: CQ Press, 2013. **(Referred to as Logic)**

**Course Resources:**

Course resources such as the syllabus, assignments, selected readings, videos, etc. are available on Blackboard. Not all functions of Blackboard will be used for the course, but Blackboard is an essential communication tool that is used extensively in this course.

**Reading Quizzes:**

For each reading assignment you will have the opportunity to earn points by completing a reading quiz on Blackboard immediately after the class in which the reading is due. Each day there is reading due there is a short quiz that will open after class lets out, and will close 24 hours later. You have the opportunity to earn up to 80 points by taking these quizzes.

**Exams:**

During the semester there will be one midterm exam, worth 50 points and a final exam that is worth 50 points; it is cumulative and covers the entire semester. Professors at UNF are currently required to provide Scantron forms to the students; you are also responsible for bringing a No. 2 pencil and accurately filling out your N-number and Test Form. Failure to do so will result in an upgradable exam and a zero for that exam. Make-up exams will only be given if the student notifies the professor PRIOR to the exam and provides documented evidence of a valid University approved excuse, i.e. University sponsored event, etc. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the professor and arrange for a make-up exam.

**Analytic Essay (Learning Outcome – Critical Thinking Assignment)**

You will watch several documentaries outside class (they are provided on Blackboard), after which you will incorporate what you have learned in lecture and the readings to answer the prompts given. The first paper should be 3 – 4 pages in length, the second should be 5 – 6 pages in length. These are opportunities to exhibit your understanding of political topics, critical thinking skills and writing competencies. The learning outcome (critical thinking) will be evaluated by a rubric rating of the student’s ability select, evaluate and employ appropriate evidence in support of the argument presented. The prompt will be distributed on Blackboard and the papers will be submitted to SafeAssign through Blackboard AND a STAPLED hardcopy in

class. The assignment is not complete until BOTH the SafeAssign submission AND the STAPLED hardcopy have been submitted. The first essay is worth 30 points and the second essay is worth 40 points.

**Attendance:** Attendance is taken regularly and accounts for 20 points of the final course grade.

**Calling Center:**

You are required to do one evening of telephone surveys for the Public Opinion Research Laboratory. Public opinion plays a vital role in the democratic process, and experiencing firsthand how public opinion gets measured provides an understanding of the process that goes beyond the classroom. Attending the training session (September 25<sup>th</sup>) and completing one evening of calling successfully will earn you 15 points. Failing to attend training will PREVENT you from calling and you will receive zero points. If you do not successfully complete the evening of calling (showing up late, not showing up on your assigned day, goofing off, not calling enough numbers, disobeying the lab director, etc.) will result in only 5 points.

**Exit Poll:**

We will be conducting an exit poll on Election Day. Exit polls are a “perfect teaching tool” because they provide you with a cooperative (rather than competitive) learning experience; help you better connect theory, methodology, and course substance; and allow you to move outside of the classroom by branching out into the community. In order to earn the full 15 points you must attend the training workshop (in class October 30<sup>th</sup>) and successfully complete one 3 ½ hour session of polling on Election Day at the polling station you are assigned. The timeslots are as follows: 6:45am – 10:15am, 9:45am – 1:15pm, 12:45pm – 4:15pm, 3:45pm – 7:00pm and the polling stations will be determined at a later date. Attending the training session and completing your assigned session successfully will earn you 15 points. Failure to attend the training session will prevent you polling. If you do not successfully complete your session (showing up late, not showing up to your assigned location, goofing off, not approaching voters, etc.) will result in only 0 points.

**Late Assignments**

Assignments completed outside of class (i.e. the essays) must be submitted to SafeAssign PRIOR to the beginning of class on the day that it is due. In order to complete the assignment you must upload the assignment (either a .pdf or .docx to SafeAssign) appropriately prior to class and submit a hardcopy in class. Assignments turned in after class has begun (1:40pm or later in the day) will also be considered late. I deduct 20% of the value of the assignment once it is late and then an additional 20% for each 24-hour period that the assignment is late. If you suspect you may have difficulty getting an assignment in on a certain date, please feel free to turn it in early.

**Plagiarism/Cheating/Academic Integrity:**

During exams, all phones must be turned off and put away. If I see a cell phone, I have to assume that you are using it to cheat. As such, you will **fail the course** and be subject to all appropriate disciplinary action as laid out in the university’s misconduct policies.

Blackboard includes a tool called “Safe Assign.” This is a plagiarism checking device you may use for this course. If you submit a draft to Safe Assign and find that you have plagiarized, please come see me for assistance. You will not be penalized for plagiarism in a draft. You will be penalized for plagiarism in a final assignment. Please note that Safe Assign is a limited tool; it

does not find all forms of plagiarism. You remain responsible for any form of plagiarism found in your final assignment, even if you have used Safe Assign.

Because students have the opportunity to learn about, check for, and avoid plagiarism prior to turning in the final paper, I have to assume any plagiarism I find in final papers is intentional. ***There are no “second chances.” The same is true for other violations of academic integrity.*** That you “didn’t mean to” or “didn’t know” are not excuses for plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity. I am available to assist you; please see me if you have any questions about avoiding plagiarism ***before*** turning in your final papers!

In addition, all sources of reference from which students take quotations, major theories or concepts must be properly cited. Submitting plagiarized work or any other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and such actions will result in ***failure of the course*** and potentially expulsion from the University. The University’s policy on plagiarism can be found at [http://www.unf.edu/registrar/forms/misconduct\\_policy.pdf](http://www.unf.edu/registrar/forms/misconduct_policy.pdf).

Aside from plagiarism, signing somebody else’s name to the attendance sheet is a violation of the academic integrity policy at the university and will be treated as such.

	<b>Course Grade</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Reading Quizzes	80	Everyday
Attendance	20	Everyday
Calling Center	15	TBD Evening
Exit Polling	15	TBD Day
Exam I	50	October 9 <sup>th</sup>
Analytic Essay – Marijuana	30	October 28 <sup>th</sup> 1:40pm
Analytic Essay – Elections	40	December 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1:40pm
Final Exam	<u>50</u>	December 9 <sup>th</sup> 1:00pm – 2:50pm
	Total Points	300

**Grade Scale:**

278 – 300 = A	248 – 259 = B	209 – 229 = C
269 – 277 = A-	239 – 247 = B-	179 – 208 = D
260 – 268 = B+	230 – 238 = C+	178 or less = F

**Tentative Course Outline:** (Subject to Change at Instructor’s Discretion)

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings</u> <u>Due by date shown below</u>
8/26	Introduction, Overviews Learning Objectives	
8/28	Logic of American Politics	Logic 1
9/2	<b><i>No Class</i></b> Logic of American Politics	Logic 1 (this chapter is too important not to read twice!)
9/4	The Constitution	Logic 2, Constitution, and Declaration of Independence
9/9	The Constitution Federalism	Logic 3

9/11	Federalism cont.	
9/16	Congress	Logic 6
9/18	Congress cont.	
9/23	Survey Research	Survey Research p. 1-40 on Blackboard
9/25	Calling Center Training	
9/30	The Presidency	Logic 7
10/2	The Bureaucracy	Logic 8
10/7	Review	
10/9	<b>Exam 1</b>	
10/14	Direct Democracy	Matusaka 2005 ( <i>JEP</i> ) on BB
10/16	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections	Logic 11
10/21	Voting, etc. cont.	Watch Marijuana Documentaries
10/23	How to write an academic paper	Writing for College on BB
10/28	Public Opinion <b>Analytic Essay – Marijuana Due Beginning of Class</b>	Logic 10
10/30	Exit Poll Training	Tip Sheet on BB Additional Reading TBD on BB
11/4	<b>No Class</b> <b>Election Day Exit Polling</b>	
11/6	Judiciary	Logic 9
11/11	What went right and wrong with the papers	
11/13	Interest Groups	Logic 13
11/18	Civil Rights Civil Liberties	Logic 4 Logic 5

11/20	Budgets .	State of the Union's Finances, US & FL Budgets on Blackboard
11/25	<i>No Class</i>	Watch <i>Street Fight</i>
11/27	Thanksgiving No Class	
12/2	<b>Analytic Essay – Campaigns and Elections Due Beginning of Class</b>	
12/4	The News Media Review for Final	Logic 14
12/9	<b>Final Exam 1:00pm – 2:50pm</b>	