

POLS101 | American Government

Course Text

Patterson, Thomas. *We the People: An Introduction to American Government*. 15th ed., McGraw Hill, 2024.

Course Description

This course examines the structure of United States government by analyzing its domestic and foreign duties in relation to its democratic foundations and values. In addition, this course discusses how the American people influence and interact with both federal and state institutions.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify the essential components of the American branches of government.
2. Analyze primary sources to compare and contrast historical perspectives.
3. Explain the importance of and evolution of civil rights throughout United States' history.
4. Delineate between the policies of different political parties.
5. Identify and recall the basic foundations of American foreign policy.
6. Distinguish voting patterns throughout United States history.
7. Create a civic engagement communication and defend a current community issue of personal importance.
8. Think and critically write about policy and presidential documents essential to understanding the political trajectory of the United States of America.

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Academic Integrity Statement

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an honest, truthful and responsible manner. Violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication and academic misconduct. Failure to comply with the Academic Integrity Policy can result in a failure and/or zero on the attempted assignment/examination, a removal from the course, disqualification to enroll in future courses,

and/or revocation of an academic transcript. Penalties for academic integrity violations can be retroactively applied upon discovery, and at our discretion.

Course Completion Policy

In order for a course to be considered complete, **all required coursework must be attempted, submitted, and graded.** Required coursework consists of graded assignments. Any Academic Integrity Policy violations may prevent a course from being considered complete.

Course Evaluation Criteria

Your score provides a percentage score and letter grade for each course. A passing percentage is 70% or higher.

There are a total of 1000 points in the course:

Topic	Assessment	Points	Learning Outcomes
1	Reflective Response: Becoming a Responsible Citizen	10	1
4	Reflective Response: Core Values	10	3
4	Graded Exam 1	100	1, 3, 7
7	Writing Assignment: Political Action	150	7
8	Reflective Response: Political Action	10	7
8	Graded Exam 2	100	3, 4, 6
12	Reflective Response: Shadow an Official	10	1
12	Graded Exam 3	100	1, 4, 8
12	Writing Assignment: Comparing Presidential Views on War and Victory	400	2, 8
16	Reflective Response: Strengths of the American Political System	10	1
16	Graded Exam 4	100	1, 3, 5
Total		1000	

Course Roadmap *Graded items in **bold***

Intro | Introduction and Getting Started

Subtopics

- Welcome
- Academic Honesty

Assignments

- Welcome Video
- Academic Honesty and Integrity Lesson

- Statement of Academic Honesty and Integrity (required)

Topic 1 | Critical Thinking and Political Culture: Becoming a Responsible Citizen

Subtopics

- America's Core Political Ideals
- The Rules of American Politics
- Theories of Power

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 1 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 1
- **Reflective Response: Topic 1**
Becoming a Responsible Citizen

Topic 2 | Constitutional Democracy: Promoting Liberty and Self-Government

Subtopics

- Negotiating Toward a Constitution
- Checks and Balances
- The Bill of Rights
- Democracy and Republic
- The Social Contract

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 2 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 2

Topic 3 | Federalism: Forging a Nation

Subtopics

- National and State Sovereignty
- National and State Powers
- The History of Federalism
- Federalism and the Modern State

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 3 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 3

Topic 4 | Civil Liberties: Protecting Individual Rights

Subtopics

- Free Speech and Freedom of the Press
- Libel and Obscenity
- The Free-Exercise and Establishment Clauses
- Abortion and Privacy Rights
- Defendants' Rights and Habeas Corpus
- Terrorism and Civil Liberties

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 4 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 4
- **Reflective Response: Topic 4**
Core Values
- **Graded Exam 1**

Topic 5 | Equal Rights: Struggling Toward Fairness

Subtopics

- Brown v. Board of Education and the Civil Rights Act
- Women's Right to Vote
- Equal Protection: The Fourteenth Amendment
- Social Movements

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 5 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 5

Topic 6 | Public Opinion and Political Socialization: Shaping the People's Voice

Subtopics

- Does Public Opinion Matter?
- Where Did You Get Your Political Beliefs?
- How Has the Internet Changed Mass Media?
- The Press and Democracy: Friends or Foes?

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 6 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 6
- Pathfinder: Influence of Public Opinion on Policymaking

Topic 7 | Political Participation: Activating the Popular Will

Subtopics

- The Vanishing Voter
- Why Your Vote Counts
- Are Parties Obsolete?

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 7 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 7
- **Writing Assignment: Political Action**

Topic 8 | Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns: Defining the Voter's Choice

Subtopics

- Party Competition and Majority Rule
- Electoral and Party Systems
- Parties and Candidates in the Campaign
- Parties, Candidates, and the Public's Influence

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 8 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 8
- **Reflective Response: Topic 8 Political Action**
- **Graded Exam 2**

Topic 9 | Interest Groups: Organizing for Influence

Subtopics

- Are Interest Groups Engines or Corrupters of Democracy?
- The Free Rider Problem
- Inside and Outside Lobbying
- Pros and Cons of Pluralism

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 9 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 9

Topic 10 | The News Media and the Internet: Communicating Politics

Subtopics

- Creating the Information Commons
- The Politics of Media Functions
- The Assault on Reason

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 10 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 10
- Pathfinder: Rise of the Internet and Social Media

Topic 11 | Congress: Balancing National Goals and Local Interests

Subtopics

- Why We Re-elect Incumbents
- Why Incumbents Sometimes Lose
- Redistricting
- Party Leaders
- Committees
- How a Bill Becomes a Law
- What Does Congress Do?

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 11 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 11

Topic 12 | The Presidency: Leading the Nation

Subtopics

- What Does the President Do?
- The Electoral College
- What Does the Cabinet Do?
- How Are Cabinet Members Held Accountable?

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 12 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 12
- **Reflective Response: Topic 12**
Shadow an Official
- **Graded Exam 3**

- **Writing Assignment: Comparing Presidential Views on War and Victory**

Topic 13 | The Federal Bureaucracy: Administering the Government

Subtopics

- Origin and Structure of the Federal Bureaucracy
- The Budgetary Process
- Policy and Power in Bureaucracy
- Democracy and Bureaucratic Accountability

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 13 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 13

Topic 14 | The Federal Judicial System: Interpreting the Law

Subtopics

- The Judiciary System
- Landmark Cases
- Federal Court Appointees
- Judicial Restraint and Activism

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 14 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 14

Topic 15 | Economic and Environmental Policy: Contributing to Prosperity

Subtopics

- Fiscal Policy
- Monetary Policy
- Social Welfare Policy
- Foreign and Defense Policy

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 15 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 15
- Pathfinder: Government as Protector of Environment

Topic 16 | Foreign Policy: Protecting the National Interest

Subtopics

- Foreign Policy
- Defense Policy

Assignments

- Pre-Reading: What Do You Think?
- Chapter 17 Presentation
- Reading: Chapter 17
- Pathfinder: Free Trade Versus Protectionism

- **Reflective Response: Topic 16 Strengths of the American Political System**
- **Graded Exam 4**

Topic 17 | Review

Assignments

- End of Course Survey
- Closing Video

Related Courses

**ENG101: English
Composition I**

**MAT101: College
Algebra**

**CJ101:
Introduction to
Criminal Justice**