

POSC 1010 | AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT

Section 3

Tue-Thu 9:30-10:45 am, Poole Agricultural 174

Instructor: Alex Honeker

Email: [jhoney@clemsun.edu](mailto:jhoneke@clemsun.edu)

Office: 114A Poole Agricultural Center

Office Hours: Tue-Thu 2:00-3:00 pm, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

The goal of this course is to introduce students to the national government, constitutional development, politics, and policy of the United States. The course focuses on the institutional framework of the U.S. political system, its main relevant actors, the attitudes and behaviors of elites and the mass public, and the main contemporary policy debates.

The course will consist of three main sections: political **institutions**, electoral and political **behavior**, and public **policy**. In **Section 1**, we will answer questions like: Were the Framers of the Constitution liberal or conservative? What is liberalism? What are the consequences of a political system based on the separation of powers? Has the balance of power between Congress and the Presidency changed throughout the years? Is the U.S. Supreme Court democratic and should it be? What is the difference between civil liberties and civil rights?

In **Section 2**, we will focus on the study of linkage institutions such as political parties and interest groups, and voter behavior, and explore questions like: How is public opinion measured? How do individuals' ideologies originate? What is "Left" and "Right" and how does that vary across the world? Are American voters ideologically polarized? What is the effect of political mobilization on voter turnout? How do electoral systems affect representation?

Finally, in **Section 3**, we will explore the main policy issues facing American domestic and foreign policy. We will explore questions like: What is the trade-off between taxes and spending? How has the size of the U.S. federal government evolved in the last 200 years? How does the U.S. welfare state compare to that of other developed democracies?

What are the main controversies surrounding U.S. education policy? Has the rise of populism and isolationism reshaped U.S. foreign policy priorities?

While the course is focused on American politics, examples of **comparative** political institutions, public opinion, and public policy will be showcased in order to contrast the U.S. political system with that of other countries, particularly other liberal democracies. Moreover, the course will provide **practical lessons** and assignments to strengthen students' **writing, presentation, and quantitative skills**. Finally, students will also have an overview of the **scientific study of politics**, with lessons on how to read political science articles, how to read regression tables, and a basic understanding of the use of experimental methodology in social science.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Identify the main features of the U.S. political system and its main relevant actors.
- Understand the constitutional development of the United States.
- Critically evaluate the interactions between different institutional levels, the role of political actors, and the processes shaping citizens' attitudes towards government and society.
- Explore the main issues in contemporary American domestic and foreign policy.
- Explain the trade-offs and political constraints surrounding the adoption of a policy.
- Compare and contrast institutional, behavioral, and policy aspects of the U.S. political system with comparative examples.
- Summarize and assess the basic findings in a scientific article.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

This course does not require any previous knowledge on the subject.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- We will use the following textbook, which you can download for free through the link below:

- Krutz, Glen. (2021). American Government. Third Edition. *American Government. Third Edition*. OpenStax. [Denoted as Textbook].
- All other readings and materials will be posted by the instructor on **Canvas**, as specified in the class schedule below. Assigned readings should be done **before** the respective week.
- The following texts are **required by the REACH Act** and are included in the required readings: the Declaration of Independence; the U.S. Constitution (and all Amendments); the Federalist Papers Nos. 10, 39, 51, 78, 84; Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation; and Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” These required texts—like all required texts—are to be read in their entirety.

GRADING SCALE

Letter grades will be determined in the following way:

A = 90-100 **B = 80-89** **C = 70-79** **D = 60-69** **F <60**

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Your grade will consist of the following components:

1. 6 Quizzes (4% each, drop lowest) **20%**
 2. Participation **10%**
 3. Response Paper **20%**
 4. Policy Analysis Paper **25%**
 5. Final Exam **25%**
1. **Quizzes.** There will be 6 quizzes during the semester over the assigned articles and material from the previous weeks. Quizzes will be delivered on Canvas and are worth 20% of your final grade (or 4% each quiz, with the lowest grade being dropped).
 2. **Participation.** Your participation grade will be based on your engagement in class discussions and activities. Specifically, you are expected to read the assigned readings before each week so you can actively participate in class and participate in the surveys and other activities we do in class or as homework. I may ask you to complete some surveys before class to use for specific activities. Failure to complete these surveys and quizzes will affect your participation grade. Participation will contribute 10% towards your final grade.

3. **Response Paper.** You will write a response paper on a journal article assigned during the semester (denoted as “[JA#]”) in the course schedule below). The paper will contribute 20% towards your final grade. The paper should critically discuss the article, connect the article’s content with the lectures, and end with a critical question that you think the article does not answer or does so in an incomplete way. A more detailed description of this assignment along with a grading rubric will be provided on Canvas. The paper should be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced, and use 12-point Times New Roman font.
4. **Policy Analysis Paper.** You will choose a policy issue from a list provided by the instructor and write a paper providing an analysis of the policy’s background, the different actors involved and their positions (political parties, interest groups, social groups, policy experts), delineate the different policy alternatives regarding the issue, their advantages and disadvantages, and recommend a course of action based on your analysis. A more detailed description of this assignment along with a grading rubric will be provided on Canvas. The paper should be 4-5 pages long, double-spaced, and use 12-point Times New Roman font. This assignment will contribute 25% towards your final grade. For this paper, you can work in groups of up to 4 students or individually.

Note on plagiarism: Canvas uses software to identify plagiarism or the use of AI for writing. Please be aware that plagiarizing your report or using AI to write it will result in a **0 grade**.

5. **Final Exam.** There will be a final exam covering the content from the semester. The exam will consist of multiple-choice, short-response, and/or fill-in-the-blank questions. The final exam will contribute 25% towards your final grade.

GRADING POLICIES

I do not round up grades. Regrade requests must be made within three days after your graded assignment has been returned and must be submitted with a written statement of at least 150 words via email. This statement should explain why you think the grade should be changed. Remember that, after re-evaluating your work, your grade may remain unchanged or be adjusted in either direction. There will be no grade changes after the final exam.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments will be penalized with a 5% reduction in the grade per day unless you provide a documented medical excuse.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend class and complete all assignments.

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Students are expected to attend class on time and to actively engage in class discussions and activities. Additionally, students are expected not to engage in any behavior that may disrupt the learning process. Students are encouraged to actively participate in class discussions in an environment of free and open intellectual exchange and mutual respect. Any kind of disrespect towards another individual will not be tolerated.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a "high seminary of learning." Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form.

All infractions of academic dishonesty by undergraduates must be reported to Undergraduate Learning for resolution through that office. In cases of plagiarism instructors may use the Plagiarism Resolution Form.

Plagiarism, which includes the intentional or unintentional copying of language, structure, or ideas of another and attributing the work to one's own efforts. Graded works generated by artificial intelligence or ghostwritten (either paid or free) are expressly forbidden.

See the Undergraduate Academic Integrity Policy website for additional information and the current catalog ("Academic Regulations" section) for the policy. Send questions to UGSintegrity@clemson.edu.

ACCESSIBILITY

Clemson University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries/conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities. Students who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let the instructor know and are encouraged to request accommodations through SAS (Student Accessibility Services) as soon as possible. To request accommodations through SAS, please see this [link](#). You can also reach out to SAS with questions by calling 864-656-6848, email CUSAS@clemson.edu or visiting SAS at the ASC Suite 239. Contact the office for the most updated drop-in schedule if you would prefer not to schedule an appointment.

THE CLEMSON UNIVERSITY TITLE IX STATEMENT REGARDING NON-DISCRIMINATION

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy or related conditions (including pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, lactation, recovery from the foregoing, or medical conditions related to the foregoing), national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sex discrimination (including sex-based harassment and sexual violence) as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This Title IX policy is located on the Access Compliance and Education website. Ms. Alesia Smith is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator, and the Assistant Vice President of Equity Compliance. Her office is located at 223 Brackett Hall, 864-656-3181 and her email address is alesias@clemson.edu. Remember, email is not a fully secured method of communication and should not be used to discuss Title IX issues.

Clemson University aspires to create a diverse community that welcomes people of different races, cultures, ages, genders, sexual orientation, religions, socioeconomic levels, political perspectives, abilities, opinions, values and experiences.

EMERGENCY PREPARATION

Emergency procedures have been posted in all buildings and on all elevators. Students should be reminded to review these procedures for their own safety. All students and employees should be familiar with guidelines from [Clemson University Public Safety](#).

Clemson University is committed to providing a safe campus environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. As members of the community, we encourage you to take the following actions to be better prepared in case of an emergency:

1. Familiarize yourself with all possible exits, safer locations, and other key information on the emergency evacuation maps in this building, and those that you visit regularly.
2. Make a plan for how you would Run, Hide, and Fight in case of an active threat in this building, and those that you visit regularly. For example:
 - (a) Run – what are all the possible exits in this building, and the routes to them?
 - (b) Hide – what are the potential hiding locations in this room and building that are out of sight of doors and windows, how do you lock the door(s), how would you barricade the door(s) and windows, where do you turn off the lights?
 - (c) Fight – What tools are available in this room and building, should you have to fight?

3. Ensure you are signed up for emergency alerts. Alerts are only sent when there is a potential threat to safety, a major disruption to campus services, and once-monthly tests.
4. Download the [Rave Guardian](#) app to your phone.
5. Learn what you can do to prepare yourself for the hazards that affect our locations (<http://www.clemson.edu/cusafety/EmergencyManagement/>).

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 | Aug 22

- **Topics:** Class introduction.
 - **Mandatory Readings:** Class syllabus.
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Week 2 | Aug 27-29

- **Topics:** The U.S. Constitution; the Founders' philosophy.
 - **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Declaration of Independence
 2. U.S. Constitution (and all Amendments)
 - **Textbook:** Chapters 1, 2
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Week 3 | Sep 3-5

- **Topics:** Federalism.
 - **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Federalist Papers 10, 39, 51
 - **Textbook:** Chapter 3
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Week 4 | Sep 10-12

- **Topics:** Civil liberties.
- **Mandatory Readings:**

1. Federalist 84
 2. *The Economist*. (2024). "Should American universities call the cops on protesting students?"
- **Textbook:** Chapter 4
 - **Quiz 1 due Sep 10**
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Week 5 | Sep 17-29

- **Topics:** Civil rights.
 - **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Letter from Birmingham Jail."
 2. National Constitution Center. (2018). "Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission."
 - **Textbook:** Chapter 5
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Week 6 | Sep 24-26

- **Topics:** The legislative branch.
 - **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Ballard, A. O., and Curry, J. M. (2022). "Minority Party Capacity in Congress." *American Political Science Review*, 115:4, 1388-1405. [JA1]
 - **Textbook:** Chapter 11
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Week 7 | Oct 1-3

- **Topics:** The executive branch.
- **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation.
 2. Goldgeier, J. and Saunders, E. N. (2018). "The Unconstrained Presidency: Checks and Balances Eroded Long before Trump." *Foreign Affairs*, 97:5, 144-156.
- **Textbook:** Chapter 12
- **Quiz 2 due Oct 1**

Week 8 | Oct 8-10

- **Topics:** The judicial branch.
- **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Federalist Paper 78
 2. Cato Institute. (2020). "Maintaining Judicial Independence and the Rule of Law: Examining the Causes and Consequences of Court Capture."
 3. Vox. (2020). "The Supreme Court is too powerful and anti-democratic. Here's how we can scale back its influence."
- **Textbook:** Chapter 13

Week 9 | Oct 17 (Fall Break Oct 14-15)

- **Topics:** Public opinion.
- **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Larsen, M. V., Nyrup, J., and Petersen, M. B. (2020). "Do survey estimates of the public's compliance with COVID-19 regulations suffer from social desirability bias?" *Journal of Behavioral Public Administration*, 3:2, 1-9. [JA2]
- **Textbook:** Chapter 6

Week 10 | Oct 22-24

- **Topics:** Ideology.
- **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Malka, Ariel, Lelkes, Y., & Soto, C. (2017). "Are Cultural and Economic Conservatism Positively Correlated? A Large-Scale Cross-National Test." *British Journal of Political Science*, 49, 1045-1069. [JA3]
 2. Osborne, D., Costello, T. H., Duckitt, J., & Sibley, C. G. (2023). "The psychological causes and societal consequences of authoritarianism." *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 2, 220-232. [JA4]
- **Textbook:** Chapter 6, pages 192-194
- **Quiz 3 due Oct 22**

Week 11 | Oct 29-31

- **Topics:** Political parties; polarization.
- **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Dias, N. & Lelkes, Y. (2022). "The Nature of Affective Polarization: Disentangling Policy Disagreement from Partisan Identity." *American Journal of Political Science*, 66:3, 775-790. [JA5]
- **Textbook:** Chapter 9
- **Response Paper due Oct 29**

Week 12 | Nov 7 (Election Day - Nov 5 - No class)

- **Topics:** Voting and elections I.
- **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Cantoni, E., & Pons, V. (2021). "Strict ID Laws Don't Stop Voters: Evidence from a U.S. Nationwide Panel, 2008–2018." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 136:4, 2615-2660. [JA6]
- **Textbook:** Chapter 7

Week 13 | Nov 12-14

- **Topics:** Voting and elections II; interest groups and lobbying.
- **Mandatory Readings:**
 1. Clinton, J.D. et al. (2021). "Polling Place Changes and Political Participation: Evidence from North Carolina Presidential Elections, 2008–2016." *Political Science Research and Methods*, 9:4, 800-817. [JA7]
- **Textbook:** Chapter 10
- **Quiz 4 due Nov 12**

Week 14 | Nov 19-21

- **Topics:** Topics in domestic policy.

- **Mandatory Readings:**

1. *The Economist*. (2022). "American policy is splitting, state by state, into two blocs."
2. Alesina, A., Glaeser, E., & Sacerdote, B. (2001). "Why Doesn't the United States Have a European-Style Welfare State?" *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 2, 187-254.

- **Textbook:** Chapter 16

- **Policy Analysis Paper due Nov 19**

- **Quiz 5 due Nov 19**

Week 15 | Nov 26 (Thanksgiving Holiday - Nov 27-29)

- **Topics:** Topics in foreign policy.

- **Mandatory Readings:**

1. *The Economist*. (2022). "New research counts the costs of the Sino-American trade war."

- **Textbook:** Chapter 17

Week 16 | Dec 3-5

- **Topics:** Course recap.

- **Quiz 6 due Dec 3**

Week 17 | Wednesday, Dec 11, 8:00-10:30 am

- **Final Exam**