

# POL 101 : American Government and Politics

Mitushi Mukherjee

Class Duration : 13th June - 2nd Aug 2022

E-mail: [mmukherj@purdue.edu](mailto:mmukherj@purdue.edu)  
Office Hours: By Appointment

Class Website: [purdue.brightspace.com](http://purdue.brightspace.com)  
Class Hours: Asynchronous online

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## Course Description

Hello, and welcome to POL 101 - American Government and Politics!

The aim of this class is to introduce students to the building blocks of American Government and the foundational attributes of American Politics. This class will run across eight weeks and each week is representative of a theme unique to the landscape of American Politics. Since it is a shorter course than usual, it will be accelerated and relatively intense. My expectation is for you to spend a couple hours outside of time dedicated to view lectures to work on readings, watching videos, and working on assignments to do well in this class.

Thank you for signing up for this course! I look forward to discussing course material, reading your thoughts, and, getting to know all of you.

## Learning Objectives

I have certain goals that I hope you are able to achieve by the end of this class. I believe it is helpful to chart out these goals so you are able to envision what I hope you take-away from this class.

- Identify and explain American Political institutions and their historical significance .
- Employ research, writing, and information literacy skills to create a cogent argument .
- Analyze the relationship amongst the three branches of federal government.
- Examine the role played by interest groups, political parties, and elections to study political behavior.

## Required Materials

There is no single textbook required for this course. The relevant reading material will be either be directly uploaded onto Bright space or a link will be provided so you are able to access it from Purdue Libraries.

## Citations

As you should expect in every class in college, plagiarism is forbidden. For that reason, it is very important to cite your essays correctly using whatever citation format you want (besides MLA since that is rarely used in college). If you need any help with citations, first refer to the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL), found [here](#). If that doesn't help, send me an email or come to my office hours and I will be glad to help.

## Academic Honesty

Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [Part 5, Section III-B-2-a, Student Regulations] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972].

## Accessibility and Accommodations

Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: [drc@purdue.edu](mailto:drc@purdue.edu) or by phone: 765-494-1247.

## Course Requirements and Evaluation

The grades in this course will be based on an intro/exit survey, weekly reflections, weekly quizzes, a midterm paper and a final paper.

**IMPORTANT NOTE** - Late assignment policy: Late papers will be docked by half a letter grade (i.e. from a B to a B-, or around 4 points on a 100-point scale) for each day they are late unless a previous agreement has been reached for specific circumstances, i.e., death in the family, illness, etc. If you are facing technical difficulties for submission, please write to me explaining your issue in detail for me to pardon your tardiness.

I expect each of you to be honest with me if you are late in submitting an assignment. If I notice you are honest, I am more likely to show leniency in grading despite late submission than an obviously fabricated excuse!

- (20%) *Weekly Quizzes*. Once a week I will give a quiz on the general ideas of the reading/lectures/videos for the week. These quizzes are designed to ensure you understood the material for the week. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz grade, whether it's due to a low score or lack of submission.
- (10%) *Intro and Exit Survey*. The intro survey is designed to understand what you are expecting in this course, and to see what you would prefer to spend more time covering. The exit survey aims to gauge your understanding of course material, your overall experience, and suggestions for improving this class.
- (10%) *Introduction Video*. Complete and submit a 1-2 minute video introducing yourself and your expectations from this course.
- (20%) *Reflections*. These reflections are designed to bring together all the material you learned for each theme of the class, such as lectures, reading material, and videos. There is no specific prompt for these reflections. However it must have these four components -
  - 1) What did you find most interesting in this week's content?
  - 2) What is something new that you learned in this week's content?
  - 3) What questions did the course material raise that you would like to explore further?
  - 4) How is this information relevant to our lives?

I expect them to be 600 - 750 words. If you are using any course material or outside source, make sure to cite. It may be in any citation format. Just ensure that it is consistent. This is an exercise aimed to help you practice writing cogent arguments, so be thoughtful and intentional in your response.

**NOTE** - It is completely okay for you to have not learned anything new in a given week! In such a circumstance, write about how the course material has engaged with your existing knowledge. It is also okay for you to feel like certain material is irrelevant to our lives. In such a circumstance, write about why you think this material is irrelevant/ out-dated. There is no right answer in these reflections. I am looking for you to share your opinion and be able to justify it efficiently.

- (20%) *Mid-term Paper*. This paper is supposed to be 4-6 pages (double - spaced) long. It should be written in response to the prompt " Take an issue relevant to Domestic American Politics from the last 5 years, and use it as a case study to explain and justify the any one of themes we have studied in class so far". This is fairly open ended because I want you to utilise your creativity to tie together theory with current affairs. An example of a good paper would be - " Studying the relevance of the Electoral College in the 2020 Presidential Election" . Your topic is due by WEEK 4. Feel free to email me if you have questions.
- (20%) *Final Exam*. This Exam will be a combination of multiple choice and short-answers, to be taken on Brightspace. More information will be shared closer to the exam date.

## Grading scale

The Grading scale is as follows:

A	94 and higher
A-	90-93
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	59 and lower

## Assignment Due Dates

While each assignment has a due date, I highly encourage students to get ahead on their work and submit as early as possible. With this course being asynchronous and online, I am designing it to be fully available on the first day of class, June 13th. So, if you want to go through the lectures/notes/readings and finish the entire class in the first 4 weeks for example, that is fine.

## Course Structure

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. I urge you all to use [Crash Course : US Government and Politics](#) as a short and effective complement to the lectures and readings and include your take-aways from these videos in your reflections.

### PART I: INTRODUCTION

**Week 1, 06/13 - 06/19:** Introduction to Political Science

- **Required Reading:**

- Take a look at [Purdue's political science homepage](#) particularly if you are thinking you might pursue a major or minor in political science.
- [How Democratic is the American Constitution?](#).

- Watch – Introduction lecture video, Syllabus video, and "[Introduction to US Govt and Politics](#)".

- **Due:**

- Intro survey due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on 6/17
- Intro quiz due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on 6/17
- Weekly Reflection due by 11:59 pm (EST) 6/17
- Introduction Video due by 11:59 pm (EST) 6/17

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**Week 02, 06/20 - 06/26: Federalism**

- **Required Reading:**
  - Federalist Papers [10](#) and [51](#). The articles are hyperlinked here.
  - The Anti-federalists [The Anti-Federalists and their important role](#).
  - [Foundations of American Federalism](#)
- Weekly Activities: View Lecture 2 on Federalist Papers, and Lecture 3 on The Anti- Federalists, Watch [Federalism](#)
- **Due:**
  - Weekly quiz due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on 6/24
  - Weekly Reflection due by 11:59 pm (EST) 6/24

**Week 03, 06/27 - 07/03: Civil Liberties**

- **Required Reading:**
  - [Summary of Robert Dahl's Polyarchy](#)
  - [Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail"](#)
- Weekly Activities: View Lecture 4 on "Civil Liberties in America", and Lecture 5 " Understanding MLK's Letter" and [Civil Rights and Liberties](#).
- **Due:**
  - Weekly quiz due by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on 7/1
  - Weekly Reflection due by 11:59 pm (EST) 7/1

**Week 04, 07/04 - 07/10: Electoral Politics in the US**

- **Required Reading:**
  - Mayhew: The Electoral Connection and the Congress [ Uploaded on Brightspace]
  - [What is the Electoral College?](#)
  - [Social Pressure and Voter Turnout](#)
  - [The role of Issue in American Politics](#)
  - [Understanding Direct Democracy in the US](#)
- Weekly Activities: Watch - [Does Your Vote Count?](#), Lecture 6 on " How do Elections work in the US?", [Election Basics](#) , [How Voters Decide](#).
- **Due:** Weekly quiz due by 11:59 p.m. on 7/10
- Weekly Reflection due by 11:59 p.m on 7/10
- Mid- term Topic due by 11:59 (EST) 7/10

**Week 05, 07/11 - 07/17:** Political Parties, Campaigns, and Systems

This week will not have a lot of material as you are expected to turn in your mid term paper

**Required Reading:**

- [Weak Parties and Strong Partisans are a Bad Combination](#)
- Weekly Activities: Watch [Political Campaigns, Party Systems, How do US Elections Work?](#).
- **Due: Midterm Paper by 11:59 p.m. (EST) on 7/17**
- Weekly Reflection due by 11:59 p.m on 7/17

**Week 06, 07/18 - 07/24:** Presidential Elections and Presidential Power

• **Required Reading:**

- [Federalist No.70](#)
- [Presidential Power](#)
- [Presidential Ratings Are Flawed. Which Makes It Hard to Assess Trump](#)
- Weekly Activities: Watch Lecture 7 on "US Presidential Elections", .
- **Due:** Weekly quiz due by 11:59 p.m. on 7/24
- Weekly Reflection due by 11:59 p.m. on 7/24

**Week 07, 07/25 - 07/31:** The Congress and the Judicial Branch

• **Required Reading:**

- [House Members in their Constituencies.](#)
- [Role of Federal Courts in Interpreting Laws](#)
- [Brown Vs Board of Education](#)
- Weekly Activities: Watch the Lecture on "Congress", [The Legislative Process](#), and [How a Case Gets to the Supreme Court](#) .
- **Due:** Weekly quiz due by 11:59 p.m. on 8/1
- Weekly Reflection due by 11:59 p.m. on 8/1

**Week 08, 08/01 - 08/07:** Brief Intro to Public Opinion and Final Paper Workshops

• **Required Reading:**

- [Media and Political Polarization](#)
- [Partisan Bias in Factual Beliefs about Politics](#)
- Aside from this reading, you are to spend this time studying for your final exam.

- Weekly Activities: Watch Lecture on "Role of Public Opinion in the US", and Lecture on "Conclusion and Future Discussions", *Public Opinion*, *Shaping Public Opinion*.
- **Due:** Weekly Reflection due by 11:59 p.m. on 8/5
- **Due: Exam TBD.**

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## Nondiscrimination Statement

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. More details are available on our course Brightspace table of contents, under University Policies.

## Emergency

In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website on Brightspace. You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.

## Mental Health/Wellness Statement

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try [WellTrack](#). Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time. If you need support and information about options and resources, please contact or see the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 am- 5 pm.

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc. sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a [Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell](#). Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is completely free and can be done on BoilerConnect. If you have any questions, please contact Purdue Wellness at [evans240@purdue.edu](mailto:evans240@purdue.edu).

If you're struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office on the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

## Basic Needs Security

Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. There is no appointment needed and Student Support Services is available to serve students 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Considering the significant disruptions caused by the current global crisis as it related to COVID-19, students may submit requests for emergency assistance from the [Critical Needs Fund](#).