

**COURSE SYLLABUS**  
**POLI 201: AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT**

Fall 2011 / Section 002  
Tu & Th 11:00 – 12:15  
Gambrell 151  
University of South Carolina

Professor Charles J. Finocchiaro  
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*Course E-mail:* poli201b@gmail.com  
*TAs:* Rebecca Reid, Soonkun Oh, and T.J. Kimel

**COURSE OVERVIEW & LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

This course provides an introduction to the politics of the American system of government. Students who successfully complete the course should be able to describe the key elements of American politics, including the founding era, historical development, federalism, civil rights and civil liberties, political participation (voting, interest groups, parties), institutions (Congress, the courts, the president), and public opinion. Additionally, students will become familiar with basic social science theories—for instance, that political actors are strategic in their pursuit of various personal and policy goals—and be able to apply theoretical perspectives to explain political behavior and processes. The class will employ methods that are both traditional (lecture-based) and non-traditional (such as simulations and polls) to enable students to explore and analyze institutions and interactions between individuals throughout the American political system.

**COURSE MATERIALS:**

Reading assignments will be drawn from a primary textbook and occasional selections posted on **B**lackboard. The textbook is:

***American Government: Power and Purpose*** (by Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere) Core 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (ISBN: 9780393933000). The publisher also sells an ebook for roughly half the cost: <http://www.nortonebooks.com/> NOTE: A less costly (and less current) alternative is the Core 10<sup>th</sup> ed. with 2008 election update (ISBN: 9780393113853).

To facilitate in-class participation and learning exercises, students also need to purchase a “clicker” (electronic response card), available at the bookstore or online from the manufacturer at: <https://store.turningtechnologies.com/index.cfm> [code Hc7R]

**COURSE EVALUATION & EXPECTATIONS:**

Grades for the course will be based in part on three non-cumulative exams (with the lowest exam weighted 20%, and the other two accounting for 25% each). Two brief writing assignments—in the form of a commentary on current events that applies insights from class, with each comprising 15% of the course grade—will be due over the course of the semester (see Blackboard for complete description, due dates, and rubric). Additionally, students are expected to participate actively in classroom discussion and activities. Success in this aspect of the course will require regularly attending class having done the assigned readings for the topic in advance. Mastery of the readings includes being able to: describe the key arguments and findings, identify the evidence and method of analysis, discuss the implications, etc. In accordance with university policy, absence from more than 10% of scheduled classes is excessive. To promote attendance and engagement, students may earn up to 5% additional credit in the course through in-class and online participation. Beyond this, there are no extra credit opportunities in the course so please **do not** ask! Each exam and assignment will be graded numerically, with scores and approximate letter

grades resulting from any curve posted on Blackboard. A curve would relax the following scale: 90-100=A, 87-90=B+, 80-87=B, 77-80=C+, 70-77=C, 67-70=D+, 60-70=D, <60=F.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, MAKEUPS, & ACCESSIBILITY:**

Students are expected to abide by the highest standards of academic integrity. Any deviation from this expectation will result in a minimum of a failing grade for the assignment, and may result in additional disciplinary measures including referral to the Office of Academic Integrity. Violations of the University's Honor Code include, but are not limited to, improper citation of sources, appropriating another individual's work, and any other form of academic misrepresentation. Also, students are expected to conduct themselves in a professional and civil manner. This includes avoiding disruptive activity by arriving to class on time, turning off cell phones, etc. For more information, see the Carolina Community Student Handbook (<http://www.sa.sc.edu/carolinacommunity/>).

It is imperative that students plan on completing each assignment/exam as scheduled. Makeups will **not** be offered except under the most extreme circumstances, involving events of an unforeseen nature—i.e., personal illness, death of an immediate family member, and incidents of similar gravity. Written documentation and advance notice must be provided.

Any student with a documented disability (as determined by the Office of Student Disability Services at 777-6142) should contact me in order to arrange appropriate accommodations.

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays 8:30-9:15, Thursdays 12:30-1:30, and by appointment.

**COURSE SCHEDULE\*:**

DATE(S)	TOPIC	READING
8/18	Introduction to Course	
8/23, 25, 30	The Principles of Politics	<b>AG: 1; BI: 1</b>
9/1	<b>NO CLASS</b> – American Political Science Association annual meeting	
9/6, 8	The Founding & the Constitution	<b>AG: 2 &amp; Appendix</b>
9/13, 15	Federalism & Sep. of Powers	<b>AG: 3; BI: 3</b>
9/20, 22	Civil Liberties & Civil Rights	<b>AG: 4</b>
9/27	<b>EXAM # 1</b>	
9/29, 10/4	Congress	<b>AG: 5; BI: 5</b>
10/6, 11	Presidency	<b>AG: 6</b>
10/13, 18	Bureaucracy	<b>AG: 7</b>
10/20	<b>NO CLASS</b> – Fall Break	
10/25, 27	Judiciary	<b>AG: 8; BI: 8</b>
11/1	<b>EXAM # 2</b>	
11/3, 8	Public Opinion	<b>AG: 9</b>
11/10, 15	Elections	<b>AG: 10; BI: 10</b>
11/17, 22	Political Parties	<b>AG: 11; BI: 11</b>
11/24	<b>NO CLASS</b> – Thanksgiving Recess	
11/29, 12/1	Interest Groups	<b>AG: 12</b>
12/9	<b>EXAM # 3</b> (5:30pm Friday)	

\* Readings may be added/dropped and the syllabus altered at the professor's discretion. **AG:** chapter number from textbook; **BI:** number of reading posted on Blackboard.