



On-Campus Course Syllabus
POL 203
Introduction to American Politics
Spring 2023

Class Information

Day and Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 8-9:15am

Room Number: E209

Contact Information

Instructor Name: Dr. Brandon Seitzler

Instructor Email: bseitzler@criswell.edu

Instructor Phone: 214.818.1309

Instructor Office Hours: Mondays: 10:45-11:45am; Tuesdays: 9:15-11am; Thursdays: 11:30am-12:45pm

Course Description and Prerequisites

An examination of the history, branches, and functions of the United States government, as well as how the public interacts with the government. (This course satisfies for a Social/Behavioral Science course.)

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to think about historical and contemporary questions and problems in American government and politics using the tools and methods of political science. This course places a heavy emphasis on analyzing current political events and debates within a political science framework.

Required Textbooks

American Government: Power and Purpose. Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, Ansolabehere, Han. 17th Edition. 2022.

Recommended Reading

- The Economist
- The Wall Street Journal
- www.khanacademy.org

Course Requirements and Assignments

- 30% - Weekly Reading Quizzes in Canvas. These quizzes are open book and must be completed individually. You may attempt each quiz as many times as you would like. Only the highest grade for each reading quiz will count for that week's grade. No late quizzes are allowed.
- 20% - "I used to be wrong about _____, but now I'm right." Two short writing assignments.
 - The first week of class you will choose two chapters from our textbook for which you will write a 500-750 word short essay titled "I used to be wrong about _____, but now I'm right." In each of these essays you will describe how that week's textbook chapter changed or improved your understanding of American politics. Of course, your beliefs about politics have always been correct, but they're even more correct now that you're taking Introduction to American Politics.
 - This essay is your opportunity to show off just how correct you've become this semester. Your essay should:
 - Explain what you used to believe and why you believed it.
 - Give evidence that you were wrong.
 - Explain what you now believe and why you are right.
 - Be formatted correctly:
 - If you need to cite any sources, use Chicago Style Author-Date formatting.
 - 12-point Times New Roman font.
 - Double-spaced without extra space between paragraphs.
 - Submit your assignment via Canvas ("Essay 1" and "Essay 2")
 - Title your assignment according to the format "LastName_FirstName_Essay1.pdf"
 - All assignments must be submitted as .pdf documents.
- 25% - Midterm Exam
- 25% - Final Exam

Course/Classroom Policies and Information

- The ideas expressed by readings, resources, and outside guests in this course should not be interpreted as implying the instructor's or college's endorsement. Course materials and outside speakers are selected for their perceived value in helping to meet the course goals and objectives.
- At all times and especially when we are working in and with the community you are expected to exhibit the college's graduate profile:
 - **Ambassadors** who communicate effectively across various platforms and contexts.
 - **Cultivators** who seek to understand diverse populations and develop purposeful relationships.
 - **Peacemakers** who pursue truth and righteousness through mercy and reconciliation.
 - **Problem-solvers** who think critically, creatively, and collaboratively.
 - **Professionals** who demonstrate competence in their field of study and intentionality in their vocation.
- You may not have your cell phone anywhere in sight during class.
- The one exception to my cell phone rule is using your cell phone as a calculator or to look something up online as a part of class participation. Other than these two exceptions, phones belong in bags.
- You may not use your laptop during class for anything other than class-related activities.

- Instructors work closely with the Student Success Manager. To help provide resources to students who may need it most, I will communicate the names of students who have two consecutive absences, low grades, or any other signs that they may be struggling. The Student Success Manager will reach out to these students and help find appropriate resources.
- The descriptions and timelines contained in this syllabus are subject to change at the discretion of the Professor.

Class Attendance

Students are responsible for enrolling in courses for which they anticipate being able to attend every class session on the day and time appearing on course schedules, and then making every effort to do so. When unavoidable situations result in absence or tardiness, students are responsible for acquiring any information missed. Instructors are not obliged to allow students to make up missed work. Per their independent discretion, individual instructors may determine how attendance affects students' ability to meet course learning objectives and whether attendance affects course grades.

Campus Closure

To ensure the health and safety of students and employees, college administrators may decide it is necessary on rare occasions to close the campus. Once this decision is announced, instructors will contact students to provide further details regarding the campus closure's impact on those courses. Students are responsible to watch for communication from their instructors and respond appropriately. (Unless otherwise specified by the instructor in this syllabus, this communication will be sent to the student's Criswell College e-mail account.)

In order to make progress toward the courses' objectives, instructors have the freedom during most campus closures to require students to participate in activities as alternatives to meeting on campus. An instructor may, for example, hold class remotely (through Zoom) at the scheduled time, provide a recording of a class or presentation for students to watch independently, or assign other activities that students are to accomplish before returning to campus. Students are responsible for accomplishing these alternative activities as well as any course requirements listed in this syllabus during the period of the campus closure. If, during the period of the campus closure, personal circumstances prohibit a student from accomplishing these alternative activities or course requirements and assignment listed in the syllabus during the campus closure, the student is responsible for communicating with the instructor as soon as possible. Instructors will not penalize students who do not have the means to accomplish the alternative activities during the period of the campus's closure and will work with students whose circumstances during the campus closure prohibited their timely completion of course requirements and assignments in the syllabus.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	4.0 grade points per semester hour
A-	90-92	3.7 grade points per semester hour
B+	87-89	3.3 grade points per semester hour
B	83-86	3.0 grade points per semester hour
B-	80-82	2.7 grade points per semester hour
C+	77-79	2.3 grade points per semester hour
C	73-76	2.0 grade points per semester hour
C-	70-72	1.7 grade points per semester hour
D+	67-69	1.3 grade points per semester hour
D	63-66	1.0 grade point per semester hour
D-	60-62	0.7 grade points per semester hour
F	0-59	0.0 grade points per semester hour

Incomplete Grades

Students requesting a grade of Incomplete (I) must understand that incomplete grades may be given only upon approval of the faculty member involved. An "I" may be assigned only when a student is currently passing a course and in situations involving extended illness, serious injury, death in the family, or employment or government reassignment, not student neglect.

Students are responsible for contacting their instructors prior to the end of the semester, plus filing the appropriate completed and approved academic request form with the Registrar's Office. The "I" must be removed (by completing the remaining course requirements) no later than 60 calendar days after the close of the term or semester in which the grade was awarded, or the "I" will become an "F."

Academic Honesty

Absolute truth is an essential belief and basis of behavior for those who believe in a God who cannot lie and forbids falsehood. Academic honesty is the application of the principle of truth in the classroom setting. Academic honesty includes the basic premise that all work submitted by students must be their own and any ideas derived or copied from elsewhere must be carefully documented.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to:

- cheating of any kind,
- submitting, without proper approval, work originally prepared by the student for another course,
- plagiarism, which is the submitting of work prepared by someone else as if it were his own, and
- failing to credit sources properly in written work.

Institutional Assessment

Material submitted by students in this course may be used for assessment of the college's academic programs. Since programmatic and institutional assessment is done without reference to specific students, the results of these assessments have no effect on a student's course grade or academic standing at the college. Before submitting a student's work for this type of assessment, the course instructor redacts the work to remove anything that identifies the student.

Institutional Email Policy

All official college email communications to students enrolled in this course will be sent exclusively to students' institutional email accounts. Students are expected to check their student email accounts regularly and to respond in an appropriate and timely manner to all communications from faculty and administrative departments.

Students are permitted to setup automatic forwarding of emails from their student email accounts to one or more personal email accounts. The student is responsible to setup and maintain email forwarding without assistance from college staff. If a student chooses to use this forwarding option, he/she will continue to be responsible for responding appropriately to all communications from faculty and administrative departments of the college. Criswell College bears no responsibility for the use of emails that have been forwarded from student email accounts to other email accounts.

Disabilities

Criswell College recognizes and supports the standards set forth in Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, and similar state laws, which are designed to eliminate discrimination against qualified individuals with disabilities. Criswell College is committed to making reasonable accommodations for qualifying students, faculty, and employees with disabilities as required by applicable laws. For more information, please contact the Student Services Office.

Intellectual Property Rights

Unless otherwise specifically instructed in writing by the instructor, students must neither materially nor digitally reproduce materials from any course offered by Criswell College for or with the significant possibility of distribution.

Resources and Supports

Canvas and SONIS: Criswell College uses Canvas as its web-based learning tool and SONIS for student data. Students needing assistance with Canvas should contact the Canvas Help Support line at (844) 358-6140. Tech support is available at this number, twenty-four hours a day. Students needing help with SONIS should contact the Campus Software Manager at studenttechsupport@criswell.edu.

Student Services: The Student Services Office exists to foster and encourage success in all areas of life—physical, intellectual, spiritual, social, and emotional. Students are encouraged to reach out for assistance by contacting the office at 214.818.1332 or studentservices@criswell.edu. The Student Services Office also works with local counseling centers to ensure that every student has access to helpful mental health resources. More information is located on the college website at [Criswell College Mental Health Resources](#), and students may contact the Director of Student Services if they have any questions.

Wallace Library: Students can access academic resources and obtain research assistance by contacting or visiting the Wallace Library, which is located on campus. For more information, email the Wallace Library at library@criswell.edu. Offsite login information is available in Canvas in the “Criswell Student Training Course” under “Library Information.”

Tutoring Center: Students are encouraged to consult with tutors to improve and enhance their skills and confidence in any subject matter taught at the college. Tutors have been recommended by the faculty to ensure that the tutor(s) are qualified to serve the student body. Every tutor brings experience and expertise in an effort to provide the proper resources for the subject matter at hand. To consult with a tutor, students can visit the Tutoring Center located on the second floor in room E203, or schedule an appointment by emailing tutoringcenter@criswell.edu or by calling 214.818.1373.

Course Outline/Calendar

Week	Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments Due
1	1/17	Welcome to POL 203 Introduction to American Politics.	
	1/19	Once upon a time, life for everyone was “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.” (according to Hobbes, at least) Now, for some people (and according to some people), life is a little better. What explains this? Luck, science, religion, technology...politics? We need to develop a framework to figure it out.	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 Five Principles of Politics
2	1/24	The USA is one of the rich countries where life seems (to <i>some[?]</i> and for <i>some[?]</i>) to be a little easier and more enjoyable. The USA is coincidentally also where we live. Maybe we should start our investigation at home and at the beginning. The <i>very</i> beginning: Legitimacy, authority, and accountability. Why should <i>they</i> get to tell <i>me</i> what to do?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2 Constructing a Government: The Founding and the Constitution <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1 Reading Quiz • Ch. 2 Reading Quiz
	1/26	The American founders thought they had some innovative ideas and answers to these questions.	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to be wrong about the founding and the Constitution, but now I’m right.
3	1/31	These innovative ideas started with the belief that power was dangerous and that the more you concentrate that power in a single person or persons the more likely you were to have tyranny. The last thing we want is some dictator pushing everyone around. So, while we recognize the need for a government (do we?), it would be nice to create a government with built-in mechanisms to limit itself. This led them to ideas like federalism and the separation of powers at the system level.	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3 Federalism <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3 Reading Quiz

	2/2	But has the share of power between federal and state governments remained constant across time? If one level of government abuses its power (or its citizens) is it the responsibility of another level of government to intervene?	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to be wrong about federalism, but now I'm right.
4	2/7	This is important because governments are governing individual persons and individual persons deserve certain things simply because they are humans. What do we as humans, and citizens, deserve? Are the things we deserve things that we deserve to be provided with or protected from or both?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4 Civil Liberties • Ch. 5 Civil Rights <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4 Reading Quiz • Ch. 5 Reading Quiz
	2/9	Who decides?	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to be wrong about civil liberties, but now I'm right. <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to be wrong about civil rights, but now I'm right.
5	2/14	All of this would be structured around and protected within formal institutions, starting with Congress. In theory, Congress would be where the people's interests are represented.	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6 Congress: The First Branch <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6 Reading Quiz
	2/16	In practice, things are a little more complicated. After all, legislators are still people and people have their own interests even when they are tasked with representing the interests of others.	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to be wrong about congress, but now I'm right.
6	2/21	In some ways, the president, because he or she serves all Americans, acting on a unitary basis, might be more efficient than Congress and able to make better policy, even though Congress is constitutionally tasked with lawmaking.	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 7 The Presidency as an Institution <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 7 Reading Quiz
	2/23	Whereas we tend to think of the president as politically strong this isn't constitutionally or historically the case. Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the president's power has increased.	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to be wrong about the presidency, but now I'm right.
7	2/28	The amount of government that the president oversees is reflected in the size of the executive branch which consists of departments, agencies, boards, commissions, and committees that Americans interact with daily.	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 8 The Executive Branch <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 8 Reading Quiz
	3/2	Remember though, the men and women who run these departments, agencies, etc. are not elected by citizens. They are tasked with duties and overseen by elected officials. This brings us back, full circle, to the	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I used to be wrong about the executive branch, but now I'm right.

		foundational questions of legitimacy, authority, and accountability.	
8	3/7	What happens when disputes arise between formal governmental institutions and between the government and the people?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 9 The Federal Courts <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. Reading Quiz
	3/9	Without guns (like the president) or money (like congress), the courts rely on their political independence to settle disputes and maintain the rule of law.	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used to be wrong about the federal courts, but now I'm right. Midterm Exam is Due at 11:59pm, 3/10
9	3/14	Spring Break – no class	
	3/16	Spring Break – no class	
10	3/21	We've talked a lot about "the people" so far. Who are they and what do they want and think?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 10 Public Opinion <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 10 Reading Quiz
	3/23	A controversial question: should we be encouraged or concerned that the people have a voice?	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used to be wrong about public opinion, but now I'm right.
11	3/28	How will these people make their thoughts and desires known?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 11 Elections <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 11 Reading Quiz
	3/30	How do you make your thoughts and desires known? Are you voting well, or succumbing to bias (optimism, confirmation, in-group, or action)?	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used to be wrong about elections, but now I'm right.
12	4/4	What happens when people organize into parties to organize and strategize their collective voices?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 12 Political Parties <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 12 Reading Quiz
	4/6	Are political parties good or bad?	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used to be wrong about political parties, but now I'm right.
13	4/11	How else do people organize and identify? Nobody really likes group or identity politics, but is that because everyone views their politics as just <i>politics</i> whereas everyone else's politics is <i>identity politics</i> ? What groups are you a part of and what interests do you have that drive your political preferences?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 13 Groups and Organized Interests <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 13 Reading Quiz
	4/13	James Madison (Federalist 10) thought groups and interests were a threat to the United States but that	<u>Assignment(s):</u>

		there were solutions to the problem. Are groups and interests a problem?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used to be wrong about groups and organized interests, but now I'm right.
14	4/18	Is the liberal media driving the groups and interest problem? Is the conservative media driving the groups and interests problem?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 14 The Media <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 14 Reading Quiz
	4/20	Would James Madison have been a social media power-user? Would Facebook or Twitter be a better place to publish the Federalist Papers?	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used to be wrong about the media, but now I'm right.
15	4/25	All semester we've been speaking vaguely about public policies and the politics and interests that drive them. What is public policy? Why are some things regulated, promoted, provided, etc. by public policy and others aren't?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 15 Economic Policy Ch. 16 Social Policy <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 15 Reading Quiz Ch. 16 Reading Quiz
	4/27		<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used to be wrong about economic policy, but now I'm right. I used to be wrong about social policy, but now I'm right.
16	5/2	All semester we've also ignored (for the most part) the idea that there might be other countries that the United States should or must interact with. We have studied other countries in comparison to the United States. What should our foreign policy toward them be?	<u>Reading(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 17 Foreign Policy <u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ch. 17 Reading Quiz
	5/4	We've learned over the semester that the United States has almost 250 years of experience building a Democracy. Perhaps other countries would like our help. Should we help these other countries? Should we share our expertise?	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I used to be wrong about foreign policy, but now I'm right.
17	5/9	Final Exam – no class	
	5/11	Final Exam – no class	<u>Assignment(s):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Exam is Due at 11:59pm, 5/11

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