**POLS 1101E:  Introduction to American Politics**

**Course and Instructor Information**

* **Instructor:** Teena Wilhelm
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* **Virtual Office Hours:** just email me, we can figure something out

This course examines government and politics in the United States, both at the national and state level. Beginning with our Constitutional foundations, we examine our system of federalism, as well as civil rights and liberties. We explore the institutional rules and human behaviors that shape government, including elections, public opinion, parties and interest groups, and our separate branches of government. American politics are a fascinating, evolving storm of information and concepts.  I'm sure I don't have to convince you that the overview material you'll work with here is important and interesting.

This is my first time to teach this class online.  I do a killer live version, but I am STOKED with what I am able to do in this forum.  I'm so glad you've signed up to join me here.

**Course Syllabus**

**REQUIRED Textbook:**

*American Politics Today*, Sixth Essentials Edition by William T. Bianco and David T. Canon

ISBN: 978-0-393-67994-6

Support for WW Norton resources can be requested at [support.wwnorton.com](http://books.wwnorton.com/books/support/).

**Course Requirements**

The assignments listed below are intended to provide each student with several opportunities to demonstrate achievement of the course objectives.

1. Module quizzes- 10 percent of final grade
2. Written response work- 10 percent of final grade
3. Module activities- 10 percent of final grade
4. Unit summative exams (3 total)- 50 percent of final grade
5. Final project- 20 percent of final grade

Unit One summative exam will cover information presented in modules 1-4. Unit Two summative exam covers information presented in modules 5-8. Unit Three summative exam will cover information presented in modules 9-12.

Unit summative exams are **TIMED**. They will require you to have **GOOD NOTES**.  They will require you to **STUDY**. **Don't be surprised about the preparation they will require.** These are the only "tests" that you'll be given in the traditional format for the course.  You've been forewarned.

**Due Dates**

Each module will have specific and noted due dates for corresponding assignments. Pay attention to the due dates, as late assignments accrue a 10 percent deduction per day. Given the flexible nature of online coursework, there is virtually no acceptable reason for late assignments.  Keep that in mind, as all illnesses will require doctor's notation and all grandmother deaths will be met with healthy skepticism.  In the spirit of successful adulting, please communicate with me if some insurmountable obstacle prevents you from making progress in your coursework.  All due dates/times are Eastern Standard Time (EST).

**Discussion Guidelines / Netiquette**

Specific discussion assignments have certain expectations for discussion behaviors. In each module, these are noted.  Above all, remember the golden rule.  And don't be a jerk.

**Communication Expectations**

Communication with me is best conducted over email.  By and large, you can expect a same-day response from me during regular business hours (M-F, 8-5).  I will be on campus at times, and will occasionally be available for face-to-face meetings. Please email for an appointment if you'd like to schedule one of those.  During the occasional holiday, I will not immediately return emails.  I will probably be on the lake in my boat and I will hope that you are doing something similarly non-school related.  I will notify all students when and if I am unavailable.

**Important Dates**

* Student Intro Survey completed-  Jan 13
* Introduction Material completed- Jan 13
* Module 1 completed and feedback survey -  Jan 20
* Module 2 completed – Jan 27
* Module 3 completed – Feb 3
* Module 4 completed – Feb 10
* **Unit One Summative Exam completed- Feb 10**
* Module 5 completed- Feb 17
* Module 6 completed- Feb 24
* Module 7 completed- Mar 3
* Module 8 completed-Mar 10
* **Unit Two Summative Exam completed- Mar 10**
* Module 9 completed-Mar 24
* Module 10 completed-Mar 31
* Module 11 completed-Apr 7
* Module 12 completed-Apr 14
* **Unit Three Summative Exam completed- Apr 14**
* **GA Constitution Material completed- Apr 21**
* **Final Project completed- Apr 30**

**Academic Honesty**

[Academic Honesty Policy](file:////d2l/common/dialogs/quickLink/quickLink.d2l%3fou=1664617&type=content&rcode=USGQProd-8138278)

**Accessibility**

[Accessibility](file:////d2l/common/dialogs/quickLink/quickLink.d2l%3fou=1664617&type=content&rcode=USGQProd-8138287)

**Course outline**

**Introduction Module: Understanding American Politics**

**Module 1: The Constitution and the Founding**

* Historical Context of the Constitution
* The Politics of Compromise and Ratification
* The Constitution as a Framework
* The Constitution as a Living Document

**Module 2: Federalism**

* Balancing National and State Power
* The Evolving Concept of Federalism
* Federalism Today

**Module 3: Civil liberties**

* Defining Civil Liberties
* Freedom of Religion
* Freedom of Speech/Assembly/Press
* Rights of the Criminally Accused
* Right to Privacy

**Module 4: Civil rights**

* The Context of Civil Rights
* The Racial Divide Today
* The Policymaking Process and Civil Rights
* Civil Rights Issues Today

**Module 5: Public Opinion and the Media**

* Defining Public Opinion and Where it Comes From
* Measuring Public Opinion
* What Americans Think about Politics
* The Media

**Module 6: Political Parties**

* Political Parties and Where they Come From
* American Political Parties Today
* The Role of Political Parties in American Politics

**Module 7: Elections**

* How American Elections Work
* Electoral Campaigns
* How Voters Decide
* Understanding the 2016/2018 Elections

**Module 8: Interest Groups**

* Defining Interest Groups
* Interest Group Strategies
* Interest Group Power

**Module 9: Congress**

* Congress and the People
* The Structure of Congress
* How a Bill becomes a Law/ Oversight

**Module 10: The Presidency**

* Presidential Power and Job Description
* Presidency as an Institution
* Presidential Power Today

**Module 11: The Bureaucracy**

* Defining American Bureaucracy
* How American Bureaucracy has Grown
* Modern Federal Bureaucracy
* Controlling the Bureaucracy

**Module 12: The Courts**

* Development of the Federal Judiciary
* American Legal and Judicial System
* Supreme Court: Access, Cases, and Decisionmaking