

Instructor

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Course Intro

This course introduces students to U.S. political and economic institutions. Lectures and readings over the first eleven weeks of the course examine the U.S. political system. A key objective in this part of the course will be to explain how reforms supported by the U.S. public have been responsible for creating division and deadlock in our political system, transforming the political system into something that the public distrusts and often despises. Specific topics covered in this part of the course include basic political theory and the U.S. Constitution, U.S. elections, Congress, the Presidency, and the Judicial Branch.

Following this, we will spend about four weeks on U.S. economic institutions, discussing microeconomic theory, markets, economic policies, and the 2007-2008 housing and mortgage securities market collapse, which set off the current economic recession. If we have time remaining at the end of the semester, there will additional lectures on the key events of the 20th and 21st centuries for the U.S.: the Great Depression and the New Deal, post 9/11 America, and the resurgent civil rights movement.

The course has an analytic rather than a normative emphasis. This means that we will not dwell on what U.S. institutions should be ideally. Instead we will try to understand *why* they are what they are, for better or for worse.

Students should not assume that the 1000-level number of the course indicates that the course is easy. The 1000-level number indicates that the course has no prerequisites, and that it is intended for students with little or no background in the subjects covered. Few students find the course easy. Most find it challenging, especially the writing requirements.

Course Objectives:

1. To provide students with a basic factual understanding of U.S. government and the U.S. economic system
2. To explain logically the workings of U.S. political and economic institutions.
3. To stimulate critical and independent thinking about U.S. government and the U.S. economic system.
4. To prepare students for careers in which they will be required to think logically and to write intelligibly--in business, government, law, journalism, education, medicine, science, technology, and engineering

Readings and Course Materials

There are no text books required for this course. Instead we will be using excerpts, journal articles and reputable media sources to understand the complexity of the U.S. government and economic systems. These readings will be available via Canvas.

Because of the changing nature of current events, specifically the current U.S. presidential campaign, many of these sources will not be posted until the week of class. Since we do not have any tests for the course, please view these as potential sources for your papers and opportunities to keep informed on critical current events.

Additionally, we will use a software program entitled "Democracy 3" with its two add-ons "Social Engineering" and "Extremism" as part of our course materials.

Requirements

This class is not exam based. Your grade is not determined by your performance on a test. Instead, to support one of the course's main objectives (preparing students for future careers), the bulk of your grade is determined by your performance on 7 papers throughout the course of the semester and either one final paper due the week of finals or a final group project. Additionally, students will be responsible for participation during the classroom lectures.

Papers

The papers will be due on Tuesday each assigned week unless otherwise stated. You will receive prompts (topics) based on our lectures and readings the week before, and you are responsible for crafting a well-reasoned response to the topic question. Each topic requires you to express your opinion, and you will not be allowed to hide behind a neutral position.

Your papers are required to be 3 pages in length, double spaced, using standard sized font (12 pt) in a standard font type. They will be graded on the following criteria: the quality of the argument, the logical flow of the paper, and the appropriate use of the English language (grammar, spelling, etc.) You need to use 3-5 separate credible sources per paper. Credible sources include journal articles, peer-reviewed books and legitimate media.

Each paper will be reviewed, but only 3 will be scored for points. These are selected at random for each student. The final paper is due on May 2nd and the topic will be chosen by you and approved by me at least one month in advance. The final paper should be 5-7 pages in length and follow the formatting guidelines used for the three page papers.

Group Project

In lieu of a final paper, you will be offered the opportunity to work with 3-4 other classmates on a group presentation due the final weeks of class. The topic of this presentation will be assigned after fall break, but you will need to decide if you would like to do a group project in place of the final paper by Jan. 17th to allow enough time for end of the term scheduling.

The presentation will require significant research into a current event assigned by the professor, and each group member will be expected to participate in the research, preparation, and presentation of the material. Presentations will be graded based on their accuracy, thoroughness, relevance to the assigned topic, and overall presentation quality.

Additional details will be provided when topics are assigned.

Participation

Participation points are awarded for completing your essays, actively taking part in the class discussions, and participating in weekly current events pop quizzes. There is no attendance taken for this course. The lectures are designed to help you write your essays, and missing them will significantly hamper your ability to prepare and write quality work. If you decide not to attend on a given day, please be prepared to turn to your peers for assistance on any missed lecture notes.

Active participation in the class discussions is an important component of learning and applying the materials learned in class. Because this course has a large population of students, we will devote several days throughout the

semester to just discussion. This should allow each student the opportunity to voice the opinion in an open forum. Students who fail to take part will lose participation points.

Due Dates

This course has specific due dates. Writing assignments lose a full grade for every day they are late. Please refer to the calendar or course outline on Canvas or the syllabus to make sure that you know when assignments are due.

Additional Resources

As many of you have realized, this class will probably be quite challenging. We want you to succeed, so for those willing to put in the extra time, we have the following additional resources available for this class:

Supplemental Instruction (SI)- USU offers supplemental instruction for some of the more challenging introductory courses. These additional sessions are hosted by Caleb Smith (smithcaleb042@gmail.com) and will be held Monday 5:00-5:50 HH 260 and Wednesday 5:00-5:50 HH 260 (subject to change.) These sessions will review the lecture material and offer potential opportunities to review previous papers and discuss ways to approach upcoming paper topics.

Writing Center- The writing center offers individualized support for your papers. You can make an appointment online at writing.usu.edu to review any of your papers. Additionally, the writing center is an excellent resource if you are struggling with transitions, thesis statements, argument structuring etc.

Teaching Assistants- This course has two teaching assistants available to provide additional support outside of class. They will be available in the Canvas chat on a regular basis to answer questions about our discussion topics, writing your papers and other general inquiries. The teaching assistants should be your first stop for any questions or general concerns.

Grade Scale

You can check your current grade at any time by dividing the points you have accumulated by the points possible.

The resulting percentage can then be applied to the following scale:

A	94-100	C	74-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-73
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	84-86	D	64-67
B-	80-83	D-	60-63
C+	77-79	F	59

The final paper is worth 60 points, each regular scored paper is worth 50 points (for a total of 150), each additional paper is worth 5 points (for a total of 20) and classroom discussion participation is worth 50 points.

Classroom Civility

Regrettably, a small minority of USU students demonstrate discourtesy to other students and to instructors by disrupting classes unnecessarily, most commonly in large lecture classes such as USU. 1300. Such disruptions commonly result from talking to friends, reading newspapers, packing notebooks prior to the end of lecture, text messaging and other cell phone issues, and late arrivals to class. Never assume that professors fail to notice discourteous behavior. Arrive to class on time, turn off your cell phone ringer, sit quietly, take thorough notes in class, ask questions of the instructor, and stay to the end of the period—or do not come at all. Discourtesy and disruptions will not be tolerated in U.S.U. 1300.

Disabled Students

Students with disabilities likely require accommodation by the instructor must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center during the first week of classes. Requests for special considerations relating to attendance, pedagogy, or exams, etc. must be approved by the instructor.

Tape Recording and Laptops

The tape recording of lectures is not permitted. Occasionally I make exceptions to this policy for a disabled student. Students can use laptop computers in USU 1300 only for note taking and only with the instructor's approval.

Course Outline

Week	Discussion Topic	Readings	Paper Topic
Jan. 9 – 13	Introduction to Course and Paper Writing 101		
Jan. 17 – 20	History of Democracy and Federalism	“The Influence of Magna Carta on American Constitutional Development”, “The Myth of Magna Carta”	
Jan. 23 – 27	The U.S. Constitution- Federalism and Decentralization	“Puppy Federalism and the Blessings of America”,	“Is democracy the best option for all nations?”
Jan. 30 – Feb. 3	The U.S. Constitution- The Bill of Rights	The U.S. Constitution: Amendments 1-10	“Why did the framers of the U.S. constitution choose to decentralize power? Do you agree with their decision?”
Feb. 6 – 10	The U.S. Constitution cont.; U.S. Congress		Pick a recent national event (i.e. Black Lives Matter movement) and explain how it relates to one of the first 10 Amendments.
Feb. 13 – 17	U.S. Congress cont.; U.S. Judiciary		
Feb. 21 – 24 (No Class on Tuesday)	The U.S. Presidency	“The Presidential Spectacle”	
Feb. 27 – Mar. 3	The U.S. Presidency cont.; Democracy 3 Primer		“Should the current role of the U.S. presidency be divided into two parts: an executive administrator and a figurehead of state?”
Mar. 6 - 10	Spring Break	Spring Break	Spring Break
Mar. 13 - 17	Elections and Representative Democracy		Democracy 3 - Can a politician govern from a pure ideological standpoint in the United States?

Week	Discussion Topic	Readings	Paper Topic
Mar. 20 - 24	The U.S. Two Party System	"Why the U.S. Has a Two Party System"	"Should the United States adopt a proportional representative system instead of the current 'Winner takes all' approach?"
Mar. 27 - 31	U.S. Representative Democracy Today	"Is Voting for Young People"	
Apr. 3 - 7	Introduction to Basic Economic Theory		
Apr. 10 - 14	Economic Theory Simulation		"Is a market driven economy the best system for large populations?"
Apr. 17 - 21	TBD		
Apr. 24 - 28	TBD		
May 1 - 5	None- Finals Week	None- Finals Week	Final Paper Due May 2nd