

Honors Introduction to American Government
POLS 1113.701 (3 credits)
Spring 2015

Professor	Eve M. Ringsmuth
Office	204 Murray Hall
Office Hours	9-10:15am and 11:30am-12:15pm MWF*
Email	eve.ringsmuth@okstate.edu
Location	Classroom Building 306
Time	MWF 12:30-1:20pm

*Note: Some office hours will be held in Low Library. I will announce these dates as they approach.

Description & Objectives: This course introduces students to American government and politics. The core objectives of the class are to:

- View government and politics more objectively and analytically, to study government as social scientists;
- Develop a broad understanding of the theoretical and institutional development of American democracy;
- Understand the basic structure and functioning of American government, including the Constitutional framework, linkage institutions, and political structures that guide our democratic system;
- Enhance political efficacy—the belief that government officials respond to public demands and that citizens can and do invoke change in the political system; and
- Interest students in the work of government as reflected in current events.

Expectations for Student Conduct

I expect all students to attend class prepared to participate in any class discussion. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of the opinions of others. Class attendance is vital to your success in this course. You will be held responsible for all material in the textbooks and in lectures, even if you miss a class. All activities at Oklahoma State University, including this course, are governed by the OSU Student Conduct Code. Inappropriate behaviors include but are not limited to reading the newspaper, cell phones ringing, not paying attention to class activities, arriving late, and leaving early. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment for others may be subject to disciplinary action under the Code. In addition, students responsible for such behavior may be asked to cancel their registration, or have their registration cancelled. Furthermore, OSU values the diversity of backgrounds, opinions, and values of its students and strives to promote a respectful learning environment. Sexual harassment is strictly prohibited by Oklahoma State University and will not be tolerated. OSU policies regarding general student conduct and sexual harassment are available online:

University Academic Regulations

<http://registrar.okstate.edu/images/2012Catalog/2012academicregulations.pdf>

Code of Conduct

<https://studentconduct.okstate.edu/code>

Student Rights and Responsibilities with policies on hazing, discrimination, and sexual harassment
http://www.osuokc.edu/rights/pdf/Rights_and_Responsibilities.pdf

Required Text

Smith, Raymond A. 2014. *The American Anomaly: U.S. Politics and Government in Comparative Perspective*. 3rd Edition. New York: Routledge.

*Note there will be other assigned readings available online from the course website on D2L.

Course Requirements

Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Debate	15%
Discussion Leader	5%
Amendment Papers	20%
Participation	10%

Communication Professor Availability

I encourage students to take advantage of my office hours. If you would like to speak with me outside of class time, you are welcome to stop by my office during regularly scheduled office hours. If you are unable to meet during office hours, we can set up an alternate appointment time via email or by talking after class. Email is the best way to reach me, and I will do my best to respond in a timely manner.

Course Announcements and Updates

I will frequently communicate with students via University email or D2L regarding assignments, schedule changes, or other course matters. Please ensure that you check your University email account and D2L regularly or that your email is forwarded to an account that you check regularly.

Policies for Assignments and Grading

“Incompletes” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and are solely at the discretion of the professor. All assignments are due at the beginning of class and will be counted as late if turned in any time after that. Any assignments turned in late will lose one letter grade per each school day late. Assignments turned in later than one week after the due date will not be accepted without special authorization from the professor. No extra credit will be offered. Assignments and exams may be submitted only once.

As a general rule, make-ups for exams or other course requirements will not be given. Students who must miss exams or other required deadlines because of scheduled activities of an official University student organization, a religious holiday, or a verifiable illness should contact the professor in advance of the absence, whenever possible, so that alternative arrangements can be made. Please be prepared to provide documentation of an illness or reason for missing an assignment or exam. The format of the make-up may differ from the in-class format.

You are responsible for keeping a copy of all written assignments and exams once they are handed back.

Sometimes errors do happen, and a grade may not be recorded for you. If this happens you must be able to produce the graded paper or exam to verify that the assignment/exam was completed and that the grade is correct.

Grading Scale

- A=90-100
- B=80-89.9
- C=70-79.9
- D=60-69.9
- F=0-59.9

Grade Appeals

If you think your exam, assignment, or any class requirement has been graded improperly you may appeal the grade to the professor. However, please note that final course grades are not negotiable under any circumstances. The appeals process for exams, assignments, or any other class requirements for which you received a grade works as follows:

- All grade appeals must be in writing and explain where you think an error was made
- Appeals cannot be submitted before 24 hours have passed after receiving the grade
- Appeals must be submitted before 7 days have passed after receiving the grade
- The professor reserves the right to raise, lower, or leave your grade unchanged

Participation

Participation may be graded on dedicated debate or discussion days listed in the syllabus according to the following scale:

3 Points	2.5 Points	1 Point	0 Points
Student makes a significant contribution to the discussion by offering helpful information, asking insightful questions, or responding to others in a respectful manner so as to advance the discussion.	Student contributes to the discussion, but not in a significant or meaningful way. Student might simply agree or disagree, but not offer a substantive reason or make an attempt to further the discussion.	Student is merely present in class but offers no contribution to the discussion.	Student is not present in class, or is present but rude, disruptive, or disrespectful towards fellow classmates. Such attitudes are not conducive to good discussion and do not help anyone gain further insight into the issue at hand.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is broadly defined as submitting work that is not your own without attribution, and is not acceptable in this or any other academic course. This also includes copying portions or all of assignments and collaborating on assignments without the expressed permission of the professor. Any willful violations of the University's academic integrity standards will result in serious consequences

such as receiving 0 for the assignment, exam, or course. In cases of violations of the academic integrity policy, I reserve the right to determine whether the case warrants a penalty on the assignment that is less severe than a 0 on the assignment. Such penalties may include, but are not limited to, a deduction of points from the assignment (up to a 0 on the assignment), and/or the completion of an additional assignment. I will make this determination based on the extent of the academic dishonesty on a case-by-case basis. If I determine that the academic dishonesty warrants a stronger response, I will adhere to the procedures detailed in Oklahoma State University's academic integrity policy. Either when determining the extent of any academic dishonesty, any resulting penalty, or whether to follow Oklahoma State University's academic integrity policy, the initial determination is strictly my own. I will meet with the student to discuss any case of an academic integrity violation, and the student may indicate at this meeting if he or she prefers to follow the procedures detailed in Oklahoma State University's academic integrity policy. Please consult the University's standards regarding academic integrity and the resulting sanctions (at <http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu>).

Student Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability condition (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact the professor and Disability Services (405-744-7116) at the beginning of the semester. More information about disabilities services can be found at the following url. (<http://sds.okstate.edu/>)

Schedule of Topics and Reading Assignments

The speed at which we get through the outlined material below will depend on the dynamics of the class, and we may therefore deviate from the outline and the information on this syllabus may be modified by the professor. Students will be notified of any changes.

Introduction to the Course

January 12

- First day/no readings

American Nation

January 14

- Read chapter 1

Constitution

January 16

- Read Declaration of Independence (<http://goo.gl/TB1n>)
 - What grievances and motivations underlie the Declaration?
- Read U.S. Constitution (http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/usconst.asp)
 - What institutional design choices did the Framers make in setting up the three branches?
 - How does the amendment process work? What does it tell us about the Framers intentions for the Document?
 - What sorts of topics/issues are addressed via amendment vs. in the original constitution? What does this tell us?
 - To what extent are the “self-evident” truths from the Declaration embodied in the Constitution?

January 19

- MLK Day – No class

January 21

- Read chapter 2

January 23

- Read p. 16-28 from Bianco

Federalism

January 26

- Read chapter 3

January 28

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Separation of Powers

January 30

- Read chapter 4

February 2

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Debate 1

February 4

- The voting eligible age should be lowered to 16.

Executive

February 6

- Read Chapter 5

February 9

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Debate 2

February 11

- The electoral college should be abolished and presidential elections determined by popular vote.

Legislature

February 13

- Read Chapter 6

February 16

February 18

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Debate 3

February 20

- Members of Congress (both chambers) should be subject to term limits.

Judiciary

February 23

- Read *Federalist 78*
- Read Chapter 7

February 25

- Supreme Court Oral Argument Discussion [no reading]

February 27

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Debate 4

March 2

- Any voter should have the option of casting his/her ballot online.

March 4

- Part I Wrap Up
- Use <http://confinder.richmond.edu> to look at the constitution of at least two other countries
 - Examine the institutional structures in place and note a few of the ways in which each country's institutions differ from that of the U.S.
 - Does the constitution address issues/topics not mentioned by the U.S. Constitution?
 - What characteristics (e.g., demographics, history, etc.) of the country may explain the decisions and principles embodied in these governing documents?
- Exam Review

Midterm Exam

March 6

Political Participation

March 9

- Read Chapter 8

March 11

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Voting and Elections

March 13

- Read Chapter 9

March 16, 18, and 20

- Spring Break – No class

March 23

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Debate 5

March 25

- Puerto Rico should be admitted to the union as the 51st state.

Political Parties

March 27

- Read Chapter 10

March 30

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Public Opinion

April 1

- Read Chapter 11

April 3

April 6

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Debate 6

April 8

- Voters should be required to show a government issued photo ID when voting.

Domestic Politics

April 10

- Read Chapter 12

April 13

- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Foreign Policy

April 15

- Read Chapter 13
- Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

April 17 – Discuss proposed amendments – read classmates' proposals

Media

April 20

- No reading

April 22 – Discuss proposed amendments – read classmates' proposals

April 24

- Media Discussion – Read articles selected by classmates (available on D2L)

Proposed Amendments Continued

April 27– Discuss proposed amendments – read classmates' proposals

April 29– Discuss proposed amendments – read classmates' proposals

May 1– Discuss proposed amendments – read classmates' proposals

- Course Wrap-Up and Review

Final Exam

May 6; 10-11:50am; regular classroom