

**POLS 1100—Introduction to American Government  
Spring 2020**

Professor: Robert A. Cropf, Ph.D.

Days and time: TR, 11:00-12:15

Office hours: Wednesdays 4:00-6:00

Course Credits: 3

**Course Description:**

The 2016 presidential election year was pivotal and will go down among the most debated and controversial elections in all of American history. The 2018 midterm election was no less significant in shaping the country's future. This year's presidential race is already among the most controversial and hotly contested elections in U.S. history, even before impeachment. This course will help you make sense about what is happening in the United States during this incredibly volatile period in our history and will help you understand American political institutions and the political system. Knowledge of the dynamics of and interactions among political institutions, including the presidency, congress, the judiciary, public opinion, the media, and political parties is absolutely essential to gain a full comprehension of what all is at stake not only for the United States but the rest of the world.

We will focus on the institutional rules and structures and human behaviors shaping government, the operation of elections, the development of parties and interest groups, social movements, public opinion, as well as the functioning of Congress, the presidency, and the courts. We begin with an historic overview of the topics that will examine how the current system has evolved because to understand the way government in the U.S. works today we have to trace its development over the last 230 years. The foundation of the U.S. political system and the rules and norms evolving over several centuries continue to exert a tremendous influence on how the government performs, what policies it produces, and how its citizens engage with it. This course fulfills the social science core requirement (see below).

**Format and Assignments:**

Because the course covers substantial material in a concentrated time period, each class will be broken into segments that involve different kinds of learning activities: lectures, in-class and on-line discussions, etc. We will often refer to current events in American politics. Students are encouraged to follow American current events by reading the news online or in a print newspaper. I especially encourage students to read reputable newspapers such as the *New York Times*, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, or the *Wall Street Journal*. We will occasionally use articles from different news venues in class. Students should be current with reading assignments to participate regularly in class discussions.

**Grading:**

Class Attendance.....	5%*
Online Discussion Bd Assignments (see below).....	10%
Online Quizzes.....	15%
Journal.....	15%
Midterm Exam (March 5).....	25%
Final Exam (May TBD).....	30%

All students are required to fill out the online course evaluation at the end of the semester.

\* All unexcused absences will lower your class attendance grade by 2 points for each absence. Excused absences will not result in a lower grade. I prefer that you contact me before you miss class but I understand that isn't always realistic. Inform of the reason for an unexcused absence as soon as possible after class.

**BLACKBOARD ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Online Journals:**

The online journal is where you will record your reflections on the class readings and discussions. In this assignment, I will be the only other person who will read the journal. The goal of this assignment is for you to develop the important habit of reflecting on your work. These will alternate with the Discussion Board.

In each lesson, I will provide you with a prompt from either the readings, class discussions, or the news. But the idea is the same from week to week: you reflect on the material in a way that indicates to me that you are thinking about your learning and development.

Just as the stories in the book describe ordinary people who have struggled and, in some cases, triumphed in the American political system, the journal will allow you to tell your story and to share your experiences.

**New journal entry every 2 weeks due by Friday 5 pm. Word minimum is 250.**

**Class Discussion Board:**

Every other week you will do a brief response to a question based on the readings for that week. Your response will be public so that all the other students will be able to read it. As part of this assignment, you will have to reply to the postings of 2 other students in the

class. My TA will keep track of all students' postings on the discussion board and the online journal.

**Discussion board posting and replies due by Friday 5 pm every otherweek of class, except the first week and finals week. Word minimum is 100 for response to question and 50 words for each response.**

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:**

*American Government: Stories of a nation* by Scott F. Abernathy, CQ Press, 2017. (A)

**CLASS OUTLINE:**

Week/Module    Reading Assignments

- I.        (A) Chapter 1 and (H) Chapter 1 Jan .
- II.       (A) Chapter 2 and (H) Chapter 2 week of .
- III.      (A) Chapter 3 and (H) Chapter 3 week of .
- IV.      (A) Chapter 4 and (H) Chapter 4 week of .
- V.       (A) Chapter 5 and (H) Chapter 5 week of .
- VI.      (A) Chapter 6 and (H) Chapter 6 week of .
- VII.     (A) Chapter 7 and (H) Chapter 7 week of .
- VIII.    (A) Chapter 8 and (H) Chapter 8 week of .
- IX.      **Midterm (March. ) covers (A) and (H) Chapters 1-7.**

**Spring BREAK (March)**

- X.       (A) Chapter 9 and (H) Chapter 9 week of .
- XI.      (A) Chapter 10 and (H) Chapter 10 week of .
- XII.     (A) Chapter 11 and (H) Chapter 11 week of .
- XIII.    (A) Chapter 12 and (H) Chapter 12 week of .

**Easter (April )**

- XIV.    Chapter 13 and (H) Chapter 13 week of .
- XV.     Chapter 15 and (H) Chapters 14-16 week of .
- XVI.    **Final Exam (May) includes all chapters since midterm.**

**GRADING SCALE**

A	93-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D	60-70%
A-	90-92%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	F	below 60%

**Honor Code**

Students are expected to be honest in their academic work. The University reserves the right to penalize any student whose academic conduct at any time is, in its judgment, detrimental to the University. Such conduct shall include cases of plagiarism, collusion, cheating, giving or receiving or offering or soliciting information in examinations, or the use of previously prepared material in examinations or quizzes. Violations should be reported to me and will be investigated and adjudicated according to the Policy on Academic Honesty of the College of Arts and Sciences. If the charges are found to be true, the student may be liable for academic or disciplinary probation, suspension, or expulsion from the University. Please refer to the university policy at <http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>.

## Expectations and Procedures

### Technology

Put everything on mute. You do not need to use your laptop for this course. Please take notes the old fashioned way. This will dissuade the trend of college students to browse the web, check email, and frequent social networking sites during lecture. I will email all lecture powerpoints after the daily lecture.

### Communication

I will post grades, send class emails, etc. through the SLU Banner system. Be sure that you can access the email address listed. I will only send email out to your SLU e-mail accounts listed on the course roster in Banner. I will not keep track of any other email addresses you may use.

### Disabilities

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about: \_Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.

\_ University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at the Student Success Center.

### Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

### University Writing Services

I encourage you to take advantage of University Writing Services; getting feedback benefits all writers! Trained writing consultants can help with any writing, multimedia project, or oral presentation. During one-on-one consultations, you can work on everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. *These services do fill up*, so please make an appointment! Also, bring your assignment description, and a few goals, to the consultation! For more information, or to make an appointment, visit [www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml](http://www.slu.edu/writingservices.xml) or call 977-3484.

### Social Science core requirement

**Student Outcomes:** Students will acquire conceptual tools and methodologies to analyze and understand their social world. With these tools, they will be able to act in their world more effectively and become forces for positive change. They will gain a better understanding of human diversity. Students will be able to think and write critically about human behavior and community. They will become aware of the various methodological approaches used by social scientists.