

POLS 1100-01, Intro. to American Government Dr. Kenneth Warren
Spring, 2021 Meets MWF at 10:00-10:50 in McGannon Hall, Rm. 260
Class list email: POL110001_120@list.slu.edu (Note: please recognize
this class email because I will be sending information to you via this class
list email. I prefer this over Blackboard since it is more direct. You will
receive messages, supplemental reading materials vis this list email).

Note: Due to the Pandemic with new cases and deaths soaring, we will not
have in-person classes until further notice. Meanwhile we will meet via
Zoom. The link to access the class appears below:

Zoom Meeting Link to be used for the entire semester, starting January 29th
at 10:00 am and ending May 10.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://slu.zoom.us/j/99797235292?pwd=QTNrRHhKOFB5TC9FVtBa2tHRktyUT09>

Meeting ID: 997 9723 5292

Password: 116757

Course Description

This course, “Introduction to American Government,” is described aptly by its title. This course introduces students to the basics about American government. It is not an advanced course, but a course that covers the fundamentals about the creation, development, and operation of American government. Focus is on the basic constitutional design and how the framers envisioned how American government would function. Special attention is devoted to the federal structure where powers are shared by our national, state, and local governments in the making and execution of public policy, as well the sharing of judicial review functions.

Special emphasis is placed on presenting and scrutinizing the operations of the three basic branches of our government: the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. However, major attention is also given to what is considered the fourth branch of government, the federal bureaucracy, since many scholars legitimately consider this branch the most powerful branch in our governmental system on a daily basis since federal civil servants, practically speaking, make over 90% of the “laws” that we must live under. The public policies that bureaucrats make are technically called rules, but they carry the force of law, as our courts have made clear.

We will also cover presidential and congressional power and especially the battles that take place between the Presidents and the U.S. Congress over agenda issues, especially to the Biden v. the U.S. Congress. Naturally, political parties and interest groups are also

major political actors in our political system. We will look at their roles. Brief attention will be given to American campaigns and elections, as well as to major issues pertaining to civil liberties and civil rights. Some attention will also be paid to major domestic and foreign policy issues and problems, especially addressing the most serious challenges to America today: protecting Americans from terrorists at home and abroad. Much attention will be given to how American government is functioning under the Biden presidency.

Course Outline

- I. Introductory Comments
 - A. Overview of Course
 - B. Course Objectives
 - C. Course Business (tests, papers, grading policy, etc.)
 - D. American Government: Then and Now

- II. Constitutional Principles
 - A. The pre-Constitutional setting and the Articles of Confederation
 - B. What did the Constitutional framers create?
 - C. The basics: Articles I, II, and III creates a separation of powers and a checks and balances system
 - D. The Bill of Rights and Amendments XI-XXVII
 - E. Constitutional design created an inherently conservative political system
 - F. Modern Constitutional problems: Do we need a more modern Constitution?
 - G. Disturbing challenges to American democracy, American constitutionalism, and the rule of law

- III. American Federalism:
 - A. What is American federalism?
 - B. Different kinds of American federalism
 - C. How well does it work?

- III. The Political Process
 - A. The American Political Landscape
 - B. Political Culture and Ideology
 - C. Political Diversity (by region, area, ethnicity, religion, class, gender, occupation, etc.) and Political Process

- IV. Interest Groups
 - A. Interest Groups and Their Politics: An overview
 - B. Constitutionally sanctioned
 - C. Different kinds of interest groups
 - D. Lobbyists
 - E. Those that influence public policy making and implementation the most, benefit the most from these public policies

- V. Political Parties

- A. Political Parties: historical and modern role of political parties
 - B. Party dominance by eras in American history: 1789-1828; 1828-1860; 1860-1896; 1896-1932; 1932-1980; and 1980-today
 - C. The increase in safe seats and the rise of polarization and its significance
 - D. Why we need to bipartisanship to help unite America
- V. Public Opinion and Political Participation
- A. The Formation of Political Opinions, Attitudes, and Ideologies
 - B. Public Opinion Polling
 - C. Voting Behavior
 - D. Promoting Integrity in American Elections
- VI. Campaigns, Elections, and the Media
- A. Elections: The Rules of the Game
 - B. Presidential Elections: Emphasis on the 2016 Presidential Election
 - C. Congressional Elections: Emphasis on the 2016 Congressional Elections
 - D. All things equal, having more money matters, but money by itself cannot buy elections
 - E. A critique of *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*
 - F. The Role of the Media in American Politics/Campaigns/Elections
- VII. Policy-Making Institutions
- A. Congress: The People's Branch
 - B. The Presidency: The Leadership Branch, but do presidents really have the power to lead?
 - C. The Bureaucracy: Where the Real Day-to-Day Power Resides
 - D. The Judiciary: The Balancing Branch
- VIII. Individual Rights and Liberties
- A. Civil Liberties
 - B. Civil Rights
- IX. The Politics of National Policy (note: optional chapters since we may not get this far in the course)
- A. Domestic Policy: Economic and Social Policies
 - B. Foreign and Defense Policy
 - C. Homeland Security and Fighting Security Abroad
- X. Concluding Reflections on American Government
- A. American Government's Challenges Today
 - B. American Government's Likely Future Based on Current Trends

My lecture approach

__ Instead of using PowerPoint, I project on the screen my lecture notes. Although I use PowerPoint when I present talks to groups, I find PowerPoint slides rather superficial, so

I decided to present my more comprehensive lecture notes. Most students have found these notes more useful when they prepare for exams. These lecture notes are numerically ordered and stress the major points from each chapter. When lecturing, I address these points and elaborate on each point. I also embed supplemental materials (e.g., a “breaking news” article on American government) via Internet sites in these lecture notes. Before each exam, I send these lecture notes to you to help you prepare for your exam.

Grading Policy

Mid-Term	160 points
Final	160 points
Position Paper	50 points
Class Participation/Attendance	30 points
TOTAL	400 points

Grading Scale * (in percent)

A	93-100%	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	68-70
A-	90-92%	B	83-86	C	73-76	F	below 60
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72		

*An Incomplete for the course requires an agreement between the student and his/her professor with terms of the agreement submitted to SLU administrators.

Required Textbook: *Government By The People, 26th ed., 2020* by David Magleby, Paul Light, and Christine Nemacheck. Any edition from 2018 or newer is fine. You can save yourself some money by buying the 2018 edition. This will be fine because I am covering basics in this class and slightly older editions still cover the basics of American government.

Contact Information

My phone, e-mail, office, and office hours:

314-977-3036 (office); 314-963-0451 (home – call when important)

E-mail: warrenkf@slu.edu

Office: McGannon Hall, Room 135

Office hours: Due to Covid, in-office, office hours are suspended until further notice—you may reach me by home phone or email any time – if I am not home, please leave your name and a detained message and I will return the call.

Attendance Policy

Regular, responsible attendance is expected. Classes should be missed only for very legitimate and compelling reasons. More than **seven** unexcused absences will result in grade penalties. Very excessive unexcused absences (**more than 10**) will result in an “F” grade. Skipping exams is absolutely forbidden unless a formal written medical excuse is submitted and accepted. Other legitimate excuses may be accepted, but you need to inform me before you miss the exam, not afterwards. Note: I give a lot of material in my lectures that does not come from the book. I frequently lecture on “breaking news” pertaining to American government that you will be held responsible for on exams, so this is another reason why attendance is important. In my lectures I try very hard to help simplify the reading material to make it more understandable for you. I try to “cut to the chase” and point out to you what is important to understand and remember for your exams.

Academic Honesty Policy

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 & 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.

(See <http://www.slu.edu.colleges/AS/academichonesty.html>)

Students with Special Needs - Disability Services Academic Accommodations

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at Disability_services@slu.edu or 314-977-3438 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

Course Objectives/Outcomes

Basically, I have a twofold objective in teaching this course. First, I want students to learn about the institutions and processes of American government. Secondly, I want students to learn to think critically about American government and its practices.

Modes of Assessment and Skills/Knowledge Being Assessed

I will use a midterm and final exam to test student knowledge on what they have learned in this American government class. I am particularly interested in this introductory course on whether students can demonstrate basic knowledge about American government institutions and processes. This material will be covered in my lectures and in the textbook. I am also interested in the ability of students to evaluate and think critically about how American government operates. A short “think piece” paper will be required to demonstrate your ability to present and critique an American government topic. Also, students will be asked on occasion in class (via Zoom) to respond to questions about American government in the context of the lecture/readings.

In-Class Activities

In-class activities (via Zoom until further notice) will consist of standard lectures combined with a class discussions on topics related to American government. Students will be expected to keep up with the reading assignments, especially the assigned current articles from the Internet and other articles sent to them via email so they can participate meaningfully in class discussions. Participation/class attendance will constitute 10% of a student’s final grade in this course. With 40 students in this class, I realize that class discussions involving all students will be impossible, but I will be asking students at random to comment once in a while. Students are always encouraged to ask questions. If I do not notice you on Zoom, please feel free to interrupt by speaking out to get my attention.

Important Note: SLU requires a lot to be included in the syllabus, so I am copying what is required, even though some components might be repeated. All required materials can be accessed through the links.

- Academic Honesty/Integrity

- a. Insert and/or link to the approved language, which can be found [here](#). You may also link to the University Policy posted [here](#).

- Disability Accommodations

- a. Insert and/or link to the approved language, which can be found [here](#).

Note: due to accreditation requirements, regulatory differences, and/or location-specific resources, the School of Law, the School of Medicine, and SLU Madrid have their own standard language for syllabus statements related to disability accommodations. Faculty in those units should seek guidance for syllabus requirements from their dean’s office.

- Title IX

- a. Insert and/or link to the approved language, which can be found [here](#).

Note: due to accreditation requirements, regulatory differences, and/or location-specific resources, the School of Law, the School of Medicine, and SLU Madrid have their own standard language for syllabus statements related to Title IX. Faculty in those units should seek guidance for syllabus requirements from their dean’s office.

- Mandatory Statement on Face Masks (Fall 2020)

The required syllabus statement requiring face masks, which can be found [here](#), reminds

students about the University's [*Interim Policy on Face Masks*](#), as well as ADA accommodation information. This syllabus statement must be added – temporarily – to every course syllabus.

- TEMPORARY Mandatory Syllabus Statement on In-Class Attendance & Participation
SLU's current [*University Attendance Policy*](#) does not address challenges related to in-class attendance (and in-person participation in class-related activities) raised in the COVID-19 era. Accordingly, [this temporary syllabus statement](#) is required for all syllabi for all courses at all locations (except the Madrid Campus) offered by the colleges/schools and other academic units reporting to the University Provost.