

### **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 president and the U.S. Congress over agenda issues, especially focusing on the Trump’s battles with Congress. presidency. 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 public policy issues, especially the ones that are hotly debated today

### **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. American Federalism: What is American federalism and how well does it work?
  - G. Modern Constitutional problems: Do we need a more modern Constitution?

- 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. Political Parties and Interest Groups
  - 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. Interest Groups and Their Politics
- 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

**Class Meetings and Room Number**

Class Aug 26, 2019 - Dec 17, 2019 12:00 pm - 12:50 pm, MWF McGannon Hall 121

**Course Prerequisites**

None

**Grading Policy**

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

**Required Textbook:** *Government By The People*, by David Magleby, Paul Light, and Christine Nemacheck. Any edition from 2016 or newer is fine. You can save yourself some money by buying the 2015 edition. This will be fine because I am covering basics in this class and newer 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](mailto:warrenkf@slu.edu)

Office: McGannon Hall, Room 135

Office hours: 10:55-11:55 Monday, Wednesday. It is also possible to see me right after our class and by special appointment.

**Attendance Policy**

Regular, responsible attendance is expected and your class participation grade is based in part on your attendance since you cannot participate if you are not in class. Classes should be missed only for very legitimate and compelling reasons. . A sign-in sheet will be passed around during each class. More than seven unexcused absences will result in grade penalties. Very excessive absences (9 unexcused absences or more) will result in an "F" grade. Skipping exams is absolutely forbidden unless a formal written medical excuse is submitted and accepted. Other excuses may be accepted, but you need to inform me. A missed and not made up midterm or final exam would cause the student to receive

an failing grade for the course. 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 the presidency. The textbook provides the basics on each traditional area of the American presidency. For the mid-term and final, you will be responsible for book assignments, my lectures, and any assigned articles. I guarantee that you will not do well if you do not attend class because I intentionally ask several questions on exams that come only from class discussions and lectures, so please come to class.

### **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](mailto: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.

### **Grading Scale \***

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.

### **Course Objectives**

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 for 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 textbook. I am also interested in the ability of students to evaluate and think critically about how American government operates, so some essay questions will be asked on exams to assess such critical thinking skills. Also, in classes students will be asked on occasion to reflect on certain items about American government.

### **In-Class Activities**

In-class activities will consist of standard lectures combined with a lot of class discussions on topics related to the American presidency. 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.

**To make certain I am including everything that is now required by SLU, I am simply attaching the entire syllabi statements, even though some statements are repeated.**

### **Syllabi Statements**

The Office of Academic Affairs and the Student Success Center encourage all faculty to review their undergraduate course syllabus and incorporate the following statements.

#### **Academic Integrity Syllabus Statement**

*Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors.* The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015,

and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at:

[http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic\\_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf](http://www.slu.edu/Documents/provost/academic_affairs/University-wide%20Academic%20Integrity%20Policy%20FINAL%20%206-26-15.pdf).

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

Specific College of Arts and Sciences Academic Honesty Policies and Procedures may be found at:

<http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml>

### **Title IX Syllabus Statement**

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; [akratky@slu.edu](mailto:akratky@slu.edu); 314-977-3886) and share the basic fact of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for resources, please visit the following web address:

<http://www.slu.edu/general-counsel-home/office-of-institutional-equity-and-diversity/sexual-misconduct-policy> [www.slu.edu/here4you](http://www.slu.edu/here4you) .

### **Student Success Center Syllabi Statements**

In an effort to be inclusive of students' learning styles and needs with regard to academic support, the following statement has been developed for use in course syllabi which identifies resources for student support in various areas of learning. As faculty members construct their syllabi for future courses, it is requested that they update materials to include new language regarding academic and career related support offered to students through the Student Success Center.

The syllabus statement will be available throughout the year by visiting the following

websites, but we encourage you to place these resources on any departmental websites you feel necessary:

- Student Success Center: [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success)
- Reinert Center for Transformative Teaching & Learning: [www.slu.edu/ctl](http://www.slu.edu/ctl)

**Student Success Center Syllabus Statement:**

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. The Student Success Center, a one-stop shop, which assists students with academic and career related services, is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331) and the School of Nursing (Suite, 114). 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 services, university writing services, disability services, academic coaching, career services, and/or facets of curriculum planning) by visiting the Student Success Center or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

**Disability Services Academic Accommodations Syllabus Statement**

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](mailto:Disability_services@slu.edu) or [314.977.3484](tel:314.977.3484) 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.