

POLS 1000 Syllabus

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Course Description:

The course is designed to introduce students to the way governing works in the United States of America and Wyoming. In particular, we will study the basic components of each government as well as the ways people behave in the political world we share. More generally, the class should be considered as a place to learn how to analyze the world of U.S. and Wyoming politics – which, by the way, should not lean toward either a conservative or liberal, Republican or Democratic, perspective.

Required Material:

1. An open and inquiring mind!
2. Access to a good online news source
 - Here are some of the best known newspapers online;
National Review
New York Times
Wall Street Journal
Washington Post
Christian Science Monitor
Dallas Morning News
St. Louis Post-Dispatch
Los Angeles Times
San Diego Union-Tribune
Orlando Sentinel
New York Post
Miami Herald
 - Here are a few interesting websites you might find helpful;
nationalreview.com
[propublica](http://propublica.com)
wyofile.com
fivethirtyeight.com
 - Or, you might watch a TV news show just to get the drift of what is happening.
3. The textbooks by Lowi, et al., *American Government: Power and Purpose (brief Fourteenth Edition)*, and *The Equality State*.

Course and University Rules:

1. In accordance with university policies, you will be governed by the Student Honor Code.
2. We will also follow the Department of Political Science policy on academic dishonesty, which can be found at; <http://www.uwyo.edu/pols/courses/index.html>. In a case of academic dishonesty, the student will receive a failing grade (50% of the total grade possible) for that assignment.
3. In this class, plagiarism is considered the use of another person's ideas (including their words) without providing recognition of that. Since our assignments are not research papers, no special citation format will be used but that does not mean you can use another person's ideas without giving them credit. If this seems confusing, please contact me with your questions.
4. If you have a physical, learning or psychological disability that requires accommodation, contact me by email as soon as possible. You will also need to register with University

Disability Support Services (and they will request documentation of your disability) in S.E.O., Room 330 Knight Hall.

5. Late assignments will be accepted if you have an illness, death in the family or if bad weather somehow prevents you from gaining access to necessary computing equipment. If you have an excused absence, contact me as soon as possible. If an assignment is late and you do not have an excuse, you will not receive a grade for it. The course is structured so that you have ample time to do the work beforehand. Remember, the biggest problem with online courses is meeting the demands in a timely manner – procrastination does not work in this kind of learning environment.
6. No personal attacks!!! Students in the class are expected to debate topics and offer alternative perspectives on matters we explore, but that only requires alternative rationale for different ideas and it does not necessitate personal attacks. In the age of provocateurs we all watch or listen to, like Rachel Maddow, Rush Limbaugh or John Stewart, it seems normal to make wild or sarcastic statements. While it may seem normal to you, it is not sufficient for making reasoned arguments, such as I expect in the class.

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated using a variety of tools.

One, will be mini-essays and they will count for 25% of the grade. For this part of the grade, you will have a series of mini-essay topics assigned throughout the semester and your five best scores will be used to determine the grade. Each mini-essay assignment will be explained in detail, be based on 50 points possible, and include grading rubrics. It is to your advantage to do a few more than necessary so that you can use the best grades. The mini-essays have due dates to help you manage the semester and avoid the problem of procrastination.

Two, regular interactions in the discussion threads are expected. Since you would normally attend class three times a week (in a MWF class), you should post on discussion threads for that many days each week. Scoring for the discussion threads will be based upon the following criteria;

- To receive an “A” in any class, you need to be engaged in the discussions so I expect that you will post on at least three different days, use materials from the textbooks (assigned for the week) and current events (from your choice of media, but online newspapers are preferable). You will also have to interact with other students by asking them questions and responding to their questions when you can.
- A “B” grade will be given if you post two different times a week and meet the other criteria for an “A.”
- “C” grades will be assigned to those who post but do less than required for a “B.”
- The lowest grade for a posting will be a “D.”

There will be a discussion every week and they will be worth 30 points each, or 45% of the grade. Of course, this is a place where you can pad your grade by making frequent postings and that should help you raise your overall grade if you struggle with another part of the class.

Three, you will be required to write a final essay on the most important concepts you learned in class. Later in the semester, a complete description of the final essay requirement will be posted but you can start thinking about what you have learned and why it is important as soon as the class starts. The final essay is worth 20% of the grade.

Four, you will be given a test on Wyoming government and constitution, and it will count for 10% of the overall grade. The multiple choice test will be a take-home test and you can use

your book to complete it. The point here is that you look up the answers and learn more about the Wyoming Constitution. Further details will be provided later in the semester.

The grading scale for class now includes pluses and minuses. The criteria follows:

| | | |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|
| A = 91 or above | A- = 90 | |
| B+ = 89 | B = 81-88 | B- = 80 |
| C+ = 79 | C = 71-78 | C- = 70 |
| D+ = 69 | D = 61-68 | D- = 60 |
| Below 60 is failing | | |

Major Course Objectives (as designed by the department):

| OBJECTIVE | TASK |
|----------------------------|---|
| Locate/gather information | Internet searches, follow the news, and textbook readings |
| Critical thinking/analysis | Mini-essay questions |
| Effective communication | Class discussions |
| Cultural diversity | Current events and textbook readings |
| Normative foundations | Mini-essay questions |
| Empirical phenomena | Internet searches, following the news, use of textbook data |
| Reason about issues/policy | Class discussions, essay questions |

Class in General?

Students use and read a major news sources (news magazine, weblogs, newspaper, online news, etc.)

Part of the class will be dedicated to learning about important topics from the textbooks and other sources of information about politics in the U.S. and Wyoming. The course will begin with in-depth discussions of important tools for analysis introduced by the textbook authors in the first chapter. We will be reading approximately a chapter a week in your textbook. We will wait a little to start the Hubbel book, but you may want to start early in order to get ahead.

Expect to see the course unfold, rather than be presented lock, stock and barrel. Allowing a course to unfold serves several purposes; 1) it makes students pay attention throughout the semester, 2) it allows the instructor to mold the class to students and current events, and 3) this approach helps keep the course fresh and therefore we won't fall into the rut of "tried and true."

You will find that the instructor is demanding but very interested in being fair. Please, contact me whenever you have a question. If I don't respond immediately, I will respond within a day or two.