

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**  
**POLI 2051**  
**M-W-F 1:30-2:20**  
**112 Audubon**

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**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The purpose of this course is for you to become familiarized with the basic principles and practices of American government. You will engage with materials that provide insight into political research. As a class, we will discuss current events in politics and sort through the facts of our government. The class is organized into four sections: (1) democracy and the structure of government, (2) public opinion, the news media, and the role of political parties, (3) branches of government, and (4) the role of government. *LSU learning competency statement: "LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference."*

By the end of this semester, you will be able to participate in an intellectual and objective discussion of politics with your friends and family members.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

**Struggle for Democracy, The 2014 Elections and Updates Edition (11<sup>th</sup> edition).**  
**Edward S. Greenberg and Benjamin Page.**  
**ISBN-13 978-0133914740**

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Exams: 60%.** There are four exams. Each exam is worth 15% of your final grade in the class. Read the assigned textbook chapters and enrichment readings for the exams. During class, we will discuss exam questions and answers.
2. **News brief: 10%. (Monday)** You are expected to participate in a current events discussion. Discussion is worth 10% of your final grade.
3. **Data report: 15%. (Wednesday)** To count toward your participation grade, you will submit a brief "Data report" exercise.
4. **Academic article review: 15%. (Friday)** You are required to read assigned reading and write a *brief* review answering a series of questions. Each review is worth 5% of your final grade. Students will write three reviews.

## ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

1. **Exams: 60%.** See “class schedule” for exam dates. Exams are multiple choice.

**Enrichment readings:** There are several enrichment readings throughout the semester. We will discuss these in class. You should be prepared to answer exam questions regarding the enrichment readings. Readings are posted on Moodle.

2. **News briefs: 10 %.** News article discussion. You are expected to stay up to date on current events. The class will spend several minutes each Monday discussing events. **Come to class well informed.** This is not the appropriate time to display your knowledge of textbook readings but to demonstrate that you are aware of what is going on in our country. For example, if there is a groundbreaking story about Donald Trump’s pet lizard (or whether he has one), I expect you to know something about it. I will prompt discussions with, “What has been going on in the world/United States this last week...” The purpose of this exercise is to lay the foundation for a lifelong interest in current events. To begin your search, try sources sources such as Politico, The Huffington Post, NPR News, Real Clear Politics, Vox, FiveThirtyEight, PRRI or Pew. Some of these sources (PRRI/PEW) are more data oriented; however, their analyses are rooted in current topics. *You will not turn anything in.*
3. **Data reports: 15%.** Each Wednesday, you will turn in a brief (very brief) exercise. Of course, the exercises will pertain to politics; we are meeting for class during an election season! Let’s make good use of our time. Example of the assignment: List the names of the President of the United States, Vice President, Secretary of State, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Speaker of the House, and the Attorney General. *Bring your typed assignments to class on Wednesday. Written assignments will not be accepted under any circumstances. I know how quickly information is accessible via cellular mobile device.*
4. **Academic article review: 15%.** We will discuss academic article reviews on Fridays during the first few minutes of class. The purpose of this exercise is to familiarize yourself with a particular topic by engaging in scholarly literature. I will post the readings on the course Moodle page. There will be *several* article opportunities. Students are required to complete **3 and only 3**. Each article is worth 5% of your grade.

The reviews should be no more than 1 single- spaced typed page. There is a page limit on the reviews to encourage you to write succinctly. You are to focus on the main points and overarching concepts. I will only read what is written on the first page of your review so do not exceed the 1-page limit. Use 12 Point-Times New Roman or Calibri Font and 1-inch margins. **Choose your article review dates wisely.** The end of the semester may not be the best time to complete all projects. As the semester progresses, reading material will (naturally) become more strenuous. **Bring your reviews to class on the day that we discuss the academic reading. You will hand in the review as soon as class begins. Late work is never accepted. Again, you have multiple opportunities to complete three assignments.**

Include in your review:

- Title, author, publication date: What is the title of the article? Who wrote it? When was it published? Include this information in the header. It should look like this:  
Gaines, Natalie, and James C. Garand. 2010. “Morality, Equality, or Locality: Analyzing the Determinates of Support for Same-Sex Marriage.” *Political Research Quarterly* 63:553-67.
- Research question: What is the question that the author(s) is trying to answer?
- Hypothesis: What is the main argument?
- Findings and Conclusion: What are the findings? What are the author’s conclusions?
- What do *you* think about the reading?

**YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO READ ARTICLES IF YOU ARE NOT SUBMITTING A REVIEW.**

**REPEAT: YOU ARE NOT REQUIRED TO READ ARTICLES IF YOU ARE NOT SUBMITTING A REVIEW.**

## GRADING POLICY

### *Grading scale:*

97.0 to 100 A+, 93.0 to 96.9 A, 90.0 to 92.9 A-, 87.0 to 89.9 B+, 83.0 to 86.9 B, 80.0 to 92.9 B-, 77.0 to 79.9 C+, 73.0 to 76.9 C, 70.0 to 72.9 C-, 67.0 to 69.9 D+, 63.0 to 66.9 D, 60.0 to 62.9 D, below 60.0 F.

If you have a disability which may require accommodation, contact the Office of Services of Students with Disabilities. You can find more information at <http://students.lsu.edu/disability>.

*Attending class:* Class attendance is required and expected. You will need to fulfill your commitment and obligation to be in class and on time every day that class is held. Simple assignments are due (mostly) every class period. However, there are breaks scheduled throughout the semester—we will not be fatigued.

*Late work:* **Late work is not accepted.** Because there is a great deal of flexibility on when students can complete an academic article review, there are no late reviews accepted. The acceptance of late “Data report” assignments is subject to my discretion. In the event that you find yourself unable to complete your assignments on time, email me as soon as possible. I reserve the right to make an exception, provided there is a valid excuse. *NOTE: You are given multiple opportunities to complete your academic article review assignments. Students should assume that I will NOT accept late article review assignments.* Of course, you are allowed to make up exams with a University approved excuse.

It is your obligation to observe the LSU Code of Student Conduct and Commitment to Community. See: [www.lsu.edu/saa](http://www.lsu.edu/saa). It is also your responsibility to refrain from cheating, academic misconduct, or plagiarism. If you are uncertain about what this means or if you are questioning your academic integrity, contact me immediately. I am happy and willing to answer any questions that you may have. ***Without exception, students who engage in academic misconduct will be reported to the Dean of Students.***

## CLASS SCHEDULE

### WEEK 1

### DEMOCRACY

- 8-22: Introduction
- 8-24: Data report: Naturalization Practice Test  
Democracy and American Politics, Chapter 1
- 8-26: Enrichment: Declaration of Independence  
Democracy and American Politics, Chapter 1, cont'd  
The Constitution, Chapter 2

### WEEK 2

### STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

- 8-29: News brief  
The Constitution, Chapter 2, cont'd
- 8-31: Data report: The Heritage Guide to the Constitution  
<http://www.heritage.org/constitution>  
The Constitution, Chapter 2, cont'd
- 9-2: Enrichment: The Constitution of the United States  
**No class**, American Political Science Association Conference

### WEEK 3

### STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

- 9-5: **No class**, Labor Day
- 9-7: Data report: Louisiana State Government, <http://louisiana.gov/>  
Federalism: States and Nation, Chapter 3
- 9-9: Academic Article Review (1): Nathan, Richard P. 2006. "There Will Always Be a New Federalism," *Journal of Public Administration* 16:499-510. (Moodle)  
Federalism: States and Nation, Chapter 3, cont'd

### WEEK 4

### STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

- 9-12: News brief  
The Structural Foundations of American Government and Politics, Chapter 4
- 9-14: Data report: <http://www.census.gov/>  
The Structural Foundations of American Government and Politics, Chapter 4, cont'd  
Exam Review
- 9-16: **EXAM 1**

**WEEK 5****PUBLIC OPINION/THE NEWS MEDIA**

- 9-19: Enrichment: Ansolabehere, Stephen, et al. 2006. "Purple America" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 20(2):97-118. (Moodle).  
News brief  
Public Opinion, Chapter 5
- 9-21: Data report: Pew Center's Political Typology Quiz (<http://www.people-press.org/typology/>)  
Public Opinion, Chapter 5, cont'd
- 9-23: Academic Article Review (2): Baum, Matthew A. and Tim Groeling. 2008. "New Media and the Polarization of American Political Discourse," *Political Communication* 25:4, 345-365. (Moodle)  
The News Media, Chapter 6

**WEEK 6****THE NEWS MEDIA/INTEREST GROUPS**

- 9-26: News brief  
The News Media, Chapter 6, cont'd
- 9-28: Data report: Interest Group (Moodle)  
Interest Groups, Chapter 7
- 9-30: Academic Article Review (3): Walker, Jack. 1983. "The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America" *American Political Science Review* 77(2): 390-406.  
Interest Groups, Chapter 7, cont'd

**WEEK 7****SOCIAL MOVEMENTS/FALL BREAK**

- 10-3: Enrichment: Williams, Rhys H. 2003. "Religious Social Movements in the Public Sphere: Organization, Ideology, and Activism." In *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michele Dillon, pp. 315-330. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Moodle)  
News brief  
Social Movements, Chapter 8
- 10-5: Data Report: <http://www.pbs.org/show/frontline/>  
Social Movements, Chapter 8, cont'd
- 10-7: Fall Holiday, no class

**Week 8****POLITICAL PARTIES/EXAM**

- 10-10: News brief  
Political Parties, Chapter 9
- 10- 2: Data report: [www.gop.com](http://www.gop.com) and [www.democrats.org](http://www.democrats.org)  
Political Parties, Chapter 9, cont'd

10-14: Academic Article Review (4): Campbell, David E. et al. 2011. "The Party Faithful: Partisan Images, Candidate Religion, and the Electoral Impact of Party Identification." *American Journal of Political Science* 55(1): 42-58. (Moodle)  
Exam Review

**WEEK 9 EXAM/VOTING, CAMPAIGNS, AND ELECTIONS**

10-17: EXAM 2

10-19: Enrichment: Gerber, Alan S et al. 2010. "An Experiment Testing the Relative Effectiveness of Encouraging Voter Participation by Inducing Feelings of Pride or Shame." *Political Behavior*. 32:409-422. (Moodle)  
Voting, Campaigns, Elections, Chapter 10

10-21: Academic Article Review (5): Harder, Joshua and Jon A. Krosnick. 2008. "Why Do People Vote? A Psychological Analysis of the Causes of Voter Turnout" *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(3): 525-549. (Moodle)  
Voting, Campaigns, Elections, Chapter 10, cont'd

**WEEK 10 CONGRESS**

10-24: News brief  
Congress, Chapter 11

10-26 Data report: [www.c-span.org](http://www.c-span.org) (5 minutes)  
Congress, Chapter 11, cont'd

10-28 Academic Article Review (6): Fenno, Richard F. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review*. 71(3):883-917. (Moodle)  
Congress, Chapter 11, cont'd

**WEEK 11 The PRESIDENCY**

10-31: News brief  
The Presidency, Chapter 12

11-2: Data report: Presidential Candidate Issue Information  
The Presidency, Chapter 12, cont'd

11-4: Academic Article Review (7): Pious, Richard. 2002. "Why Do Presidents Fail?" *Presidential Studies Quarterly*. 32(4): 724-742. (Moodle).  
The Presidency, Chapter 12, cont'd

**WEEK 12 THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH/TBD ASSIGNMENT**

11-7: News brief  
The Executive Branch, Chapter 13

11-9: The Executive Branch, Chapter 13, cont'd

11-11: The Executive Branch, Chapter 13, cont'd

**WEEK 13 EXAM/THE COURTS**

11-14: **EXAM 3**

11-16: Data report: [http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/pop\\_landmark\\_cases/](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/pop_landmark_cases/)  
The Courts, Chapter 14

11-18: Enrichment: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/06/21/us/top-u-s-supreme-court-decisions-fast-facts/>  
The Courts, Chapter 14, cont'd

**WEEK 14: CIVIL LIBERTIES/ CIVIL RIGHTS**

11-21: News Brief  
Civil Liberties: The Struggle for Freedom, Chapter 15  
Civil Rights: The Struggle for Political Equality, Chapter 16

11-23: Thanksgiving, no class

11-25: Thanksgiving, no class

**WEEK 15: RELIGION AND POLITICS**

11- 28: Enrichment: Kettell, Steven. 2012. "Has Political Science Ignored Religion?" *PS: Political Science & Politics* 45: 93-100. (Moodle)  
Wald, Kenneth D., and Clyde Wilcox. 2006. "Has Political Science Rediscovered the Faith Factor?" *American Political Science Review* 100: 523-529. (Moodle)  
News brief

11-30: Enrichment: Djupe, Paul A., and J. Tobin Grant. 2001. "Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40: 303-314.  
Data report: Public Religion Research Institute, <http://www.prrri.org/>  
Academic Article Review (8): Adkins, Todd et al. 2013. "Religious Group Cues and Citizen Policy Attitudes in the United States." *Politics and Religion* 6: 235-263. (Moodle)

12-2: Enrichment: Layman, Geoffrey. 1997. "Religion and Political Behavior in the United States: The Impact of Beliefs, Affiliation, and Commitment from 1980 to 1994." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61: 288-316. (Moodle)  
Academic Article Review (9): Gill, Anthony. 2001. "Religion and Comparative Politics." *Annual Review of Political Science* 4: 117-38.

**WEEK 16: EXAM WEEK**

12-5- 12-9: Final exam week

**EXAM 4**