

Political Science 101  
American Government  
Fall, 2007  
R. H. Bruhl

Syllabus

The objective of this course is to introduce the student to the systematic study of the structure and function of the United States government. From this introductory course, the student may go on to examine the questions of how governments could or should be structured (political philosophy), how different governments might be compared (comparative politics), and how states, represented by their governments, interact with one another (international relations).

This course is divided into three sections. In the first section, we will examine the social and historical context in which the United States was founded. We will use these insights to help explain “why” the U.S. government is structured as it is. The second and third sections of the course will be interleaved and will cover the current structure of the government and the functions, represented as policies, the government undertakes.

Each student’s learning assessment will be comprised of five parts: (1) an essay exam on the social and historical foundations of the United States (20 points); (2) a short-answer and multiple-choice exam covering the current structure of the U.S. government (20 points); (3) a policy analysis project in which students will form groups, research a selected policy area, and report their findings to the class as a whole (25 points); incidental homework assignments (15 points); and (5) the student’s participation in the weekly discussion sessions (20 points).

The textbooks for the course include: *American Government*, by O’Connor and Sabato (2008 edition), and *A Brief History of Western Civilization*, by Kishlansky, *et al.* (5<sup>th</sup> edition). Supplementary readings may also be distributed as necessary.

Tentative Weekly Schedule

<u>Week of:</u>	<u>Topic</u>
8/27	Overview on Structure and Function of government; read O’Connor and Sabato, Chapters 17, 18, and 19.
9/3	Social Welfare Policy, Economic Policy, and Foreign and Defense Policy; read Kishlansky, pp. 1-108.
9/10	Historical foundations; read Kishlansky, pp. 108-200.
9/17	Historical foundations; finish Kishlansky.
9/24	Historical foundations; Structure of the U.S. government; read O’Connor and Sabato, Chapters 1 and 2.
10/1	<b>Examination on historical foundations</b> ; Federalism; read O’Connor and Sabato, Chapters 3 and 4.
10/8	Legislative Branch; read O’Connor and Sabato, Chapter 7.
10/15	Executive Branch; read O’Connor and Sabato, Chapters 8 and 9.
10/22	Judicial Branch; read O’Connor and Sabato, Chapter 10.

10/29	<b>Policy Reports</b>
<u>Week of:</u>	<u>Topic</u>
11/5	<b>Policy Reports</b>
11/12	Parties and Elections; read O'Connor and Sabato, Chapters 11 and 12.
11/19	Parties and Elections; read O'Connor and Sabato, Chapters 13, 14 and 15
11/26	Other topics of interest.
12/3	Review
12/10	<b>Final examination on U.S. government Structure and Function.</b>

Any student with special instructional needs is requested to discuss those needs with me at the student's earliest convenience.