



Shih Chien University

STP Program (Dec 22-Jan 16)

PLSC 100 Foundations of American Political Systems

Course Outline

Course Code: PLSC 100

Instructor: Dr. Margaret E. Stiffler

Home Institution: North Carolina State University

Office Hours: TBA

Email: stiffler@ncsu.edu

Credits: 4

Class Hours:

The course comprises a total of 144 instructional hours, consisting of 50 hours of lectures, 30 hours of professor office hours, 20 hours of TA-led discussion sessions, 10 hours of review sessions, and 34 hours of supplementary classes.

Course Description

This course provides an introduction to American government and politics. Students will examine the historical foundations of the U.S. political system, the structure and functions of major governing institutions, and the processes through which political decisions are made. The course will cover the Constitution, federalism, the three branches of government, political parties, interest groups, public opinion, campaigns, and elections. Throughout the semester, we will consider competing perspectives and connect course concepts to current events and students' own experiences.

Course Objectives

Academic Inquiry: Shih Chien University
Disclaimer: Course schedule is subject to change.



By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand key principles of democratic theory and practice.
- Analyze the origins, structure, and central concepts of the United States Constitution.
- Explain federalism and the respective roles of the national and state governments.
- Examine American political culture and the beliefs and behaviors of voters.
- Identify the major political parties, their core principles, and the influence of interest groups.
- Understand the structure and function of elections and the electoral process.
- Analyze the organization and responsibilities of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches.
- Understand the role and structure of the federal bureaucracy.
- Evaluate the influence of modern media on public opinion and political outcomes.
- Examine civil rights and civil liberties and assess their impact on American society.

Course Textbook

Glen Krutz et al., American Government, 2nd Edition. OpenStax, University of Oklahoma. Available online: <https://assets.openstax.org/oscms-prodcms/media/documents/american-government-2e-6.11.pdf>

Course Requirements and Grades Evaluation:

Participation (20%)

Active participation in weekly discussion sessions is required. Engagement with course material and respectful contribution to group dialogue are essential.

Quizzes (20%)

Weekly quizzes will be based on assigned readings and class discussions. Quizzes may be given without advance notice and are worth 20% of the total course grade.

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Midterm Examination (20%)

A midterm exam consisting of short-answer and/or multiple-choice questions will be administered approximately halfway through the term. It will cover all readings, lectures, and discussions to that point.

Reflection Paper (20%)

Students will submit a two-page reflection paper responding to a documentary on a topic related to American government or politics. Papers are due at the end of Week 3. Students may choose to present their papers for extra credit.

Final Examination (20%)

The cumulative final exam will include short answer, multiple choice, and short essay questions. It will be given on the last day of class.

Course Policies

Students are expected to participate consistently and to engage respectfully with the perspectives and contributions of their classmates. Please check your email regularly, as additional readings and course announcements will be distributed there. Use email to notify the instructor of illness or to arrange a meeting.

Grading System (1 ~ 100):

A+ : 96 - 100	A : 91 - 95
B+ : 86 - 90	B : 81 - 85
C+ : 76 - 80	C : 71 - 75
D+ : 66 - 70	D : 60 - 65
F : 0 - 59	
Pa : Pass	Fa : Fail

Course Schedule:

Week 1

Read: Chapters 1–4

Chapter 1: American Government and Civic Engagement

Chapter 2: The Constitution and Its Origins

Chapter 3: American Federalism

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Chapter 4: Civil Liberties

Watch: Zoom Lectures 1–4

Assessment: Weekly quiz covering readings and lectures

Week 2

Read: Chapters 5–8

Chapter 5: Civil Rights

Chapter 6: The Politics of Public Opinion

Chapter 7: Voting and Elections

Chapter 8: The Media

Watch: Zoom Lectures 5–8

Assessment: Weekly quiz covering readings

Midterm Exam

Week 3

Read: Chapters 9–12

Chapter 9: Political Parties

Chapter 10: Interest Groups and Lobbying

Chapter 11: Congress

Chapter 12: The Presidency

Watch: Zoom Lectures 9–12

Assessment: Weekly quiz covering readings

Reflection Papers Due

Week 4

Read: Chapters 13–17

Chapter 13: The Courts

Chapter 14: State and Local Government

Chapter 15: The Bureaucracy

Chapter 16: Domestic Policy

Chapter 17: Foreign Policy

Watch: Zoom Lectures 13–17

Assessment: Weekly quiz covering readings

Final Exam