



Nanchang University SOC23: American Politics

Credit: 4

Contact Hours

This course is composed of 24 lecture sessions, 3 tutorial sessions and 9 office contact hours. Each lecture session takes 2 contact hours in length; each tutorial session takes 3 contact hours in length; There will be a Q-A review session (3 contact hours) and Final Exam (3 contact hours) at the end of this term. This course has 72 contact hours in total.

Course Description

This course aims to familiarize students with the institutions, processes, and influences of American government, politics, political behaviors and policies. Emphasis will be placed on the discussion of the history and theories of American democracy as well as its political institutions (Congress, Executive and Judiciary).

Learning Goals

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- 1) Identify and explain the major purposes of government;
- 2) Distinguish between different forms of government and democracy, underscoring the American political system;
- 3) Differentiate between American political ideologies, particularly conservative and liberal, and attitudes about the scope of government;
- 4) Analyze the roots of the American political system, the failure of the Articles of Confederation, and the adoption of the Constitution;
- 5) Discuss the fundamental principles of the American political system, such as separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism;
- 6) Outline the history and structure of the Congress (House of Representatives and Senate);
- 7) Analyze the sources of presidential power and how the powers of the president have evolved over time;
- 8) Define and trace the evolution of the bureaucracy and bureaucratic reform;
- 9) Assess the impact of the bureaucracy on public policy making;
- 10) Outline the history & structure and explain the origins of the judicial system.

Textbook

American Government by Walter E. Volkomer, 11th Edition, Prentice Hall



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Grading

- Participation 10%
- Assignments 20%
- Papers 20%
- Midterm 20%
- Final Exam 30%

A+ 96-100	A 90-95	A- 85-89
B+ 82-84	B 78-81	B- 75-77
C+ 71-74	C 66-70	C- 62-65
D 60-61	F < 60	

Course Schedule

The course has 24 class sessions in total. All sessions are 2 contact hours in length. At the end of this term, there will be a Q-A review session(3 contact hours) and Final Exam (3 contact hours).

Note: the course outline and required readings are subject to change.

Class 1:

Introduction to the course

The Study of American Government

Reading: Chapter 1

Class 2:

The Constitution

Reading: Chapter 2

Class 3:

Federalism

Reading: Chapter 3

Class 4:

American Political Culture

Reading: Chapter 4

Class 5:

Civil Liberties

Reading: Chapter 5

Paper 1



Class 6:

Civil Rights

Reading: Chapter 6

Class 7:

Public Opinion

Reading: Chapter 7

Class 8:

Political Participation

Reading: Chapter 8

Class 9:

Political Parties

Reading: Chapter 9

Class 10:

Elections and Campaigns

Reading: Chapter 10

Paper 2

Class 11:

Interest Groups

Reading: Chapter

Class 12:

The Media

Reading: Chapter 12

Class 13:

Review of Chapter 1 to Chapter 12

Reading: Chapter 1 - Chapter 12

Midterm Exam

Class 14:

Congress

Reading: Chapter 13

Class 15:

The Presidency

Reading: Chapter 14

Paper 3

Class 16:



The Bureaucracy
Reading: Chapter 15

Class 17:
The Judiciary
Reading: Chapter 16
Discussion

Class 18:
The Policy-Making Process
Reading: Chapter 17

Class 19:
Economic Policy
Reading: Chapter 18

Class 20:
Social Welfare
Reading: Chapter 19
Paper 4

Class 21:
Foreign and Military Policy
Reading: Chapter 20

Class 22:
Environment Policy
Reading: Chapter 21

Class 23:
Environment Policy(Cont)
Reading: Chapter 21

Class 24:
Who Governs? To What Ends?
Reading: Chapter 22
Overall Review

Attending Policy

Regular and prompt attendance is required. Under ordinary circumstances, you may miss two times without penalty. Each absence over this number will lower your course grade by a third of a letter and missing more than five classes may lead to a failing grade in the course. Arriving late and/or leaving before the end of the class period are equivalent to absences.



Policy on “Late Withdrawals”

In accordance with university policy, appeals for late withdrawal will be approved **ONLY** in case of medical emergency and similar crises.

Academic Honesty

Nanchang University expects all students to do their own work. Instructors will fail assignments that show evidence of plagiarism or other forms of cheating, and will also report the student's name to the University administration. A student reported to the University for cheating is placed on disciplinary probation; a student reported twice is suspended or expelled.

General Expectations:

Students are expected to:

- Attend all classes and be responsible for all materials covered in class and otherwise assigned;
- Complete the day's required reading and assignments before class;
- Review the previous day's notes before class and make notes about questions you have about the previous class or the day's reading;
- Participate in class discussions and complete required written work on time;
- Refrain from texting, phoning or engaging in computer activities unrelated to class during the class period;
- While class participation is welcome, even required, you are expected to refrain from private conversations during the class period.

Special Needs or Assistance

Please contact the Administrative Office immediately if you have a learning disability, a medical issue, or any other type of problem that prevents professors from seeing you have learned the course material. Our goal is to help you learn, not to penalize you for issues which mask your learning.