

## Political Science 1113: Introduction to American Government

Oklahoma State University

Spring 2019

Tuesdays & Thursdays 12:30-1:45

Noble Research Center 106

### I. Instructor Information

Instructor: Dr. Joshua Jansa  
Email: [joshua.jansa@okstate.edu](mailto:joshua.jansa@okstate.edu)  
Office Location: Murray Hall 233  
Office Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10-12 & 3:30-4:30  
Office Phone: 405-744-0420

### II. Course Overview

This is an introductory course on the origins of the American system of government, American political institutions, political behavior, and the policy process. Students will learn to apply the concepts we discuss to current events and, in particular, problems facing the United States today. Students should leave this course with a better understanding of how American democracy works and greater confidence in their ability to participate in it, no matter their chosen career field or political persuasion.

### III. Course D2L Website

To access the course site, go to **[online.okstate.edu/d2l/home](https://online.okstate.edu/d2l/home)** and sign-in. Start by reading this syllabus. It is posted under the Syllabus tab in the Content section. More often than not, your question will be answered by the syllabus. If you have any problems accessing the course site, please let me know as soon as possible!

### IV. Readings

Most of the readings will come from the *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government—The Essentials, Fourth Edition* by John G. Geer, Richard Herrera, Wendy J. Schiller, and Jeffrey A. Segal.

You will access this book electronically. You can access the textbook through the MindTap folder in the Content section of the course Brightspace by D2L site. You can also access individual chapters by clicking the appropriate link in the chapter folders on the course site. To access the course site, go to **[online.okstate.edu/d2l/home](https://online.okstate.edu/d2l/home)** and sign-in. The first time you try to access the textbook, you will be asked to set-up a Cengage username and password. Your Bursar account will be charged for the textbook after the end of the drop-add period. **You do not need to purchase a hard copy of the textbook.**

All other required readings will be provided to you on D2L. You are responsible for completing all assigned readings **before** coming to class. You are not required to print the readings. Recommended readings are provided to enhance your understanding of complex topics. You are not required to read these, and you will not be tested on these readings, but they are recommended for your enjoyment.

## V. Student and Instructor Responsibilities

I will work hard to be prepared, enthusiastic, fair, and respectful of every student. I will provide interesting and important readings, lectures, and assignments that will help you better understand the subject. I will also be accessible and do my best to return graded materials in a timely fashion.

You are expected to actively engage with course material, to read all assigned material, and complete assignments on time. You are expected to keep up with lectures, grades, and assignments as they are posted to the course D2L site. You may be asked questions at times, and you are expected to provide thoughtful responses and to be respectful of the responses others provide. Rude, sarcastic, disrespectful speech, and disruptive behavior has a negative impact on everyone's learning and will not be tolerated. You are also expected to ask questions about the material when necessary, and provide thoughtful responses on written assignments. A wise colleague once said: **“Do not let your education be the one thing where you expect less for your money.”**

## VI. Assignments and Grading

Your grade for the course will be determined through a weighted grade. The assignments are weighted in the following way:

Exam #1	20%
Exam #2	20%
Exam #3	20%
Reading Quizzes (online)	20%
Activities	20%

### Grade scale

The following grading scale will be used for assigning final letter grades.:

A = 90.00 – 100.00%
B = 80.00 – 89.99%
C = 70.00 – 79.99%
D = 60.00 – 69.99%
F = 0 – 59.99%

**Note on grade scale:** There will be no rounding up of final course grades, nor a grade curve. There will also be no additional extra credit opportunities given at the end of the semester.

### Exams

You will be given three exams. **The first exam will be given in class on Thursday, February 7<sup>th</sup>.** The exam will consist of multiple choice questions meant to assess your comprehension of the material covered in the first one-third of class. The first third of class covers the American system of government as outlined in the U.S. Constitution, including the powers and limitations of the federal government.

**The second exam will be given in class on Thursday, March 14<sup>th</sup>.** The exam will consist of multiple choice questions meant to assess your comprehension of the material covered in the second one-third of class. The second one-third of class covers the three branches of government, the norms that define them, and the tactics and strategies of those in power.

**The third exam will be given at the University assigned exam time and location: Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM in NRC 106.** The third exam will consist of multiple choice questions meant to assess your comprehension of material covered in the final third of the class. The final third of class covers the American people and participation in politics.

### Reading Quizzes

For each assigned textbook chapter, there is an associated reading quiz available online. The quizzes are designed to assess your comprehension of the reading material and help prepare you for the types of questions you will encounter on the exams. You may access these reading quizzes through our course's Brightspace by D2L site. Detailed instructions on how to access and complete quizzes will be provided in-class.

We will cover 14 chapters and, therefore, have 14 different reading quizzes. These quizzes are due at various times in the semester. The 12 quizzes you score best on will count toward your grade. I will drop the 2 lowest scores and they will not be considered when calculating your final grade.

The online quizzes are due by 11:59 PM on the following dates:

Chapters 1 & 2 Wrap-It-Up Quizzes: **Saturday, January 26<sup>th</sup>**  
Chapter 4 & 5 Wrap-It-Up Quizzes: **Saturday, February 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Chapter 12 Wrap-It-Up Quiz: **Saturday, February 16<sup>th</sup>**  
Chapter 13 Wrap-It-Up Quiz: **Saturday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>**  
Chapter 14 & 15 Wrap-It-Up Quiz: **Saturday, March 9<sup>th</sup>**  
Chapter 11 Wrap-It-Up Quiz: **Saturday, March 30<sup>th</sup>**  
Chapter 9 Wrap-It-Up Quiz: **Saturday, April 6<sup>th</sup>**  
Chapter 10 Wrap-It-Up Quiz: **Saturday, April 13<sup>th</sup>**  
Chapter 6 & 7 Wrap-It-Up Quiz: **Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>**  
Chapter 16 Wrap-It-Up Quiz: **Saturday, May 4<sup>th</sup>**

**Note on Online Quizzes:** Sometimes two reading quizzes are due on the same day, so plan accordingly. Also, I give Saturday due dates 1) to give you the entire week to complete the quiz and

the assigned reading and 2) so you will not wait until the last minute to complete them – I know there are things you would rather be doing on Saturday night than this.

Also, please understand the following things about the online quizzes:

- We will not cover the textbook chapters in order, so the corresponding quizzes will not be due in sequence either.
- If you fail to complete a quiz for any reason it will not necessarily count against your grade – your 2 lowest scores will be dropped.
- It is your responsibility to make sure that you begin each quiz early enough to complete it on time and to address any technical obstacles that you might encounter. **No exceptions of any kind will be made regarding these required quizzes and their due dates** – dropping your 2 lowest quiz scores is the blanket accommodation I make for all potential challenges you might face.
- These quizzes are not timed.
- You are free to refer to the textbook as you work through your quizzes.
- You are free to work ahead to complete quizzes that may be due in the future.

### Activities

Throughout the semester, opportunities to engage in and learn more about American politics will arise. Since political participation is a key theme of the course, you will be given credit for the opportunities that you take advantage of. These will include watching debates or other political events or attending political speaker events on campus. Sometimes we will discuss political topics in class, or complete assignments in small groups. I will announce the activities that will count toward your grade as the semester progresses. The activities will be graded by completion and you must complete **at least six** activities in order to receive full credit. Completing additional activities may result in extra credit being awarded on your final grade. More information will be provided on extra credit throughout the semester.

**Note on attendance:** You will not be directly graded on attendance and participation. This is not license to miss class. There are several reasons you should attend each class and participate. First, we will engage in small group discussions and activities in class from time to time. These activities may count toward the activities portion of the grade. If you are absent when we do a graded activity, you get a zero for that activity. Second, the exams will be built around material from the readings as well as in-class lectures. I have even been known to ask questions about activities conducted in class. Missing class means you will be missing meaningful information that could show up on the exams.

## **VII. Communication**

If you do not understand the readings, or what we discussed in class, or if you have further questions about readings or class, please do not hesitate to ask questions! You are encouraged to attend office hours. If you would like to meet one-on-one, but cannot attend office hours, please email me to set up a time to meet. I am easy to reach if you need to communicate with me. It is important for you to stay in touch, particularly if any problems arise.

I will only send email out to your okstate.edu email accounts. I am willing to discuss your grade with you *in person*. This can include where you stand in the class or your grade on a particular assignment. You have an important role to play by reviewing your scores as they are posted to D2L. In the event that you think there is an error, please bring it to my attention and I will investigate as necessary.

### **VIII. Academic Honesty**

You must always adhere to OSU's academic integrity standards. Violations of academic integrity, including unauthorized collaboration, plagiarism, cheating on examinations, helping another person cheat, and unauthorized advance access to examinations, will result in severe penalty. Penalties include: receiving a failing grade on an assignment, examination or course, receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript, and being suspended from the University. You can learn more at <http://academicintegrity.okstate.edu>.

### **IX. Technology**

Our classroom is a texting and web-surfing free zone. Cell phones should be shut off and out of sight. You are allowed to use paper, pen/pencil, and your brain during class time. Computers may not be used unless instructed to do so by me. Humans are not good at multitasking; if you are shopping, checking out your Facebook page, or sending an email, your ability to mentally process what is going on in class is compromised and you may be distracting others.

### **X. Additional Course Policies**

Please see the Oklahoma State University Syllabus Attachment for all other policies in effect and resources available to you for this course.

### **XI. Course Schedule**

The course schedule is presented below. I reserve the right to change the course schedule at any time, but I will let you know with ample time before hand.

	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>
<b>Week 1 Jan. 15 &amp; 17</b>	Course Introduction  <b>Read:</b> Syllabus	The Origins of the Constitution  <b>Read:</b> Chapter 1

<p><b>Week 2</b> <b>Jan 22 &amp; 24</b></p>	<p>The Constitution Pt. I</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Chapter 2</p>	<p>The Constitution Pt. II</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Textbook Appendix B</p>
<p><b>Week 3</b> <b>Jan 29 &amp; 31</b></p>	<p>Civil Liberties</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Chapter 4</p>	<p>Civil Rights</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Chapter 5 <b>and</b> <b>Read:</b> King, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail"</p>
<p><b>Week 4</b> <b>Feb 5 &amp; 7</b></p>	<p>Constitutional Controversies &amp; Exam Review</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Azari &amp; Masket "The Four Types of Constitutional Crises"</p>	<p><b>Exam #1</b></p>
<p><b>Week 5</b> <b>Feb 12 &amp; 14</b></p>	<p>Congress: How a Bill Becomes a Law</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Chapter 12</p>	<p>Members of Congress and their Constituents</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Victor "Why you should call, not email, your legislators"</p>
<p><b>Week 6</b> <b>Feb 19 &amp; 21</b></p>	<p>Congress: Gerrymandering</p> <p><b>Recommended:</b> Leavitt "A Citizen's Guide to Redistricting"</p>	<p>The Basics of the Presidency</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Chapter 13</p>
<p><b>Week 7</b> <b>Feb 26 &amp; 28</b></p>	<p>President &amp; Domestic Policy</p> <p><b>Read:</b> Klein "The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency, explained"</p>	<p>Case Study: The Affordable Care Act of 2010</p> <p><b>Recommended:</b> Jacobs &amp; Skocpol "Why Now? Broken Health Care and an Opportunity for Change"</p>

<b>Week 8</b> <b>March 5 &amp; 7</b>	Executive Orders & The Bureaucracy  <b>Read:</b> Chapter 14 <b>and</b> <b>Read:</b> Buhre “Trump has threatened to declare a national emergency. Is that legal?”	The Judiciary  <b>Read:</b> Chapter 15
<b>Week 9</b> <b>March 12 &amp; 14</b>	Judiciary Wrap-Up & Exam Review	<b>Exam #2</b>
<b>Week 10</b> <b>March 19 &amp; 21</b>	<b>NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Week 11</b> <b>March 26 &amp; 28</b>	The Act of Voting  <b>Read:</b> Chapter 11	Voting & Ideology  <b>Read:</b> Supplementary Chapter, Sections 1-4
<b>Week 12</b> <b>April 2 &amp; 4</b>	Parties & Voting Systems  <b>Read:</b> Skuldt “Could a Third Party Candidate win the U.S. Presidency?”	Political Parties  <b>Read:</b> Chapter 9
<b>Week 13</b> <b>April 9 &amp; 11</b>	Candidates for Office  <b>Recommended:</b> Boschma “Why Women Don’t Run for Office”	Presidential Elections  <b>Read:</b> Chapter 10
<b>Week 14</b> <b>April 16 &amp; 18</b>	Case Study: The 2016 Election  <b>Read:</b> Meko, Lu, Gamio “How Trump won the presidency with razor-thin margins in swing states.”	Polling & Election Forecasting  <b>Read:</b> Cohn et al “Putting the 2016 polling miss in perspective”

<b>Week 15</b> <b>April 23 &amp; 25</b>	Public Opinion and Framing <b>Read:</b> Chapter 6	Politics and the Media <b>Read:</b> Chapter 7
<b>Week 16</b> <b>April 30 &amp; May 2</b>	Public Policy <b>Read:</b> Chapter 16	Wrap-Up & Exam Review
<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<b>EXAM #3 Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM</b>	