

# POS 2041 – American Federal Government

## Course Syllabus

UF Flexible Learning  
3 Credit Hours

*This course expires 16 weeks from the date of your enrollment.*

### ABOUT THE COURSE

**Instructor:** Richard S. Conley  
309 Anderson Hall  
Department of Political Science  
University of Florida  
[rconley@ufl.edu](mailto:rconley@ufl.edu)  
(352) 317-1860  
Virtual Office Hours by appointment

**Course Website:** <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>

### Course Communications

Students may ask questions about the course by emailing me through the Canvas message system or at [rconley@ufl.edu](mailto:rconley@ufl.edu). I try to respond to students' inquiries within 24 hours on weekdays and within 48 hours on weekends.

### Course Textbooks/Materials

1. Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere, *American Government: Power & Purpose* (14th edition). New York: WW Norton. [Brief edition is not advisable for the course; policy chapters in the extended book are not covered in this course]
2. David T. Canon, John J. Coleman, and and Kenneth Meyer (editors). *Fault Lines* (5th edition). New York: WW Norton.
  - (ISBN for bundled package of Lowi et al. and Canon et al. is **978-0-393-63736-6**)

### Course Description

This Flexible Learning course is designed to survey topics that are vital for an understanding of American national politics and government. Readings and videos will examine the structural foundations, institutions, citizen-government linkages, and processes that characterize the American political system.

### Purpose of Course

To provide students with a critical understanding of the processes and institutions that characterize American national government. Information gained will enhance students' ability to take part in the political process and make normative judgments about the American political system.

### Course Objectives

- Identify the processes that characterize the American political system, including voting, elections, representative institutions (Congress, Presidency, Courts), and structural components such as federalism

- Interpret competing accounts of the Founders’ intent in designing the national government
- Examine interpretations of the Constitution, governmental power, and protections of individual freedoms
- Research, analyze and explain the importance of a major national policy
- Construct a policy proposal to be sent to members of Congress
- Evaluate democratic processes to take part in the American political system
- Critique and defend theoretical and empirical approaches to explaining the dynamics of American national government by engaging fellow students in civic debate
- Illustrate a superlative knowledge of processes and institutional features of the national government necessary for advanced study of politics and/or careers in journalism

### Teaching Philosophy

The online teaching environment is challenging for both students and faculty. I endeavor to balance recorded videos alongside PowerPoint slides with weekly readings to facilitate a better understanding of the topics relating to American politics. Online videos are also included to furnish a more in-depth comprehension of topics ranging from the Founding of the American Republic to civil rights and elections. Students are asked to evaluate debates about American politics from a reader, and post commentaries to enhance their ability to objectively assess contemporary controversies.

## GRADING POLICIES

### Evaluation of Grades

| <i>Assignment</i>                        | <i>Total Points</i> | <i>Percentage of Final Grade</i> |
|--|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Constitution Exam                        | 40                  | 10%                              |
| Midterm Exam                             | 100                 | 20%                              |
| Final Exam                               | 100                 | 20%                              |
| Participation in course discussion posts | 14 x 100 = 1400     | 10%                              |
| Weekly assignments                       | 11 x 100 = 1100     | 25%                              |
| Weekly quizzes                           | 16 x 100 = 1600     | 15%                              |
| <b>Total</b>                             | <b>4340</b>         | <b>100%</b>                      |

I try to give feedback and grade assignments within 2 weeks.

### Grading Scale

Neither individual assignments nor final grades in this course will be subject to a “curve.” Letter grades for the final grade in the course will be assigned per the following grading scale:

| <i>Percent</i> | <i>Grade</i> | <i>Grade Points</i> |
|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| 90-100%        | A            | 4.0                 |
| 87-89%         | A-           | 3.67                |
| 84-86%         | B+           | 3.33                |
| 80-83%         | B            | 3.0                 |
| 77-79%         | B-           | 2.67                |
| 74-76%         | C+           | 2.33                |

| <i>Percent</i> | <i>Grade</i> | <i>Grade Points</i> |
|----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| 70-73%         | C            | 2.0                 |
| 67-69%         | C-           | 1.67                |
| 64-66%         | D+           | 1.33                |
| 60-63%         | D            | 1.0                 |
| 57-59%         | D-           | .67                 |
| <56% (failing) | E            | 0                   |

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Performance Policy**

This Flexible Learning course has been developed with the same rigorous standards of content as a campus course. Expectations for your performance as a Flexible Learning student are as high as they would be if you were taking this course in a classroom.

### **Attendance/Participation Policy**

Students are required to participate in all course activities and submit all assignments posted on the website.

### **Quiz/Exam Policy**

Weekly quizzes are to be undertaken without notes/readings/access to the Internet. The three exams for the course (Constitution Exam, Mid-Term Exam, and Final Exam) require online proctoring by [ProctorU](#). Details on signing up for the ProctorU service are available on the Canvas page. All exams are closed book, closed note, no aids. No online exams are given early or later than the date for which they are scheduled.

### **Assignment Policy**

**All assignments must be completed at least 2 weeks before the course expires. The course expires 16 weeks after your enrollment.** Complete all modules in the order they are presented on the course website; do not skip modules.

### **Technology Requirements**

Students must use their Gatorlink email account for this course. Students are recommended to check their email account DAILY for the duration of the course. Access to and on-going use of a computer with Internet access is required for all students. Competency in the basic use of a computer is required. At times, computers crash and Internet connections fail. It is in your best interest NOT to wait until the last minute to complete assignments.

### **Course Deadline and Extension Policy**

Students are allowed 16 weeks, from their date of enrollment, to complete and submit their coursework. If the student has not submitted at least 50% of their coursework and have an extenuating circumstance preventing them from submitting the coursework, a failing grade of "E", "E0" or "E1" will be issued and recorded to the UF Registrar.

If the student has made sufficient academic progress, which is defined as completing and submitting at least 50% of the coursework and have an extenuating circumstance, the student may petition the instructor for a course extension before the course expires. Each course extension request will be administratively evaluated. Instructors are not required to allow extensions. If a student does receive an

extension, an incomplete grade of an "I" will be assigned as an interim grade. When the course is completed, the instructor will initiate the change of grade. After that, the "I" grade will be changed to the student's final course grade on their transcript.

### **Course Cancels and Course Drops:**

#### **A Course Cancel:**

A tuition refund may be granted after a student submits a written request within 30 days of enrollment to the Flexible Learning Office. This request must be in writing by [learn@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:learn@dce.ufl.edu) or sent by fax, 352-392-6950. Refunds will be the amount of tuition, less \$25.00 per course. If a credit card was used, the refund will be credited back to the card. No refunds are granted after 30 days.

#### **Course Drop:**

Dropping a course: To drop a course, you need to email the Flexible Learning office at [learn@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:learn@dce.ufl.edu) with a request to drop within 14 weeks of the date of enrollment. In addition to their own request by email, UF students must have advisor approval to drop a flexible learning course. An advisor can email [learn@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:learn@dce.ufl.edu) with the student's name, the course that they want to drop, and confirmation of permission to do so. It is the student's responsibility to verify that all drop requests have been received by the Flexible Learning office within the allotted time. The course grade will appear as "W" on a UF transcript.

Students with disabilities who need to drop a course due to disability-related reasons are permitted to petition for additional drops. Find more information by contacting the [Disability Resource Center](#).

#### **Full Term Withdrawals:**

All full-term withdrawals must follow University of Florida policies/ procedures. An approved withdrawal form must be submitted to the [Dean of Student's Office](#) for review and final approval. Students must also notify the Flexible Learning of this request by [learn@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:learn@dce.ufl.edu).

It is the responsibility of the student to notify Flexible Learning of their approved medical or retroactive withdrawal so the students' record is updated. [Email](#) to our office a copy of the approval.

#### **Medical Withdrawals**

[Here is the link to start the Medical Withdrawal Process:](#)

#### **Retroactive Withdrawals:**

[Here is the link for retroactive withdrawal information:](#)

#### **UF Official Transcripts**

Be sure to review your "unofficial transcript" first to ensure your grade(s) is/are posted, prior to ordering the "official transcript".

- Two ways to order a transcript: [Order UF Official Transcripts here](#)
- If you are unable to order your official transcript online, please contact the [UF Office of the University Registrar](#). In addition on more information on mailing in a transcript request form by remitting a check or money order. [Official Transcripts FAQs](#).

The Registrar's Office hours are Monday-Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and their phone number is 352-392-1374. Persons with hearing impairments can call FRS # 1-800-955-8771 (TDD).

Please check your "unofficial transcript" first, before ordering your "official transcript", to make certain that

your grade has been posted.

UF Flexible Learning Contact Information:

Email: [learn@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:learn@dce.ufl.edu)  
Phone: (352) 392-1711  
Toll free: (800) 327-4218  
Fax: (352) 392-6950  
Website: [UF Flexible Learning](#)

**Office Hours:**

Monday-Friday, except Holidays  
8:00am-5:00pm EST

## UF POLICIES

### University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Students requesting accommodation for disabilities must first register with [the Dean of Students Office](#). The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation. You must submit this documentation prior to submitting assignments or taking the quizzes or exams. Accommodations are not retroactive, therefore, students should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which they are seeking accommodations.

**The Flexible Learning office should be notified of any special accommodations required by the student when they begin their course.**

### Academic Honesty

Academic honesty and integrity are fundamental values of the University community. Students should be sure that they understand the UF Student Honor Code found at the [Dean of Students Office Website](#).

#### **Plagiarism:**

*“A student shall not represent as the student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:*

- (a) Quoting oral or written materials including but not limited to those found on the internet, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution.*
- (b) Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student.”*

Source: [Regulations of the University of Florida, UF-4.041](#).

*“For a violation or violations of the Honor Code, a student may receive any of the sanctions that can be imposed for Student Conduct Code violations, including but not limited to conduct probation, suspension and expulsion as well as any educational sanctions. In addition, students may receive the following:*

- (a) Assignment grade penalty. The student is assigned a grade penalty on an assignment including but not limited to a zero.*
- (b) Course grade penalty. The student is assigned a grade penalty in the entire course including but not limited to an ‘E’.”*

Source: [Regulations of the University of Florida, UF-4.047](#).

## **Netiquette: Communication Courtesy**

All members of the class are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions and chats. Please read the [UF Netiquette Guide for Online Courses](#).

**Students who post inappropriate comments or material may have their posts deleted by the supervising faculty and may receive a 0 for the assignment. Continuing violations will result in a failing grade for that portion of the course.**

## **GETTING HELP**

### **Technical Help**

**For issues with technical difficulties for E-learning in Canvas**, please contact the UF Help Desk:

- Location: HUB 132
- Email: [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu)
- Phone: (352) 392-HELP - select option 2
- Website: <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>

Any requests for make-ups due to technical issues MUST be accompanied by the ticket number received from LSS when the problem was reported to them. The ticket number will document the time and date of the problem. You MUST e-mail your instructor within 24 hours of the technical difficulty if you wish to request a make-up.

### **UF Flexible Learning Contact Information**

Email: [learn@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:learn@dce.ufl.edu)

Phone: (352) 392-1711

Toll free: (800) 327-4218

Fax: (352) 392-6950

Website: <http://flexible.dce.ufl.edu/>

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00am-5:00pm EST

### **Other Resources**

**Other resources** are available at the [UF Distance Learning website](#) for:

- Counseling and Wellness resources
- Disability resources
- Resources for handling student concerns and complaints
- Library Help Desk support

Should you have any complaints with your experience in this course please email the Distance Learning office at [distance@dce.ufl.edu](mailto:distance@dce.ufl.edu) or visit the [UF Distance Learning website](#) to submit a complaint.

**Disclaimer:** This syllabus represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the class learning opportunity. Such changes, communicated clearly, are not unusual and should be expected.