



# PENSACOLA STATE COLLEGE

American National Government - Section Syllabus

POS 2041 – W1055

Summer 2025, Session A

**Instructor:** Jeremy Schmuck, MA  
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**Final Exam Date:** TBD  
**Last Date of Drop/Add:** May 15, 2025  
**Last Date for Student to Withdraw:** July 14, 2025

**Course Description:** A study of the American federal system of government with emphasis on the constitutional distribution of powers among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches and the states. An analysis of policy formation as related to democratic theory and the role of government in the society.

**Class Meeting Time:** T-TH 9:45-11:20am  
**Class Location:** Room 3244, Bldg. 3200  
**Credits:** 3 cc

**Prerequisites:** ENC 1101C with a grade of C or better.

**Offered:** FA, SP, SU.

**Distribution:** Meets AA General Education Core, Social Sciences requirement. A writing emphasis course. Satisfies the State of Florida civic literacy requirement.

**Required Textbooks and Instructional Materials:**

- Required Readings Posted on Canvas. Readings are **due on the date they are listed** on Canvas (i.e., the student must have read the assignment before the date it is listed and be prepared to answer quiz questions and discuss it on the day it is listed).
- Free "Open Educational Resources" textbook. Please see your instructor.

**Supplemental Textbooks and Instructional Materials:** None

**Special Requirements:**

Writing Emphasis Requirement: A minimum of three fully developed, multi-paragraph, evaluated writing assignments, not including a final examination, are required.

Writing Emphasis Requirement: Instructors provide detailed feedback regarding the content, organization, and use of standard written English for each evaluated writing assignment.

Writing Emphasis Requirement: Instructors return each evaluated writing assignment to a student before submission of the next evaluated writing assignment.

Writing Emphasis Requirement: Only individual student work may count toward the minimum three evaluated writing assignments.

Writing Emphasis Requirement: Grading rubrics will be used for each evaluated writing assignment. These rubrics will be shared with each student.

Writing Emphasis Requirement: The grades earned on the writing assignments must reflect student performance in college-level writing and significantly impact the final course grade.

### Methods of Evaluation:

At minimum, the instructor will cover content which aligns with statewide and institutional learning outcomes for the course. The instructor will measure student performance using the following:

Grading Scale:	
90% - 100%	A
87% - 89%	B+
80% - 86%	B
77% - 79%	C+
70% - 76%	C
67% - 69%	D+
60% - 66%	D
0% - 59%	F

Grading Calculation	
Class Participation (three grading periods averaged)	15%
Quizzes (averaged together, at least 1 per week)	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Op Ed Summary/Critique	10%
Op Ed Pro Argument (Writing 2)	10%
Op Ed Con Argument (Writing 3)	10%

Evaluations of student progress towards achieving the stated learning outcomes and performance objectives is the responsibility of the instructor, within the policies of the College and the department. Detailed explanations are included in the course supplementals developed by the instructor for each section being taught.

**Student Expectations:** Students enrolled in this course can expect the following:

1. clearly identified course objectives;
2. productive class meetings;
3. a positive learning environment;
4. opportunities for appropriate student participation;
5. effective instruction;
6. positive and appropriate interactions;
7. assistance with meeting course objectives during and beyond class hours;
8. evaluation of student performance and appropriate and timely feedback; and
9. clear and well-organized instruction.

### General Education Student Learning Outcomes:

**Critical Thinking:** The student analyzes, evaluates, and, if necessary, challenges the validity of ideas, principles, or data in order to develop informed opinions, probable predictions, or defensible conclusions.

**Communication:** The student effectively communicates knowledge and ideas.

**Cultural Literacy:** The student demonstrates an understanding of human culture and its diversity.

**Course Learning Outcomes:**

1. Identify the parts of the Constitution relating to political institutions and the rights of individuals.
2. Explore the structure and function of each branch of government.
3. Identify the key players and their roles in the political process of policy formulation within the scope of American political culture.
4. Develop and demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and practices of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government.
5. Develop and demonstrate an understanding of the United States Constitution and its application.
6. Develop and demonstrated knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance.
7. Develop and demonstrate an understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions and their impact on law and society.

**Academic Dishonesty Statement:**

Pensacola State College is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic conduct. All forms of academic dishonesty, to include plagiarism and cheating, are prohibited. Penalties for academic dishonesty include but are not limited to one or more of the following: the awarding of no credit on the assignment, a reduction in the course grade, or the assignment of a final course grade of F and removal from the course. See the College Catalog for more details.

**Student Email Accounts:**

Pensacola State College provides an institutional email account to all students enrolled in courses for credit. PirateMail is the official method of communication, and students must use PirateMail when communicating with the College. In cases where companion software is used for a particular class, email may be exchanged between instructor and student using the companion software.

**Flexibility:**

It is the intention of the instructor to accomplish the objectives specified in the course syllabus. However, circumstances may arise which prohibit the fulfilling of this endeavor. Therefore, this syllabus is subject to change. When possible, students will be notified of any change in advance of its occurrence.

**ADA Statement:**

Students with a disability that falls under the Americans with Disability Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, it is the responsibility of the student to notify Student Resource Center for ADA Services to discuss any special needs or equipment necessary to accomplish the requirements for this course. Upon completion of registration with the Student Resource Center for ADA Services office, specific arrangements can be discussed with the instructor.

**Equity Statement:**

Pensacola State College does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, color, gender/sex, age, religion, marital status, pregnancy, disability, sexual orientation, gender

identity, or genetic information in its educational programs, activities, or employment. For inquiries regarding Title IX and the College's nondiscrimination policies, contact the Executive Director, Equal Opportunity Compliance at (850) 484-1759, Pensacola State College, 1000 College Blvd., Pensacola, Florida 32504.

### **Security Statement:**

Pensacola State College is committed to encouraging all members of the College community to be proactive in personal safety measures. In case of emergency, students should ensure that they are aware of the building exit closest to each of their classrooms, as well as all alternative building exits in case circumstances require using a different route.

### **Emergency Statement:**

In the case of severe weather or other emergency, the College administration maintains communication with appropriate state and local agencies and makes a determination regarding the cancellation of classes. Notices of cancellation will be made through the College's PSC Alert system and on the College's website.

### **Course Assignments:**

#### Class Participation

Students **must attend at least 70%** of the course to avoid a failing grade for absences.

Class participation is evaluated in three building levels of participation: attendance, passive participation, and active participation. To receive full credit for class participation a student must participate consistently at each level. The final attendance grade is an average of three attendance grading periods (each grading period is 5 weeks).

Students are expected to keep track of their own attendance, but they will receive a warning when they are one absence away from reaching the 30% mark which will result in a failing grade. Students can and should meet with the instructor for any questions or concerns about their participation evaluation.

(1) Attendance. Students who attend regularly (defined in course policies below) and are prepared (**bringing a physical or digital copy of assigned readings to class and a notebook and writing utensil for taking notes**) earn 80% of their course participation grade. Students with absences and tardies lose points from that 80% for each grading period.

(2) Passive Participation. Students who are alert, are consistent in notetaking (e.g., visibly writing down notes unprompted at key ideas in the lecture), and provide interactive feedback during lectures (such as nodding or shaking a head, showing confusion) earn an additional 10% to their participation grade. Students who engage in disruptive behavior or exhibit inattentive behavior (e.g., drawing in notes, blank stares, 'zoning out', etc.) will not earn these points.

(3) Active Participation. Students who actively contribute to class earn the final 10%. Contributing to class includes answering questions, raising relevant questions (e.g. questions that expand on, apply, or evaluate the ideas in class lecture or from the readings), or proposing original ideas related to class content. Clarifying questions about the readings or lecture are always welcome as long as they are honest questions and not because of the students lack of due diligence to read or listen carefully.

Participation grades in my courses track close to students' grades on exams and quizzes and rarely deviate by a letter grade from them. This is unsurprising since participation in class is the best preparation for what you will be evaluated on in the exams and quizzes. In other words, your work *in class* shapes your skills and

knowledge so that evaluation of your work *in class* will match evaluations of your academic competence. In short, the more you put into a class the more you will get out of it. Because of this I reserve the right to adjust borderline grades in light of a student's participation (but this adjustment will always be upward in the student's favor).

### Quizzes

Students will be periodically quizzed over the ideas and arguments of assigned readings. These quizzes **will not be announced in advance**, and will evaluate (a) the student's reading and comprehension of the assignment(s) due that day (the date it is listed in Canvas) and (b) understanding of the material from the previous lecture (but only the previous lecture and not earlier lectures). Students should **expect at least one quiz per week**.

Quizzes will be administered on paper in class in the first 5-10 minutes of class. Quizzes will comprise 5-10 questions of some combination of multiple choice and true/false questions. Students will not consult books, notes, or other materials while taking a quiz. At the end of the semester I will drop the two lowest quiz scores. There will be no make-up quizzes regardless of excuse so be sure to attend class regularly. Quiz grades for excused absences will not be recorded; while quizzes for unexcused absences are recorded as a zero.

### Midterm and Final Examinations

The two exams will comprise multiple choice questions and short answer questions (requiring a one word or a one sentence response to complete). In order to help you prepare for each exam, I will post a review sheet to Canvas no later than one week prior to the exam. This review sheet will identify key terms, concepts, and arguments that will be tested, but will not define or explain them in detail. Students should use their lecture notes and assigned readings to fill in these details. The review sheet is a guide for students to use their own notes to study. Previous students have found it helpful to compare notes with their classmates and to work in small groups to prepare a study guide based on the exam review sheet. Each exam is cumulative.

Exams will be taken through the **Proctorio Lockdown Browser** in Canvas. This will require students to enable the Proctorio extension in the Chrome web browser. See the Course Canvas for more details about using Proctorio. Students **should not consult books, notes, or other materials** while taking an exam.

### Op-Ed (Opinion Editorial) Summary and Evaluation

Each student will select an opinion editorial from a national newspaper and summarize its argument. Students will then critique the argument in the op-ed. Students will be evaluated on their ability to identify and restate the central claim, to identify and reproduce in their own words the chain of claims (the logical structuring of the argument) made by the editorial in support of its conclusion, and their ability to evaluate the reasoning and implications of the argument. More details and the grading rubric can be found on the Course Canvas.

### Op-Ed Pro (For) and Op-Ed Con (Against)

Each student will write both an original pro and an original con opinion editorial on a proposition of their choice. The proposition must be approved by the instructor in advance and must be a proposition of policy or of political value relevant to American politics. Both the pro and con must be written on the same proposition. In other words, each student must craft an argument for both sides of issue. For example, if a student chooses to write on the policy proposition "the federal government should ban assault weapons" the student must write an opinion editorial in favor of such a ban and an opinion editorial opposed to such a ban. Similarly, if a student selected to write on the value proposition "capital punishment is immoral," then the student must write in favor and in opposition to the morality of capital punishment.

Each opinion editorial will be **graded separately** for correct usage of grammar, good clear style, and the strength of reasoning and evidence. Students should therefore develop their **strongest** arguments for both the pro and the con arguments. Each opinion editorial has a 500 word limit. More details and the grading rubric can be found on the Course Canvas.

## **Class Policies:**

### Electronic Devices

Use of electronic devices in the classroom such as tablets or laptops is strictly restricted to accessing course materials. Students may use technology only for accessing course materials. Non-course related use is prohibited. All cell phones should be stowed away during class. Flagrant and repeated violators of this rule will be asked to leave and counted absent. Except in the cases of accommodations, students should take notes by hand.

### Academic Freedom and Critical Inquiry

The best way to reject an idea or value as incorrect or untrue is to engage with it seriously. Accordingly, in the spirit of seeking the Truth (critical inquiry) students are encouraged to discuss any topic however controversial and are free to express any opinion (whether their own or someone else's) and to challenge any idea. Students may not obstruct or interfere with the freedom of others to express arguments with which they disagree or the freedom of other students to hear (and evaluate) those arguments.

However, students may not use academic freedom to break laws or engage in personal attacks and provocations against fellow students. These diminish the conditions necessary to question and test ideas according to standards of rational debate and they denigrate the human dignity of fellow classmates.

In the interest of time or relevancy, the instructor does reserve the right to shorten in-class discussions.

### Instructor Response Time

I read and respond to student emails at 10:00 am and 8:00 pm each day. This means if you send me an email at 1:00 am in the morning I will not read it before 10:00 am that day. It does not mean you will receive a response exactly at 10:00 am or 8:00 pm since that is when I begin reading and responding. Depending on the number of emails and the length of time required to respond to each one my response to your particular email may take longer. However, I will respond to your email usually within 24 hours and no later than 48 hours. The response will usually be by email, but sometimes I may simply speak to you before or after class if that is a more convenient way to answer the question from your email and if class will be meeting within the response time. Although I usually check my emails more frequently on days that assignments are due to help with quick troubleshooting of technology issues, students should not rely on this and should be sure to begin and complete assignments in a timely manner to ensure I have proper time to respond to any questions they may have about how to properly complete an assignment.

### Academic Conduct/Plagiarism Policy:

Students agree to abide by the rules and standards set forth in the PSC Student Code of Conduct. **All written work submitted** for this course **must be your own original work**. All written assignments must be submitted through Turnitin on or before the day that they are due.

### Class Attendance

This course works best when students come to class ready to participate. Attendance is defined as being seated in class when attendance is taken at the beginning of class and remaining seated until class is dismissed. Students who are not present when attendance is taken or who leave class without permission prior to dismissal will be considered absent.

Excused absences for illness or family emergencies will be granted at the discretion of the instructor and consistent with PSC's policy, on the condition that documentation is provided to verify the cause of the absence. Documentation for excused absences must be submitted to me by the day of the final exam. Special circumstances which affect attendance will always be considered if the instructor is informed ahead of time.

### Course Schedule

I reserve the right to adjust the course schedule as needed with one-week advance notice of the changes to students.

Week/Date	Topic	Reading(s)
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	
1/14	Government as Organized Politics	No Reading
1/16	Foundations of American Government	(1) US Declaration of Independence (2) Textbook, Section 2.1
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>The Constitution</b>	
1/21	Need for a <u>National</u> Government	(1) Textbook, Section 2.2 (2) Preamble to the US Constitution
1/23	Small vs. Extended Republic Representative Government on a Continental Scale	(1) Storing, Herbert J. "The Small Republic." (2) Jefferson, Thomas. "On Citizenship." (3) "Federalist 10"
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>Constitution Design Principles</b>	
1/28	Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances Within the National Government	(1) Textbook Section 2.3 (2) Federalist 49 (3) Federalist 51
1/30	Limited Government Op-Ed Workshop in Class	(1) Bring an Opinion Editorial to Class on Any Topic Relevant to American politics
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Federalism in Theory</b>	
2/4	Separation of Powers Between State and National Governments	(1) Madison, "The Work of the Constitutional Convention" (2) Brutus, "On the Dangers of the Federal Government"  Recommended: US Constitution: Article I, Sections 8, 9, and 10; Article IV; Article VI, and Amendment X.

2/6	Federalism in Practice	(1) McCulloch v Maryland (2) Textbook Chapter 3.1-3.2 <b>1<sup>st</sup> Writing Assignment Due on Canvas by 11:59 PM (Op-Ed Summary and Critique).</b>
	Segregation	<i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i>  <i>Bolling v. Sharpe</i>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Federalism in Practice</b>	
2/11	Federalism in Practice	(1) Textbook 3.3-3.5
2/13	Federalism in Practice	(2) <i>Roe v Wade</i> (3) <i>Dobbs v. Jackson</i> <b>Approval for Op-Ed Topics</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Public Opinion and the Marketplace of Ideas</b>	
2/18	Importance of Public Opinion in “Government by the People”	(1) Walter Lipmann, “The Phantom Public: The Myth of the Informed Voter” (2) Textbook 1.2, 6.2, and 6.4
2/20	The Marketplace of Ideas and Rule by “the People”	(1) Hayek, F. A. “Majority Rule” from <i>The Constitution of Liberty</i> . (2) Howard, “Is Dangerous Speech Free Speech?” (3) Haidt, “The Tower of Babel.”
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Organizing Public Opinion</b>	
2/25	Roots of Public Opinion	(1) Watch Video: Jonathan Haidt “Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives” (2) Textbook 6.1
2/27	Interest Groups vs Political Parties	(1) P. J. O’Rourke, “Parliament of Whores” (2) Scully, “Presidential Leadership and Party Unity” (3) Textbook, 10.1-10.3.
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Influencing Public Opinion</b>	
3/4	The Media	(1) Textbook, Chapter 8.
3/6	The Media Continued <b>Midterm Due</b>	(1) Dan McLaughlin “Fact-Checking the Babylon Bee”



		(2) Stephen J. Ceci, Wendy M. Williams. "The Psychology of Fact-Checking"
		<b>Midterm Due on Canvas by 11:59 pm.</b>
<b>Week 9</b>		<b>Elections</b>
3/11		(1) Caesar, "Political Parties and Constitutional Principles"
3/13		(1) Textbook, Chapter 7
<b>Spring Break</b>		<b>Spring Break Week</b>
3/18	<b>Spring Break</b>	No Reading
3/20	<b>Spring Break</b>	No Reading
<b>Week 10</b>		<b>Congress</b>
3/25	Design of Congress  How Representative is Congress?	(1) Textbook 11.1-11.3  (2) Brutus, "Letter III"  (3) Hamilton, "On Representation"
3/27	How Deliberative Is It?  How Competent Is It?	(1) Textbook 11.4-11.5  (2) Fiorina, "Rise of Washington Establishment"  (3) William F. Connelly, "Congress is Not the Broken Branch."  <b>Second Writing Assignment Due (Either Pro or Con Op-Ed on an Approved Topic)</b>
<b>Week 11</b>		<b>Presidency</b>
4/1	Presidential Powers	(1) Textbook 12.1-12.2  (2) T. Roosevelt, "Stewardship Theory."  (3) William H. Taft, "Our Chief Magistrate and His Powers."  (4) W. Willson, "Cabinet Government"
4/3	Directing the Executive Branch	(1) Textbook 12.3-12.5
<b>Week 12</b>		<b>Judiciary and Civil Liberties</b>
4/8	Judicial Powers and the Federal Court System	(1) Brutus "On the Federal Judiciary"  (2) Hamilton, "Federalist 78"  (3) Textbook Chapter 13
4/10	Civil Liberties	(1) Textbook Chapter 14
<b>Week 13</b>		<b>Civil Rights</b>

4/15	Civil Rights	(1) <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> (2) Du Bois, W.E.B., "On Social Equality" (3) Textbook, 5.1
4/17	Liberty and Equality	(1) <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (2) <i>Bolling v. Sharpe</i> (3) <i>Grutter v. Bollinger</i> (4) Kurt Vonnegut. "Harrison Bergeron." (5) Sowell, "Cosmic Justice."
<b>Week 14</b>	<b>Public Policy</b>	
4/22	The Bureaucracy	(1) James Q. Wilson, "Bureaucracy" (2) Bruce Chapman, "The Middleman: Bureaucrats" (3) Textbook, Chapter 15
4/24	Domestic Policy	(1) Textbook, Chapter 16 (2) FDR. "The New Goals of Politics" (3) FA Hayek, "Economic Policy and Liberty"
<b>Week 15</b>	<b>Public Policy</b>	
4/29	Foreign Policy	(1) Textbook, Chapter 17
5/1	Review Session	No Reading  <b>Third Writing Assignment Due by 11:59 pm on Canvas. (Either Pro or Con Op-Ed Depending on the Second Writing Assignment—Must be the Opposite Position on the Same Proposition as the Second Writing Assignment).</b>
<b>Week 16</b>	<b>Exam Week</b>	
5/6	<b>Final Exam Due</b>	<b>Final Exam From 8:00-10:00 AM on Canvas.</b>