



COURSE SYLLABUS

POS 2041 American National Government

Spring Semester, A Session, 2026

CRN: 10098 • Online • Semester Hours: 3 • Prerequisites: None

Semester Dates: 9 January 2026 – 8 May 2026

Instructor Information:

Elizabeth Trentanelli

Instructor's email: If Canvas email is not available, please try my college email address:
etrentanelli@gulfcoast.edu .

After teaching more than 25 years at two colleges and two years at high school level I retired from my full-time teaching appointment at Gulf Coast State College, and I am currently teaching part time here. My other professional experience includes:

- NGO staff lobbyist & communications officer, 1983-88
- political campaign work, including presidential campaign, 1992
- Human rights investigations, Haiti & Nicaragua
- International election observer, Haiti
- Former chapter board member Habitat for Humanity (Tarpon Springs, Miami) and national board member, Witness for Peace
- Trained National Issues Forums moderator
- *Recently published research in Beyond Politics As Usual: Paths for Engaging College Students in Politics by Kettering Foundation Press, Dayton, OH: 2017*
- Civics specialist with published K-12 curricular materials
- Legislative analyst

Division Chair Information:
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Required Textbook:

Textbook—Free!: Krutz, Glen , and Sylvie Waskiewicz. *American Government 3e* . Houston, Texas : OpenStax , 2021. **Book URL:** <https://openstax.org/books/american-government-3e/pages/1-introduction>

Digital version (free): ISBN-13: 978-1-951693-38-1 OR

Paperback version (small fee): ISBN-13: 978-1-711493-95-4

POS 2041: American National Government

In this course, students will investigate how the national government is structured and how the American constitutional republic operates. It covers the philosophical and historical foundations of American government, including but not limited to: the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution and its amendments, and The Federalist Papers. The course examines the branches of government and the government's laws, policies, and programs. It also examines the ways in which citizens participate in their government and ways their government responds to citizens.

SLOs

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and practices of America's constitutional republic.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the US Constitution and its amendments, and The Federalist Papers.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of landmark US Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions.
- Students will demonstrate knowledge of the history and development of the American federal government and its impact on law and society.

- Students will demonstrate an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates.
- Students will demonstrate an ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

Additional information:

- This course is online, reading based, with weekly assignments to support learning with feedback from instructor. Assignments are class discussions via the Canvas discussion boards or short essays submitted to directly instructor.
- The broad goals of the course include students learning and retaining a significant amount of information about how the US government functions as well as components of our Constitution and key founding documents; students will also learn about their role in public life of the US society, while developing critical thinking and deductive reasoning skills; and improving written communication skills.

6A-10.02413-1 Civics Literacy Competency

Prior to the award of an associate in arts, associate in science, or a baccalaureate degree, first-time-in-college students entering a Florida College System institution in the 2021-2022 school year, and thereafter, must demonstrate competency in civics literacy **by completing (a) and (b)** prior to graduation:

(a) Successfully passing either POS 2041 American Government or AMH 2020 United States History Since 1877. Each of the courses must include the following competencies:

- (1) Understanding of the basic principles and practices of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government;
- (2) An understanding of the United States Constitution and its application;
- (3) Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-government; and
- (4) An understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation and landmark executive actions and their impact on law and society.

(b) Achieving the standard score on one of the following assessments:

Assessment:	Standard Score:
AP Government and Politics, US	3

AP United States History	4
CLEP: American Government	50
Florida Civics Literacy Exam	60

What you can expect from this course:

- Students enrolled in this section of POS 2041 can expect a comprehensive, highly detailed, and balanced study of the theory, practice, ideals, and realities of government and politics in the US. Major areas of study include behavior and participation, the legislative process, the presidency, the judicial process, and the administrative state.
- **This online course is organized into weekly modules, that correspond to each textbook chapter reading assignment. Inside each specially labeled module folder you will find an assignment and a quiz. Also, you will see additional resource documents and digital links to short videos or websites (data bases, plus government, think tank, and organization sites) relevant to the material within each module.**
- Please check the course schedule (available January 8) for days/times I devote to our web class and contact with students.
- **Barring emergencies I generally check & respond to emails & phone calls within 48 hours (excluding holidays/weekends) Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.**
- **The primary learning activities** in this course will be reading all of the assigned chapters within the textbook, contributing to our ongoing discussion boards, completing short essay assignments and quizzes, and taking the midterm and final exams. Extra credit assignments that relate directly to our course are in a specially labeled module folder. **Many previous students have commented positively about the organization of my online courses, so you should find everything to be clear and well-labeled. But if you have questions, please do reach out to me.**

Students enrolled in this course will be required to:

- **Follow the schedule** provided; **weekly chapter assignments and extra resources** are in each week's module folder.
- **Read the assigned chapter(s)** for the week; follow instructions to **complete the accompanying assignment and chapter quiz**. Each will be completed through Canvas.
 - **Complete all weekly assignments and quizzes, plus the midterm and final exams AS SCHEDULED (see the course schedule in Canvas).**
 - **Contact the instructor via email at once with any problems or issues.** I cannot handle problems unless you make me aware of them. Do not wait until the assignment or quiz *due date* to contact me with questions about the material.

- Students enrolled in this section of POS 2041 are expected to use the textbook (noted above), use Canvas for accessing the learning materials for this course and to email me. *If Canvas is down*, please use GCSC email address to email me directly at etrentanelli@gulfcoast.edu.

Academic Integrity Policy - Honest participation in academic endeavors fosters an environment in which optimal learning can take place and is consistent with the college's mission. Academic misconduct, including cheating or plagiarism, is destructive to the spirit of an educational environment. Social Science professors report every instance of student academic misconduct to the college for inclusion on the student's records. ***"Cheating" includes but is not limited to use of any unauthorized assistance in completing course work. "Plagiarism" includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment as well as the purchase of papers or projects. "Self-plagiarism" occurs when a student submits the same or considerably similar document to fulfill requirements in different classes.*** For example, if a student submits a term paper in Religion they originally wrote for an English class, this is self-plagiarism. Once a paper receives a grade in one class, it cannot be submitted again for another class. **Sanctions for incidences of academic misconduct, depending on the severity of the incidence and/or its repetition, may range from receiving an F grade (or 0) for the test, assignment, or activity, to failure of the course, to suspension or dismissal from the college.**

****Limited Assistive Use Only:** Students may use basic assistive technologies for spelling, grammar, and formatting (e.g., PaperRater or SpellCheckPlus); however, the use of AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly's AI function, etc.) for generating, rewriting, or enhancing content is not permitted. All work must reflect the student's original ideas and writing. Representing work created by AI as one's own is a violation of academic integrity and may result in penalties, including a zero on the assignment and additional disciplinary actions as outlined in the college's academic integrity policy.**

Student Accessibility Statement - Gulf Coast State College supports an inclusive learning environment for all students. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that hinder your full participation, reasonable accommodation can be arranged. Prior to receiving accommodation, you must register with Student Accessibility Resources. **Appropriate academic accommodation will be determined based on the documented needs of the student.** For information regarding the registration process, email sar@gulfcoast.edu or call 850-747-3243.

Diversity of Viewpoints and Recording Lectures – A Florida College System institution may not shield students, faculty, or staff from “expressive activities”, such as peaceful assembly, speeches, signs, literature, lectures, and educational materials. “Intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity mean the exposure of students, faculty, and staff to, and encouragement of their exploration of a variety of ideological and political perspectives” (Chapter 2021-159, Laws of Florida). In accordance with federal and state privacy laws, students may record class lectures for their own personal educational use, in

connection with a complaint to the college, or as evidence in internal or external legal proceedings. Students may not publish or upload the recordings or any components thereof without the knowledge and written permission of the faculty member. Failure to obtain permission to publish could lead to the students' having to pay damages, attorney fees, and court costs. For more information about what can be recorded, please see the guidelines in the GCSC Student Handbook.

Attendance - Regular class attendance and participation are significant factors that help to promote success in college. In face-to-face courses, students are required to be in class at the beginning of each class session, as attendance will be taken at this time. If a student arrives late, it is his/her responsibility to inform the instructor after class of his/her presence. Failure to do so may result in the student being marked as "Absent." **Attendance in an online/hybrid CANVAS class is defined as submission of complete written assignments prior to their posted deadline.**

Withdrawals - Students may withdraw themselves from any course until the published withdrawal deadline for that term in the Gulf Coast State College catalog. Students wishing to withdraw from a course and receive a "W" must complete a withdrawal form and submit this to the Office of Enrollment Services prior to the scheduled withdrawal date as published on the college calendar. Social Sciences instructors do not withdraw students from their individual courses under any circumstances. If you feel you have a unique situation that warrants removal from all of your courses for a term after the withdrawal deadline has passed, you may contact the Vice President of Student Affairs to discuss your situation.

Consequences of Withdrawals - Two withdrawals are permitted per credit course. After that, a grade will be assigned. Please be concerned about withdrawals. When admitting students into certain programs, universities may calculate withdrawals as grades. It is your responsibility to verify the effects of enrollment and/or withdrawal upon your financial assistance (financial aid, scholarships, grants, etc.).

Incomplete Grades - Grades of Incomplete in any Social Sciences course can only be assigned to students who have an emergency arise during the last two weeks of the course.

To receive an Incomplete, students must:

- Submit a written request to the instructor prior to the last face-to-face class meeting. For online courses, a written Incomplete request must be received no later than the week before the Final Exam period begins.
- Have completed no less than 60 percent of the course requirements and be passing the course at the time the request for an Incomplete is submitted.

Important Note: The Incomplete option provides 30 days from the date grades are due to make up any missing work; if work is not submitted during this period, the grade will automatically change to an "F" in Lighthouse.

Instruments of assessment for POS 2041 include:

Final grades are composed of test scores, online quizzes, and class participation through short assignments.

<u>Weekly Quizzes</u>	<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Exams</u>
12 textbook quizzes, up to 10 pts. (and 2 @ 15 pts)	12 assignments, up to 10 pts each (and 2@ 15 pts)	midterm 150 points final exam 150 points
<u>Sub-total: 150 points</u>	<u>Sub-total: 150 points</u>	<u>Sub-total: 300 points</u>
25% of final grade	25% of final grade	50% of final grade

**Students are required to complete 12 weekly assignments (discussion boards) & quizzes which coincide with textbook chapters. Each assignment must be completed with well written & accurate posting work addressing each part of the assignment. If you miss an assignment or a quiz you can “make up” points with assignments from the “Extra Points for Extra Work” folder. Points will be deducted from any weekly assignment that is difficult to read/comprehend due to misspellings or poor grammar. All assignments & quizzes can be found under the “modules” tab. Late work is penalized at one letter grade off per day late. Work posted more than two weeks after the due date will receive a grade of 0.*

Assignment of Grades: All examination and assignments grades will appear in the student’s gradebook in Canvas. Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

- A 90%-100%**
- B 80%-89%**
- C 70%-79%**
- D 60%-69%**
- F 59% and below**

Weekly workflow (preliminary schedule)

- Week 1** – introduction to government in America
- Week 2** – US Constitution
- Week 3** - federalism
- Week 4** – Bill of Rights/individual liberties
- Week 5** – 14th Amendment & rights for all
- Week 6** – public opinion polling/media
- Week 7** – voting and elections
- Week 8** – midterm exam
- Week 9** – political parties and interest groups
- Week 10** - Congress
- Week 11** – the U.S. presidency
- Week 12** - court system
- Week 13** – U.S. government agencies/departments
- Week 14** – domestic policies/programs
- Week 15** – foreign policies/programs
- Week 16** – final exam

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