



**POS 2041—12800—Online**  
**American National Government**  
**Instructor: Professor Teresa Thurtle**  
**Course Syllabus**  
**Spring 2026 Semester — Session B**  
**Term Dates: 9 Jan 2026 to 4 Mar 2026**  
**3 Credit Hours—Pre-requisites: None**

For any syllabus posted prior to the beginning of the term, the instructor reserves the right to make minor changes prior to or during the term. The instructor will notify students via e-mail or Canvas announcement when changes are made in the requirements and/or grading of the course.

Online Courses at Gulf Coast State College: All online courses at GCSC utilize the Canvas Learning System. Students should read all information presented in the Canvas course site and should periodically check for updates--at least every 48 hours.

Remember: This course is not one in which students may work at their own pace. Each week there are learning modules, assignments, online lectures, online discussions, and/or online exams with due dates. Refer to the schedule within this syllabus for more information.

**Instructor:**

Professor Teresa Thurtle  
Social Sciences Division  
[tthurtle@gulfcoast.edu](mailto:tthurtle@gulfcoast.edu)

**Instructor Education:**

BA, Criminal Justice, University of Nevada Reno, 2008  
BA, Women's Studies, University of Nevada Reno, 2008  
MA, Organizational Behavior, University of Texas, 2019  
MPA, Masters of Public Administration, American Military University, 2011  
PhD, Public Policy and Administration, Walden University, 2020

The best way to contact me is through **Canvas messages**. I travel often and sometimes get locked out of my email. And/or your email goes to my spam. Messages are best.

I ask that you do not send me a message as if you are sending a text. This is a professional, academic setting. Please respect the institution. Please use common courtesy as I often times will not respond to students who are not respectful. I generally respond to messages within 24 to 48 hours.

**Social Sciences Office Contacts:**

Dr. Robert Saunders, Chair  
Social Sciences Division  
Office 211 Social Sciences Building  
(850) 872-3826    [rsaunder2@gulfcoast.edu](mailto:rsaunder2@gulfcoast.edu)

**Division Senior Administrative Assistant:**

Ms. Jody Walton  
Social Sciences 210  
850-872-3825  
[jwalton1@gulfcoast.edu](mailto:jwalton1@gulfcoast.edu)

**Required Textbook:**

Krutz, G., & Waskiewicz, S. (2021). *American Government 3e*. OpenStax.  
<https://openstax.org/books/american-government-3e/pages/1-introduction>

**Office Hours:** No set office hours. Just send me a message and we can set up a time to video chat.

**Technology Requirements for this Course:** This section of POS 2041 requires that students have regular and open access to a computer and that they maintain reliable Internet service.

**Technical Assistance:**

- Technical support is available by phone 24 hours a day 7 days per week by calling (850) 913-3303.
- Technicians are available on the Panama City Campus from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday.

**POS 2041 Catalog Description:** 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.

**Broad Goals:** The primary means of content delivery for this online course includes instructor-generated lectures, textbook readings, PowerPoint presentations, the Discussion Board, and weekly synchronous study sessions. Each of these techniques support the broad goals of students learning the American political system in its most broad aspects and understanding the functions, processes, policies, and philosophical foundations of that system.

## **Student Learning Outcomes(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.

## **Civic Literacy, Course Competencies, and Outcomes: (As required by the State of Florida Legislature and the Florida Department of Education):**

- An understanding of the basic principles of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government.
- An understanding of the U.S. Constitution.
- Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance.
- An understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases and their impact on law and society.

## **Study Resources Available**

The Florida Civic Literacy Test includes topics from the materials provided below:

### U.S. Citizenship Test:

- Civics Questions and Answers
- Flash Cards
- Pocket Study Guide

### CANVAS Study Course

- Florida Civic Literacy Exam Prep Module

### Supreme Court Cases

- Landmark Supreme Court Cases (Review of this information is **STRONGLY** recommended!)

### Scheduling the Exam

- Students can schedule their testing appointment 72 hours in advance through Register Blast

**Student Expectation Statement:** The student is expected to participate in the course listening to and taking thorough notes on all digital lectures, by reading the assigned readings, by participating in the weekly discussion boards, and by completing all exams as scheduled. The students should understand that this course is delivered via the Canvas LMS.

**Instructor Availability:** The best way to contact me is through **Canvas messages**. I ask that you do not send me a message as if you are sending a text. This is a professional, academic setting. Please respect the institution. Please use common courtesy as I often times will not respond to students who are not respectful. I generally respond to messages within 24 to 48 hours.

**Course Requirements. Students enrolled in this course will be required to:**

- Listen to and take thorough notes on the digital lectures assigned with each weekly Learning Module—***I cannot overstress the importance of the digital lectures;***
- Read all of the textbook pages assigned with each Learning Module;
- Contribute to the weekly discussion boards
- Complete all four exams AS SCHEDULED (see the course schedule below).
- Contact the instructor via Canvas messenger at once with any problems or issues. I cannot handle problems unless you make me aware of them. I do not open up

### **COURSE OUTLINE OF LEARNING MODULES**

Week of:	MOD	Module Assignments
Jan 9-18	1	Introduction, American Government and Civic Engagement, The Constitution and Its Origins, American Federalism: lecture videos, knowledge checks, discussion boards
Jan 19-25	2	Civil Liberties and Rights, Politics of Public Opinion, lecture videos, knowledge checks, discussion boards, Quiz 1
Jan 25 - Feb 1	3	Voting and Elections, The Media, Political Parties, lecture videos, knowledge checks, discussion boards
Feb 2 - 8	4	Midterm Exam
Feb 9 - 15	5	Interest Groups and Lobbying, Congress, The Presidency, lecture video, knowledge check, discussion board
Feb 15 - 22	6	The Courts, State and Local Government, The Bureaucracy, lecture video, knowledge check, discussion board, Quiz 2
Feb 23-Mar 1	8	Domestic and Foreign Policy, lecture video, knowledge check, discussion board
Feb 27-Mar 3	9	Final Exam

**Attendance Policy:** Although physical class meetings are not part of this course, you are required to participate in the weekly discussion boards to show your understanding of the lectures. This is counted as posting a 250 initial post, and a 100-word post to another student.

**Make-Up Work Policy:** Missing any part of this schedule may prevent completion of the course. If you foresee difficulty of any type (i.e., an illness, employment change, etc.), which may prevent completion of this course, **notify the instructor as soon as possible**. Failure to do so will result in failure for an assignment and/or failure of the course. If I have not heard from you by the deadline dates for assignments, exams, or forums, no make-up work will be allowed (unless extraordinary circumstances exist, such as hospitalization). **Requests for extensions must be made in advance and accompanied by appropriate written documentation.** **“Computer problems” is not an acceptable excuse.**

**Using LockDown Browser with Respondus Monitor for Online Exams:** This course uses LockDown Browser with Monitor for online exams. While there is no cost to you to use the software, you are required to have a webcam, which may be built into your computer or may be an external camera. Respondus is available for Mac, PC, and Chromebooks. Watch this [short video](#) to get a basic understanding of LockDown Browser and the Monitor webcam feature.

Instructions for using LockDown Browser and Monitor can be found in the [student quick start guide](#). For additional resources, visit the [Respondus Tools webpage](#).

### **Test-Taking Guidelines**

- Follow all specific test procedures and instructions provided.
- Ensure you are in a location where you will not be interrupted.
- Turn off all other devices (e.g., tablets, phones, second computers).
- Clear your desk of all external materials - books, papers, and other devices or distractions.
- Before starting the test, know how much time is available to complete all questions, and that you have allotted sufficient time to complete it in one sitting.
- LockDown Browser will prevent you from accessing other websites or applications during the test. You will be unable to exit the test until all questions are completed and submitted unless otherwise allowed by the instructor.

### **Webcam Video Tips**

You should take into consideration the following information to produce a good webcam video.

- Avoid wearing hats or caps.
- Ensure your computer or tablet is on a firm surface (a desk or table). Do not have the computer on your lap, a bed, or other surface where the device (or you) are likely to move.
- If using a built-in webcam, avoid tilting the screen after the webcam setup is complete.
- Take the exam in a well-lit room and avoid backlighting, such as sitting with your back to a window.

### **Security and Privacy Information**

Respondus LockDown Browser is a secure browser downloaded and installed on individual computers. It prevents users from accessing other websites and applications on the same device during a WebCampus test. Security and privacy information is listed below, with [additional details](#) available online.

- No personal data or information is exchanged or stored within the browser or by the vendor.

- LockDown Browser has no other function than to be used as a browser in conjunction with tests that require it.
- No existing browsers or programs are deleted or altered on the end user's computer.
- ***Installed on computer lab computers and most Library computers. If you. Have issues getting Respondus to work on your computer, consider an on-campus option.***

Respondus Monitor uses a number of methods to limit access to video sessions and associated data. Security and privacy information is below, with [additional details](#) available online.

- Respondus Monitor uses industry standard SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) or TLS (Transport Layer Security) encryption to transfer information.
- Student identifiable information - name, grade, course name, and photos of identification cards - can only be accessed through WebCampus.
- Only users with instructor credentials for this course (e.g., instructors, teaching assistants, LMS administrators) are able to view video sessions in conjunction with the student identifiable information.
- Video URLs are one-time use and will not function if copied.
- Respondus uses independent, third-party security firms to review Monitor architecture and test for vulnerabilities and exploits.

### **Some tips to remember**

- Students need to have the most up-to-date operating systems and browsers.
- See the special instructions for [Respondus for Chromebooks](#)[Links to an external site.](#) **There are limitations and issues discussed on the help page.**
- If you take a test via iPad, you must enable that in advance when requiring Respondus Monitor. This setting is automatically enabled when using the LockDown Browser only.
- Some webcams will not work with Respondus Monitor.

## **Social Sciences Policies**

**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 in the student's records.

- **“Cheating”** includes but is not limited to the use of any unauthorized assistance in completing coursework.
- **“Plagiarism”** includes, but is not limited to, the use by paraphrase or direct quotation of another person's published or unpublished work 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.

- **The use of AI software in any form** to create class assignments may violate GCSC's Academic Integrity Policy. Before employing AI technology in any manner and to any degree, students should consult with their professors for all courses offered through the Social Sciences Division.

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 aspects of this course's instruction or design hinder your full participation, reasonable accommodations can be arranged. Before receiving accommodations, you must register with Student Accessibility Resources. Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the student. For information regarding the registration process, email [sar@gulfcoast.edu](mailto:sar@gulfcoast.edu) or call 850-747-3243.

**Recording Lectures -** Under federal and state privacy laws, students may record class lectures for their 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 student(s) paying damages, attorney fees, and court costs.

For more information about what can be recorded, please see the guidelines in the GCSC Student Handbook: <https://www.gulfcoast.edu/current-students/student-handbooks/2021-2022-student-handbook.pdf>

**Email & Voicemail Response Time -** Instructors will check and respond to messages sent to their gulfcoast.edu email within 48 hours during scheduled workdays, barring illness or emergencies. The instructor may or may not check email during holidays or weekends. This policy also applies to messages sent via Canvas, as well as voicemails left on a provided phone number.

**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 the submission of complete written assignments before 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 before the scheduled withdrawal date as published on the college calendar. 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 before 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.

**Method of Evaluation:**

Type of Assignment	# Of Questions	Points	Total
Quizzes (Q)	30	2	2 Quizzes x 60 = 120
Mid-Term	70	4	280
Final	70	4	280
Lecture Knowledge Check (KC)	5	1	17 x 5 Points =85
Discussion Boards		5	5 x 17 required = 85
Points Possible			850
Extra Credit		5- 25	

Assignment of Grades: All grades will be posted in the student grade book in Canvas and will be assigned according to the following scale:

765 – 850	90-100	= A
680 - 764	80-89	= B
595 - 679	70-79	= C
510 – 678	60-69	= D
> 509	50-0	= F

**Assessment Instruments: Students will be evaluated based on the following:**

- Weekly Discussion Board (DB): Participation and discussion demonstrating the understanding of assigned reading and lectures. All initial posts must be 300+ words. Initial posts are due on Wednesdays unless otherwise noted. You must also respond to another student, with 150+ words. Due on Sundays. Initial post and response to another student, but their due date, will result in full credit.
- Lecture Knowledge Check (KC): Short test of your knowledge and understanding of the weekly lecture.
- Quizzes (Q): This will test your knowledge and understanding of assigned reading and lectures between the mid-term and final exams.
- Mid-Term: Multiple-choice examination. Testing your knowledge and understanding of assigned reading and lectures for the first half of the semester.
- Final: Multiple-choice examination. Testing your knowledge and understanding of assigned reading and lectures for the second half of the semester.
- Extra Credit (EC): Opportunities for students to earn additional points demonstrating their understanding of the required matter to current events.