



Course Syllabus

American National Government

POS 2041 / 85322 / Fall 2026

Session A: 8/17/2026 – 12/10/2026

Credit Hours 3

Pre-requisites None

Contact Information

Instructor

Teresa Thurtle
Adjunct Professor, Ph.D.
tthurtle@gulfcoast.edu

Office Location: Online
Office Hours By Appointment
Response Time: Within 24-48 Hours

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.

Division Chair

Dr. Robert Saunders
Social Sciences Division Chair
rsaunder2@gulfcoast.edu
840-769-1551 ext. 3826

Division Administrative Assistant

Ms. Jody Walton
Social Sciences 210
jwalton1@gulfcoast.edu
850-872-3825

Course Information

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.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- 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

Course Materials & Resources:

American Government 4e, Glen Krutz and Sylvie Waskiewicz, 2025, OpenStax.org,
ISBN-13: 979-8-385190-66-9

<https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-4e>

Delivery Method:

This is a web-based course. 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.

Student Expectations

In this course, communication and feedback will occur through various channels, including GCSC email, Canvas Inbox, Canvas Announcements, Canvas Discussions, Microsoft Teams or Zoom, assignment feedback, and instructor office hours. Review the statements below so that you understand the expectations for communication.

As a student at Gulf Coast State College, you are expected to:

- **Adhere to Course Guidelines:** Follow the guidelines detailed in the course syllabus, along with any additional instructions provided by the instructor. This includes understanding and complying with the course objectives, grading criteria, and academic policies.
- **Maintain Regular Contact:** Keep in touch with your instructor and classmates via your GCSC email or other designated communication channels. Regular contact helps clarify doubts, share ideas, and foster a collaborative learning environment.

- **Active Participation:** Engage actively in class discussions and submit assignments on time. Your active participation is crucial for your academic success and contributes to a vibrant learning community.

As your instructor, my commitment to you is to:

- **Provide Timely Feedback:** I will review and provide feedback on your assignments and submissions promptly. My goal is to help you understand your strengths and areas for improvement, which is crucial for your academic growth.
- **Respond Via Canvas Inbox:** I will respond to your emails or messages within 24-48 hours (excluding weekends), unless otherwise noted. I understand the importance of clear and timely communication in addressing your questions and concerns.
- **Post Regular Announcements:** To keep you updated and help you manage your time effectively, I will send out weekly reminders via announcements. These reminders will include important dates, upcoming assignments, and any changes to the course schedule.
- **Maintain Weekly Office Hours:** I will maintain regular weekly office hours, but I can also be available by appointment. This is to ensure I'm available for any questions or concerns that may come up during the week.

Course Schedule

Week of	Module	Assignments
August 17 - 23	1	Introduction: Lecture Video, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board American Government and Civic Engagement: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
August 24 - 30	2	The Constitution and Its Origins: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
August 31 - September 6	3	American Federalism: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
September 7 - 13	4	Civil Liberties: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board Civil Rights: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
September 14 - 20	5	Politics of Public Opinion: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board, Quiz 1
September 21 - 27	6	Voting and Elections: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
September 28 - October 4	7	The Media: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board Political Parties: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
October 5 - 11	8	Midterm Exam
October 12 - 18	9	Interest Groups and Lobbying: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board

October 19 – 25	10	Congress: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
October 26 – November 1	11	The Presidency: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
November 2 – 8	12	The Courts: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
November 9 – 15	13	State and Local Government: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
November 16 – 22	14	The Bureaucracy: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board, Quiz 2
November 23 – 29	15	Thanksgiving Week: No Assignments, ALL EXTRA CREDIT
November 30 – December 6	16	Domestic Policy: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board Foreign Policy: Lecture Videos, Knowledge Check, Discussion Board
December 7 – 13	17	Final Exam

Grading

GCSC Grading Scale

- A: 90% - 100%
- B: 80% - 89%
- C: 70 – 79%
- D: 60 – 69%
- F: Below 60%

Calculation of Grades

Type of Assignment	# of Questions	Points	Total
Quiz 1	30	1	30
Quiz 2	30	1	30
Mid-Term	100	1	100
Final	100	1	100
Lecture Knowledge Check	5	1	5 x 17 = 85
Topic Discussion Boards		5	5 x 12 = 60
Introduction Discussion Board		1	1
			406
Extra Credit			
Letter to elected official		25	25
Special Topic Discussion Boards		5	5 x 5 = 25
			50

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

Points	Letter Grade
406 – 365	A
364 - 324	B
323 – 284	C
283 - 243	D
Less than 242	F

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.”

Course Policies

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 accommodations can be arranged. Prior to receiving accommodations, you must register with Student Accessibility Resources. Appropriate academic accommodations will be determined based on the documented needs of the student. Please visit [GCSC's Student Accessibility Resource \(SAR\) webpage](#) to learn more. For information regarding the registration process, email sar@gulfcoast.edu or call 850-747-3243.

Attendance Policy

Regular class attendance and participation are significant factors that help to promote success in college. Students are expected to attend all class meetings of all courses for which they are registered.

You are expected to know the instructor's specific attendance policy, as stated in the syllabus for each course. In the event of absence, you should contact your instructor as soon as possible to indicate the reason and to inquire whether make-up work is possible. (Make-up work is offered solely at the discretion of your professor.)

If your absences in a class become excessive, as stated in the course syllabus, your professor may contact you, indicating that further absence may result in your withdrawal from the course. Your professor can withdraw you from a course for excessive absences without your permission.

Instructors will monitor attendance at the beginning of each semester. If you are not in attendance during this period, you may be withdrawn from the course. You will be financially responsible for the course and a "W or NS" will appear on your transcript. Withdrawal from a course may also have implications for financial aid

Make- Up Work and Missing Assignments Policy

No extensions are granted after an assignment's due date. This policy applies uniformly to all students. The **only exception** is in cases of documented extenuating circumstances, such as illness. In those situations, appropriate documentation (e.g., a doctor's note) is required, and extensions will be considered.

It is **imperative** that if you anticipate difficulty submitting an assignment on time, you **contact me before the due date** so that alternative arrangements can be discussed. Waiting until after the deadline has passed limits what I am able to do.

Discussion Boards are the sole exception to the no-extension policy. Initial discussion posts are due on **Wednesday or Friday**, as indicated in the course schedule. However, you may continue to post to discussion boards until **the end date of Sunday at 11:59 p.m. CST**. Posts submitted after the original due date will incur a **10% deduction per day** but remember: *some points are always better than no points*.

If you miss an assignment or are dissatisfied with a grade you earned, please know that there are **ample extra credit opportunities** available.

Withdrawal Policy

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.). There are two kinds of withdrawals---student and administrative.

- *Student Withdrawal (W1)* - Students wishing to withdraw must complete the online Student Withdrawal Form before the scheduled withdrawal deadline as published in the College catalog. Student withdrawals initiated prior to the scheduled withdrawal deadline will be recorded as a grade of "W." The withdrawal deadline for an off-term or condensed term is one week after midterm.
- *Administrative Withdrawal (W2)* – A faculty member may withdraw a student up to the published withdrawal deadline for violation of the class attendance policy in which case the student will receive a grade of "W." The withdrawal deadline for an off-term or condensed term is one week after midterm.

Students cannot withdraw from developmental studies courses (college-preparatory classes) after the drop/add period without written permission from their instructor and/or their academic advisor.

Academic Integrity

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. GCSC professors report every instance of student academic misconduct to the college for inclusion on the student's records.

Most course syllabi include an academic honesty policy and the consequences for violating this policy. Familiarize yourself with course policies regarding authorized or unauthorized use of AI to avoid the pitfalls of academic dishonesty.

The following definitions will apply:

"Cheating"

includes but is not limited to use of any unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations; dependence upon the aid of sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments; the acquisition without permission of tests or other academic materials belonging to a member of the College's faculty.

"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. It can also include overuse of an editing program like Grammarly or submitting work written by an Artificial Intelligence (AI) generator like ChatGPT. Make certain to consult your course syllabi for your instructor's guidelines of AI material.

"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.

"Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)"

is technology that uses machine learning to create new content, such as text, images or code, based on user input. These systems are trained on vast amounts of data, including large language models and image or code generators. Common examples include ChatGPT, GitHub, Copilot, Google Gemini, Perplexity, and the Grammarly AI function.

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.

Classroom Recording

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.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

The use of generative AI tools in academic work requires clear guidelines to maintain academic integrity. Please review the policy selected for this course regarding the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Grammarly's AI features, and similar platforms for assignments, research, and other coursework.

See the student handbook for further information. Students with questions about acceptable use should consult their instructor.

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.

Anti-Discrimination Policy

Gulf Coast State College does not discriminate against any person in its programs, activities, policies or procedures on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, national origin, marital status, religion, age, gender, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, disability, or veteran status. All questions or inquiries regarding compliance with laws relating to non-discrimination and all complaints regarding sexual misconduct or discrimination may be directed to Amanda Reed, Executive Director of Human Resources/Title II/504/Title IX Coordinator and Employment Equity Officer, Gulf Coast State College, 5230 W. US Highway 98, Panama City, FL 32401; 850-769-1551, ext. 3516. Rules, policies, fees, and courses described in this catalog are subject to change without notice.

Syllabus Policy

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.

Student Support Resources

Gulf Coast State College is committed to providing you with the resources you need for success as a student and beyond. View all the academic and student support resources provided at GCSC on the [Student Services web page](#).

Course Technology & Support

To successfully participate in this online course, students must have basic computer and digital information literacy skills and meet the following technology requirements:

- **Computer:** Up-to-date web browser that supports the Canvas learning management system; please refer to the system requirements for compatibility and information on using the Canvas app on mobile devices.
- **Internet Speed:** Minimum bandwidth of 8 Mbps upload/download speed to effectively engage in online activities and access multimedia.
- **Office 365 software:** Available for free download through GCSC Information Technology Services (ITS).

If you need technical support, contact the ITS Help Desk, available 24/7 at (850) 913-3303.