

**POL 215 OA (ONLINE)
AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
SPRING 2021 (9/8/21 to 12/14/21)**

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

American democratic system of government; ideological background; constitutional system; structure and problems. This course is a survey of American politics and government. Topics are divided into three broad categories. First, we will examine the American founding, the Constitution, and what it means to have a federal system of government. Second, we will consider American political institutions –Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, the judiciary – and policymaking. Third, we will study American political behavior and the interactions of behavior with political institutions on issues including voting, political parties, interest groups, public opinion, politicized identity, the media, and inequality.

VERY IMPORTANT

- This syllabus is required reading for the class.
- The syllabus clearly states course policy and acts as a basic agreement between the instructor and students.
- Print out a copy of the syllabus and check it at least once a week throughout the semester.
- Students are responsible for accessing course information posted to the discussion board or sent through the course email.
- If you have any questions regarding the syllabus, be sure to let me know as soon as possible.
- To be successful, you have to engage the course materials several times a week throughout the semester.
- If you find online learning challenging, have difficulty with the schedule, or if you are unable to complete assignments on dates as specified, then you should reconsider taking this course.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

Patterson, Thomas (2019) We the People: An Introduction to American Government. 13th Edition. ISBN: 9781259912405. McGraw Hill

COURSE ORGANIZATION

Learning on-line may be a very different environment for many of you. You will generally set your own schedules except for assignment deadlines, participate in class activities at your convenience, and work at your own pace. You may require some additional time online during the first few weeks while you adjust to the online format. You may feel overwhelmed at first, but it will get better. Online learning requires students to be very self-disciplined, so be sure you understand and are prepared to complete all required class assignments and deadlines. **ALL ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE AT 11:59PM ON SUNDAYS.**

STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

Student Learning Goals The Student will:	Program competencies	Nyack Core Goals	Assignment/Assessment
Knowledge			
Be familiar with the major concepts, methods, and theories in political science.	Apply critical thinking skills and greater depth of knowledge about American political thought, the Constitution, political institutions, and processes.	Academically Excellent	Exams, Quizzes
Skills			
Comprehend conceptual and analytical tools for understanding the organization and purpose of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of government.	Engage and assess the relationship between America's major political parties, the core beliefs, and the impact special interest groups can have on their actions.	Socially Relevant	Research paper
Access and efficiently use technology and information literacy	Apply critical thinking to inform social science research practices	Academically Excellent	Research Paper
Values			
Understand the concepts of civil rights and civil liberties and their impact on American society	Assess the impact of inequalities on all political structures within American society.	Personally transforming	Group Exercises

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1 Critical Thinking Paper	10 points
Discussion	28 points
3 Quizzes	30 points
Film Analysis	12 points
Participation	5 points
Final Exam	15 points
Total	100 points

Grade, Grade Points, and Numerical Equivalent

A	4	93-100	B-	2.67	80-82	D+	1.33	68-69
A-	3.67	90-92	C+	2.33	78-79	D	1	63-67
B+	3.33	88-89	C	2	73-77	D-	0.67	60-62
B	3	83-87	C-	1.67	70-72	F	0	0-59

ASSIGNMENTS

1. PARTICIPATION (5%)

Participation is required and constitutes 5% of the grade. Remember, this is a social science course and not a course for political activism. Partisan and ideological perspectives are welcome and appropriate for many discussions, but must be expressed in an appropriate and civil manner that is respectful of classmates. As a result, there is no place in this class for the vitriol or distortions sometimes seen in political discourse. In this class, you are a social scientist – not an activist. Furthermore, be mindful of the fact that, the course management system tracks, and I am able to review, all of your online interactions and specifically, attendance in the course. That becomes part of the participation evaluation.

2. QUIZZES & EXAM (45%)

Quizzes and the final exam will draw heavily from material covered in the lecture notes and readings. Quiz 1 is due Week 3 (**Chapter 3**); Quiz 2 Week 6 (**Chapter 5**); Quiz 3 Week 11

(**Chapter 11**); and the Final Exam Week 13 (**Chapter 14**). Note that once you start the quiz or exam online, you cannot stop and re-enter. You will not be allowed to re-enter.

3. DISCUSSIONS (28 POINTS)

The discussion board is the place where course content is negotiated, personalized, and connected to broader issues than those outlined in the readings. Students should expect to use this space regularly to initiate, support, and advance critical discussions of the assigned material. The discussion forum is a place for dialogue, so you will be expected to respond to those who have preceded you. In other words, your contributions should not replicate the discussion; they should extend it in particular directions.

Weekly Discussion Assignments

Each week's seminar will contain a discussion forum where you will engage in a discussion with your classmates around questions that I will post in the weekly forum. You are required to post at least three contributions to each discussion: One original response to one of the discussion questions, and two secondary responses. Your secondary posts are responses to what others have posted. **They should show an engagement with your classmates and what they wrote. The one original post is worth 1 point and the two secondary response posts are worth ½ a point each. Discussion posts will therefore be graded on a 2-point scale each week, EXCEPT week 13—which is worth 4 points.** Your FIRST contribution (original response) should be a direct and comprehensive response to the question around which the discussion is focused. This should be a minimum of 250 words, and should demonstrate your knowledge and understanding of the key related material covered in the lecture, readings, video clips, etc. Failure to refer to the related material will lead to the receipt of an unsatisfactory grade for discussion contributions.

Posting Guidelines

Your discussion posting should follow these posting guidelines.

- When contributing to the discussion, you are expected to use a signature comprising your first name and initial, last name (i.e., Charles A., Cynthia, M. or Pablo, S.).
- **Introductory Posting**--Post an introduction of yourself to the topic by Sunday, September 12, 2021.
- Remember, the DISCUSSION assignment is considered academic writing--so we expect your primary post to be anchored with at least 1 or more citations in APA style.

- So, if you are using concepts/themes from the textbook, it will be cited as: (Patterson, 2019) or According to Charon (2016)...
- If you are referencing materials outside the textbook, it will be cited as: (Author, Year) and you must add a page number if it is a quotation.
- If you are referencing verses from the Bible--we also expect you to provide a book, chapter & verse as: "Quote" (Book Chapter: Verse, Translation).Example: “*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*” (Romans 8:28, New International Version, NIV).
- **Primary discussion posts should be at least 250 words or you will lose points**
- **Secondary posts should be at least 5 (five) sentences—or you will lose points.**
- Remember to list the Reference(s) at the end of your essay. The textbook reference is: **Patterson, T. (2019) We the People: Introduction to American Government. McGraw Hill**
- If you need further help with citations in APA style--contact the Writing Center.
- **MISSED DISCUSSIONS CANNOT BE MADE UP, NO EXCEPTIONS.**

DISCUSSION GRADE RUBRIC

	4=Excellent	3=Good	2=Limited	1=Poor
Contribution to the Class	Posting is insightful, thorough, and interesting	Posting is thorough and interesting	Discussion is interesting but lacks insight and depth	Discussion is uninteresting and/or too brief for the assignment
Inspires further reply discussions from other students	A serious effort is made to frame the discussion in a way that encourages others to reply. Discussion generates thoughtful questions and opens up new meaningful avenues for discussion	A serious effort is made to frame the discussion in a way that encourages others to reply.	Some effort is made to frame the discussion in such a way as to encourage others to reply.	No effort is made to frame the discussion in such a way as to encourage others to reply.

Demonstrated understanding of the reading assignment	Discussion demonstrates a thorough understanding of the reading assignment substantiated by several examples from the textbook.	Discussion demonstrates an understanding of the reading and is substantiated by at least one example from the textbook	Discussion demonstrates an understanding of the reading but is not substantiated by examples from the textbook	Discussion demonstrates very little understanding of the reading assignment
Grammar, mechanics, spelling, and sentence structure	Discussion is highly polished; no grammar or spelling errors.	Discussion is highly polished; maximum of one grammar or spelling error.	Discussion is adequate; maximum of two grammar or spelling errors	Inadequate discussion; more than two spelling or grammar errors

3. CRITICAL THINKING PAPER (10%)

The Critical Thinking Paper offers students the opportunity to demonstrate a command of the concepts introduced in the readings and lectures, as well as provide analysis and critique. The paper should reflect critical thinking on the part of students. Student should **SELECT** and answer 1 question from the critical thinking questions attached to the lesson. **The critical thinking paper is due in Week 12.** The paper should be 3 pages long and double-spaced. See grading rubric below. In answering the questions, students are encouraged to both summarize/paraphrase what is in the textbook and then add your own comments. Avoid quoting too much from the chapter. Phrase the answers in your own words. Students who are inclined to use outside sources—should make sure to cite those sources using the APA style. Your answers should be 3 pages long and double-spaced. The paper is worth 10 points. **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED.**

CRITICAL THINKING RUBRIC

	Exemplary	Proficient	Basic	Developing	Unsatisfactory
Identifies the argument question or issue	Clearly identifies most important arguments and notes the relationships between factors.	Identifies important arguments and clearly and summarizes the main issues. Identifies secondary issues.	Identifies the important arguments but at a basic level of understanding	Attempts to identify the important arguments but aspects are confused, incorrect or absent	No attempt or fails to identify important arguments
Analyzes and Evaluates Alternatives	Analysis is appropriate, thoughtful and	Analysis is appropriate and	Analysis is superficial. Limited ability	Attempts analysis but	Inappropriate analysis or nonexistent.

	accurate. Clarity is provided.	provides some clarity to issues.	to clarify the issues.	often incorrect or inaccurate.	
Presents results in a logical and organized fashion	Presentation is logical and direct. Ideas are organized. Effectively makes arguments and conclusion.	Presentation is logical and direct. Ideas are organized.	Presentation is organized with minor problems.	Presentation is sometimes organized and has limited effectiveness.	Little or no organization of ideas. Presentation is disjointed.
Grammar, Spelling Errors	No grammatical or spelling errors	Maximum of 1 grammar or spelling error	Maximum of 2 grammar or spelling errors	More than 2 grammar or spelling errors	Too many errors interfere with communication /meaning.

4. FILM ANALYSIS (12%)

Students will write a 3-page critique of the assigned film. It is to be thoughtfully assessed with relevance to the readings and ideas discussed in class. Each student will write a review that outlines: (1) the student's sense about the film's relevance to course subject matter; (2) the relevant meanings and insights to be gained from it; (3) how the film advances some of the perspectives we have considered over the semester; and (4) how it applies to the student's personal experience and worldview. This assignment should not summarize the film, but offer a personal reaction and interpretation to the film and its particular meaning and relevance to the student reviewing it. **The film Analysis is due in Week 9.**

FILM ANALYSIS GRADE RUBRIC

	4=Excellent	3=Good	2=Limited	1=Poor
Content	Thesis well developed. Detailed, accurate and appropriate examples/quotations from film. Fully developed throughout essay	Thesis is clear. Sufficient, accurate examples from film. May not be fully developed throughout essay	Thesis is not clearly stated. Minimal examples used from film. Not fully developed throughout essay.	No clear thesis. Evidence is vague, missing or inappropriate. Little or no examples from film.
Organization	Order contributes to an effective argument, reinforces content, unified and coherent, paper flows smoothly.	Order follows position, shows clear plan, but not perfected.	Ineffective or inconsistent paragraph order, not fully developed.	Random, no evidence of paragraph structure. Illogical

				organization of ideas
Expression	Error free in spelling, grammar	Few errors but do not interfere with meaning.	Errors are careless and distracting	Mechanical errors interfere with communication and/or meaning.
Resources	Bibliography complete and in proper format. Film is properly cited.	Bibliography is complete, may not be in proper format. Film is cited.	Bibliography complete, not in proper format. Film is cited	Bibliography incomplete. Film not cited.

COURSE POLICIES

1. **Email Communication:** All emails should have your full name, course number and section designation. All emails from both the instructor and students will ONLY go through the @nyack.edu email address. Emails from students will be answered within 48 hours of receipt.
2. **Online Conduct--**You are to treat this course, your colleagues, and the professor with utmost professionalism and respect. You are not required to agree to everything you encounter in this course, but you are required to know the material and confront it academically. Pay special attention to the way in which you interact with your colleagues and professor. Express your views in a way that does not insult, blame or put others down. Any student who participates in disruptive, lewd, rude, harmful or disrespectful behavior will be removed from the online forum until the matter is resolved with said student.
3. **Course Introduction:** Post a picture of yourself (your face) as your profile picture. Because this is a fully online course, it is required that you upload a picture of yourself and not an avatar or some other picture. You will post an introduction of yourself for the class in the discussion. You must submit your introduction posting by 11:59pm Sunday, September 12, 2021.
4. **Attendance:** In an online class, logging into the course is how you “show up.” You are expected to check into the course at least twice a week--(at the beginning and end of every week) in order to stay tuned into what is happening in the course.
5. **Class sessions**—The course week begins on Mondays (except week 1) and ends at 11:59pm on Sundays for all weeks.

6. **Quizzes & Exam:** Note that once you start a quiz or exam online, you cannot stop and re-enter. You will not be allowed to re-enter.
7. **Due Dates:** Papers should be doubled-spaced, and proofread before submission. All weekly assignments must be completed by **11:59pm on Sunday**. Discussions will be closed after 11:59pm on Sunday following the week in which it was assigned. Missed Discussion cannot be made up, no exceptions. All work must be submitted to the drobox on or before the due date. **All assignments submitted must have the student's name at the top of the first page of that assignment.** Assignments submitted to the instructor that do not have the student's name at the top of the first page of the assignment will be penalized two percentage points. You are expected to use academic language and college-level vocabulary and include and cite text whenever necessary using APA citation format.
8. **Submit College Level Work!** You are expected to use academic language and college-level vocabulary and include and cite text whenever possible, using APA citation format. Please **PROOFREAD** work before submitting it to ensure that it is free of grammatical and structural errors.
9. **Late Work--**Neither late work nor will make-up exist in this class. Assignments that fail to be submitted by the deadline into the assignment drobox will not be accepted (unless you get specific approval from the instructor based on documented unexpected and uncontrollable extenuating circumstances that occur before the due date. If you miss a quiz or exam, you miss it. There are no extensions for exam or quizzes. Once the exam or quiz window closes, you will not be allowed to enter or re-enter.
10. **Accommodation Requests--**Students being served by the Office of Learning Disability must inform the professor within the first two weeks of the class.
11. **Writing Center--**All Nyack College students seeking assistance with pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing their written assignments are encouraged to use the resources available through the Writing Center. **You can contact or book an e-session at: <https://writingcenter.nyackic.org> or by email to: thewritingcenter@nyack.edu.**
12. **Plagiarism—** Be aware that academic dishonesty in any form, including plagiarism and cheating, will not be tolerated in this course. Failure to provide proper citations and

attribute excerpts, thoughts, statements, or ideas to their original source may constitute plagiarism and may make you liable for sanctions from the college.

13. **Communication:** You should inform the instructor of any personal emergencies that may arise which will prevent you from getting online. I am available via email:

Charles.awasu@nyack.edu.

**The instructor reserves the right to modify this syllabus, assignments, course content, etc. in any way to enhance the learning experience of this course.*

COURSE CALENDAR

WEEK ONE (WEDNESDAY 9/8/21 – SUNDAY, 9/12/21)

- **Self-Introduction (Due Sunday, 9/12/21 by 11:59pm)**
- Read Patterson Chapter 1: Political Thinking and Political Culture

WEEK TWO (MONDAY 9/13/21 – SUNDAY, 9/19/21)

- Read Patterson, Chapter 2: Constitutional Democracy
- Discussion Week 2 (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday 9/13 by 11:59pm

WEEK THREE (MONDAY 9/20/21 – SUNDAY, 9/26/21) QUIZ 1

- Patterson, Chapter 3: Federalism
- **Quiz 1 based on Patterson, Chapter 3 (Due Sunday, 9/26 by 11:59pm)**
- Discussion Week 3: (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday 9/26 by 11:59pm

WEEK FOUR (MONDAY, 9/27/21 – SUNDAY, 10/3/21)

- Read Patterson, Chapter 4: Civil Liberties: Protecting Individual Rights
- Discussion Week 4 (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday, 10/3 by 11:59pm

WEEK FIVE (MONDAY 10/4/21 – SUNDAY, 10/10/21)

- Read Patterson, Chapter 5: Equal Rights: Struggling Toward Fairness
- Discussion Week 5 (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday, 10/10 by 11:59pm

WEEK SIX (MONDAY, 10/11/21 – SUNDAY, 10/17/21) QUIZ 2

- Read: Patterson, Chapter 6: Public Opinion and Political Socialization
- **Quiz 2 based on Patterson, Chapter 5: (Due Sunday, 10/17 by 11:59pm)**
- Discussion Week 6 (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday, 10/17 by 11:59pm

WEEK SEVEN (MONDAY, 10/18/21 - SUNDAY, 10/24/21)

- Read Patterson, Chapter 7: Political Participation
- Discussion Week 7 (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday, 10/24 by 11:59pm

WEEK EIGHT (MONDAY, 10/25/21 – SUNDAY, 10/31/21)

- Read: Patterson, Chapter 8: Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns
- Discussion Week 8 (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday, 10/31 by 11:59pm

WEEK NINE (MONDAY 11/1/21 – SUNDAY, 11/7/21) FILM ANALYSIS PAPER

- Read: Patterson, Chapter 9: Interest Groups: Organizing for Influence
- **Film Analysis Paper due 11/7/21 by 11:59pm**
- Discussion Week 9: (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday 3/28 by 11:59pm

WEEK TEN (MONDAY 11/8/21 – SUNDAY, 11/14/21)

- Read: Patterson, Chapter 10: The News Media: Communicating Political Images
- Discussion Week 10: (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday 11/14 by 11:59pm

WEEK ELEVEN (MONDAY 11/15/21 – SUNDAY, 11/21/21) QUIZ 3

- Read: Patterson, Chapter 11: Congress
- **Quiz 3 based on Patterson, Chapter 11: (Due Sunday, 11/21 by 11:59pm)**
- Discussion Week 11: (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday 11/21 by 11:59pm

WEEK TWELVE (MONDAY 11/29/21 – SUNDAY, 12/5/21) Critical Thinking Paper

- Read: Patterson, Chapter 12: The Presidency: Leading the Nation
- **Critical Thinking Paper (Questions in Lesson) Due Sunday, 12/5 by 11:59pm)**
- Discussion Week 12: (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday 12/5 by 11:59pm

WEEK THIRTEEN (MONDAY 12/6/21 – WEDNESDAY, 12/14/21) FINAL EXAM

- Read: Patterson, Chapter 14: The Federal Judicial System
- Discussion Week 14: (minimum 3 contributions) Due Sunday 12/14 by 11:59pm
- **Final Exam based on Patterson, Chapter 14 (Due Sunday, 12/14/21 by 11:59pm)**

The Carnegie Unit- This course must be and is accountable to a professional academic standard (US Dept. of Education). This impacts types and amounts of reading, “seat time” (instructional time), and outside work assignments (90 hours for a 3-credit course) are mandated to assure that students receive a fair education. Estimated homework hours for this course by category are:

Category	Homework Hours
I. Required Reading	25
II. Studying for exams/quizzes	18
III. Research for Writing Assignments	20
IV. Writing Assignments	17
Other Assignments	10
Total Homework Hours	90