

Syllabus Fall 2026
US Government (Political Science 10)

Level: Introductory (I)

Thursday 12:30 - 3:15

3 Units (45 hours of class)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is an introductory survey of the institutions and processes of government in the United States. Although we examine the basic structure of state governments, the major emphasis is on the Federal Government. The course includes a close reading of the United States Constitution. Building knowledge of the Constitution, we look at the most important political institutions as they work in the world. Institutions studied include Congress, the Presidency, the courts and the national security apparatus. We also try to identify the interaction between political structure, ideology, public opinion, the press, money and of external events.

SCOPE: In this course we shall examine the American political system. Although we will cover theory, the emphasis will be on the practical realities of day to day politics and what social scientists call "political culture.". We will concentrate the US government on the federal level but also look states and localities. We will also explore the influence the American system has had on other nations and compare the US system with that in use in other modern countries.

PURPOSE: American culture is extremely political. Hopefully, students will profit from understanding the basic structure of the US political system and how it is reflected in the American economic and social systems. In addition, like all courses in the social sciences, the study of government will help the students develop analytic skills.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES: There are no prerequisites for this class. Attendance is mandatory. Homework for this class are the reading assignments detailed in the schedule as well as shorter topical items sent via the mailing list. Students are urged to complete the appropriate reading assignments before the lectures. It is very important that students be attentive in lecture and take notes as the lectures will have a different emphasis than the readings. It is very important that each student is on the class mailing list so I can email supplemental readings and exam questions. Questions and discussions in class are strongly encouraged. It is very important to have an orderly atmosphere during lectures. Therefore cell phones should be turned off and conversation between students is strongly discouraged. We will spend time detailing all aspects of student responsibilities and grades during the first meeting of the class and late when needed

The text is *American Government: Brief Version* by James Wilson. (ISBN 0669174122 ISBN 0-618-221-45-X from \$4) I will help students navigate Amazon and find extremely inexpensive used volumes. There will also be copies on reserve in the library. (Talk with instructor if you do not understand.) We will also read an annotated version of the Constitution that I will provide. I shall also forward contemporary open source materials that are topical to the week of publication via our mailing list. The weekly assignments are Wilson Chapters in [] and found in the schedule. (Assignments require students to actively use resources of the library. There is also an acceptable Open Source text (American Government) available at <https://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/textbooks/318>. Detailed guides to business resources of the library as well as the description of Lincoln University approach to information literacy are available at the LU Library website (lincolnuca.libguides.com).

FORMAT AND GRADES: This course will be based on a standard lecture format. In addition we shall use employ videos and internet sources. The grades will be based primarily on the outcome of one midterm and a final exam. The exams will be essay in nature. The essays will be very broad and I will discuss their scope prior to exams. We shall also discuss the basic techniques of building an orderly argument suitable for the exams. The Standard A-F grades will be given. Approximately 1/3 of the grade is based on the midterm and 2/3 on the final. I also do take into consideration a favorable trajectory between the midterm and final when deciding the course grade. Bad attendance results in a grade penalty. Grading essays is necessarily subjective but the grades will be put into a numerical format:

Point/Grade Conversion

100-95	A	76-74	C
94-90	A-	73-70	C-
89-87	B+	69-67	D+
86-84	B	66-60	D
83-80	B-	59 or <	F
79-77	C+		

CONTACT BETWEEN INSTRUCTOR AND STUDENTS: I will have office hours on Thursday at a room and time to be arranged. If you would like to arrange a different time for a meeting I will be glad to arrange one. If there are any questions or messages you wish forwarded please email me: I check my messages several times a day and will contact you very promptly. I ask that you use my home email address (rickt2@prodigy.net). My school email is bergerud@lincolnuca.edu but this will be forwarded and it is easier to go direct.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT:

I. Outcome: Improve Analytic Skills

A. Assessment Activities: In-class examination of source materials – Understand structure, point of view, logical coherence. This exercise is an in-class interactive activity – student responses assessed by instructor.

B. Cooperative Research & Analysis. All students required to participate in Group Oral Report. performance of reporting students and responses to report from class assessed by instructor.

C. Note Taking. Notes needed to record significant points of lectures, videos and other non-textbook materials and make them useful for exams. Exam outcome assessed.

D. Essay Midterm and Final Exams. Thoroughness and quality of student argument assessed by instructor. (Students with analytic/content problems on midterms, class discussion or oral reports encouraged to seek assistant from appropriate staff.)

II. Outcome: Assimilate Basic Knowledge of Course Material.

A. Assessment Activities. Content of essay exam answers reflect completion of readings and attention to lectures/videos and are Assessed by Instructor.

B. Class discussion and questions posed to clarify issues raised by course materials reflect students' knowledge of course Materials as course develops. Assessed by instructor.

III. Outcome: Improve Communication Skills – Especially for ESL Students.

A. Assessment: Oral reports and class discussion allow assessment of oral language improvement or continued problems.

B. Assessment of essay exams reflects improvement in written language skills or continued problems. (Students with language problems referred to language staff.)

SCHEDULE: Text Chapters Given In [] (*American Government*, James Q. Wilson)

August 27	Introduction: The function of government [1]
September 3	Historical Background to the American Political system [2]
Sept. 10	Constitution [3]
Sept. 17	Constitution
Sept. 24	Constitution
October 1	Constitution [4]
Oct. 8	Constitution [5]
Oct. 15	Political Parties and Interest Groups [6]
Oct. 22	Media and Elections [7] Midterm
Oct. 29	How Congress Works [9]
November 5	How the Presidency Works [10]
Nov. 12	Military and Lobbyists
Nov. 19	The Courts [12]
Nov. 26	Fall Break
December 3	US Government Model and Influence on Other Political Systems [15]
December 10	Final Exam

Syllabus updated: August 9, 2026