

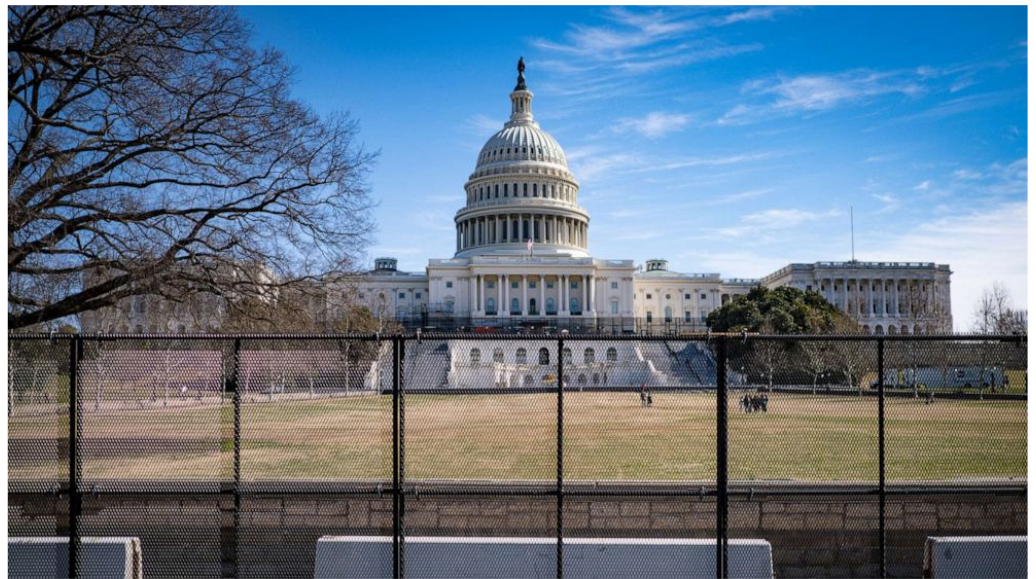
3 credits

Dr. Michael D. Martinez @ The University of Florida

**Lecture Meets:****8:30-9:20 am M/W****McCarty 100**

Sections meet Th/F as  
noted on your One.UF  
schedule.

(Eleven Sections)

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## Course Overview

The underlying theme of this class is democracy. We will discuss various conceptions of democracy, and how to assess various aspects of the political system using those concepts. We will also read about possible alternatives to the current structures of American politics. By the end of the course, students should be able to critically evaluate claims about the U.S. political system using empirical evidence.

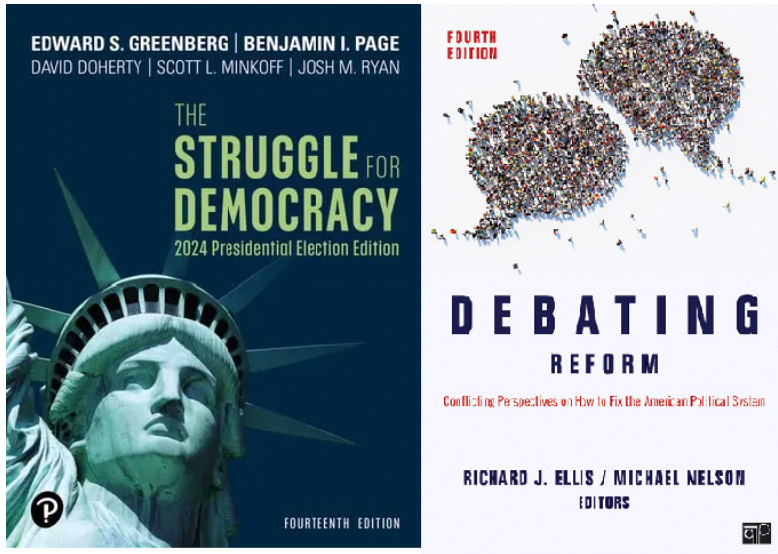
In this course, students will investigate how the national government is structured and how the American constitutional republic operates. It covers the philosophical and historical foundations of American government, including but not limited to the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution (the original text and all 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.

This course satisfies a [Social and Behavioral Science \(S\) General Education requirement](#) providing instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and underlying theory or methodologies used in the social and behavioral sciences. Students will learn to identify, describe, and explain social institutions, structures, or processes. These courses emphasize the effective application of accepted problem-solving techniques. Students will apply formal and informal qualitative or quantitative analysis to examine the processes and means by which individuals make personal and group decisions, as well as the evaluation of opinions, outcomes, or human behavior. Students are expected to assess and analyze ethical perspectives in individual and societal decisions.

**Student Learning Outcomes and Civic Literacy Competencies:** Students will demonstrate ...

- understanding of the basic principles and practices of America's constitutional republic;
- knowledge of the nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and its amendments, and *The Federalist Papers*;
- knowledge of landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions;
- knowledge of the history and development of the American federal government and its impact on law and society;
- an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates; and
- the ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.

# American Federal Government (POS 2041)



## Weekly Pattern

This course includes lectures on Mondays and Wednesdays that will introduce material, and discussion sections that provide opportunities for students to engage synchronously in political discussions and civil debates with multiple points of view and to master the ability to synthesize information that informs civic decision making.

Readings from either [The Wall Street Journal](#), [The New York Times](#), or [The Federalist Papers](#) will usually be announced on Mondays in lecture and on Canvas.

Weekly assignments and weekly quizzes will be due on Wednesdays at 11:59 pm.

Weekly discussion sections (on Thursday or Friday) will allow you, along with your TA, to discuss complex issues in American politics to illustrate the themes of the course. Students should be prepared to read, evaluate, gather data, and discuss different points of view in discussion sections and in weekly assignments.



I encourage thoughtful participation in lectures. We will use the iClicker technology, [available free to UF students](#), to enable snap polling, stimulate discussion, and track lecture participation and attendance.



## How to Succeed

**Go to class.** Lectures emphasize and explain important concepts and theories beyond the text. Discussion sections provide opportunities to debate important related topics. **PowerPoints will be available on Canvas, but will not replace notetaking.**

**Read** assigned readings, including:

- Greenberg, Edward et al. *The Struggle for Democracy: 2024 Presidential Election Edition* (ISBN-13: 9780138361334).
- Ellis, R and M Nelson. 2019. *Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System*. (Fourth Edition; ISBN: 9781544390604)
- [The Federalist Papers](#). (selected)
- [The New York Times](#)
- [The Wall Street Journal](#).

**You must opt-in to UF All Access to read the books.** *The Federalist Papers* are public domain and [online](#). UF provides [free subscriptions](#) to both newspapers.

**Visit your TA or instructor** during office hours if necessary.

**Complete all the assignments and quizzes on time.**

**Materials and Supplies Fee:** N/A, but students must purchase two examination books ("blue books"), one each for the midterm and final exams. Students must also download the [iClicker app](#).

Assignments and weekly quizzes will be submitted via E-Learning (Canvas). E-Learning will also have grades for your Lecture Participation, Discussion Section participation, and Exams.

# Assessment & Grading

**Exams:** You will take two exams, which will be a combination of multiple choice and true/false justify. Exams cover material from lecture, discussion, readings, and current events. While the final exam is not cumulative, some issues are revisited later in the semester and could appear on the final exam. **Each exam must be taken on the scheduled date, except in documented emergencies.** The Midterm will be on Wednesday, October 15, at 8:30 am, and the Final Exam will be Thursday, December 11, at 7:30 am. Each exam is worth 25% of your grade.

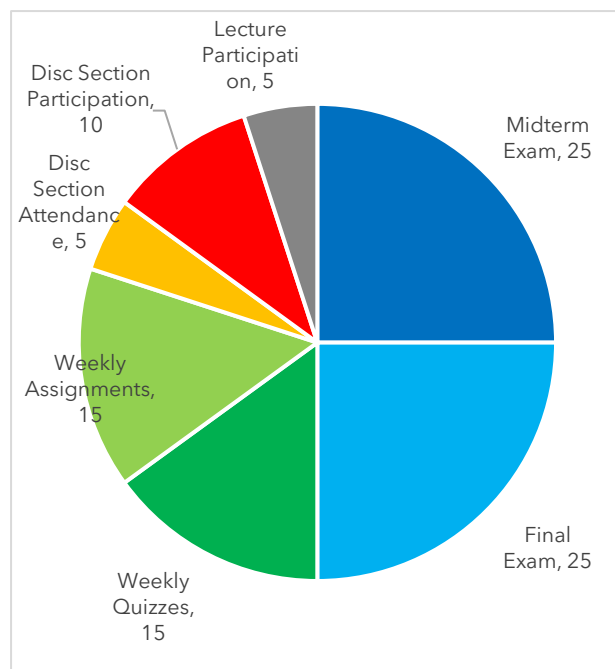
**Lecture Participation:** Attendance and participation in the lectures is required and is taken via iClicker Student - an app on your phone or tablet. These cannot be made up but may be waived with a documented excused absence. Lecture participation, the percentage of points earned out of those available, is worth 5% of your course grade.

**Weekly Assignments** will be announced on Mondays and are due Wednesdays at 11:59 pm on Canvas; they form the basis of most Thursday/ Friday class discussions. Assignments may take a variety of formats, including (1) a reflection on how a contemporary political issue or event is related to the readings, or (2) an empirical analysis using specified data. Your TA will grade these using the rubric on page 4. Together, these assignments are worth 15% of your course grade. Unless otherwise noted, students may not submit AI generated text (or edited versions of AI generated text) as their own work.

**Weekly Quizzes** are multiple choice and short answer. They cover assigned readings to ensure that students are prepared for discussion sections. They are due Wednesdays at 11:59 pm on Canvas, and are worth 15% of your final course grade.

**Late Work:** Canvas will assess a 5% per day penalty automatically to late work. Ordinarily, late work will not be accepted seven days past the due date, unless you provide documentation of prolonged extenuating circumstances.

**Discussion Sections:** Weekly discussion groups are not mini lectures, but are active discussions of the assigned readings (from *Debating Reform*) or the weekly assignments. Your TA will assign 15% percent of the course grade based on participation and attendance in discussion sections. Please see grading rubric for participation on page 4. Tentative grades will be posted every two weeks.



## Grading Scale

Grade	Grade Pts	Percent
A	4.00	93.0% - 100%
A-	3.67	90.0% - 92.9%
B+	3.33	87.0% - 89.9%
B	3.00	83.0% - 86.9%
B-	2.67	80.0% - 82.9%
C+	2.33	77.0% - 79.9%
C	2.00	73.0% - 76.9%
C-	1.67	70.0% - 72.9%
D+	1.33	67.0% - 69.9%
D	1.00	63.0% - 66.9%
D-	0.67	60.0% - 62.9%
E	0.00	Below 60.0%

See [UF grades and grading policies](#)

To receive SBS gen-ed credit, you must earn a C or better in the course.

## Grading Rubric: Discussion Section Participation

This portion of your grade (15%) is based on the quality of your participation in discussion group (Th/F), including listening, preparation, quality of contributions, impact on the class, and frequency of participation. Opinions held by other students, the instructor, the TA, and the guest speakers should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

	<b>Strong (A+ to B+)</b>	<b>Needs Development (B to C)</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory (C- or Lower)</b>
<b>Listening</b> (15 points possible)	Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor (15-13 points)	Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others (12-11 points)	Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others (including browsing other materials during class) (10-0 points)
<b>Preparation</b> (15 points possible)	Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, questions (15-13 points)	Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation (12-11 points)	Little evidence of having completed or thought about assigned material (10-0 points)
<b>Quality and impact of contributions</b> (45 points possible)	Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of assignments, previous remarks of other students, and insights about assigned material; comments frequently help move discussion forward (45-39 points)	Comments sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate lack of attention to previous remarks of other students; sometimes advances the conversation, but sometimes does little to move it forward (38-33 points)	Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in class; comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it (32 - 0 points)
<b>Frequency of participation</b> (25 points possible)	Actively participates at appropriate times (25-22 points)	Sometimes participates but at other times is "tuned out" (21-18 points)	Seldom participates and is generally not engaged or absent (17-0 points)

## Grading Rubric: Weekly Assignments

Your TA will use the following rubric to assess your weekly assignments; together they are worth 15% of your grade. Use of AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is not permitted.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Exceeds</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>Competent</b>	<b>Below</b>
<b>Analysis &amp; Critical Thinking</b> (75 points possible)	Synthesizes new concepts and formulates evidenced based conclusions; makes connections to other readings and/or current events. Key issues fully identified. (68-75 points)	Evaluates and analyzes the concepts provide some examples. Most key issues are identified. (60-67 points)	Understand and discusses basic concepts. Minimal use of readings and examples. Some key issues identified. (53-59 points)	Gathers and understands simple concepts related to the topic; discussion superficial; few or no examples given; key issues missing. (0-52 points)
<b>Conventions</b> (25 points possible)	Minimal spelling or grammar errors; well organized. Key organizing thesis present. (23-25 points)	Occasional spelling or grammar errors. Some sense of a thesis statement. (20-22 points)	Frequent errors, thesis not clear. (17-19 points)	Multiple grammatical and spelling errors, no thesis present. (0-16 points)



## Reading Schedule:

Date	Topic	Readings*
Aug 21-22	Introduction	
Aug 25-27	Power	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 1
Aug 28-29	Power	Debating Reform, Ch. 2
Sep 1	Labor Day	
Sep 3	Constitution	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 2; Federalist 51; Anti-Federalist 1
Sep 4-5	Constitution	Debating Reform, Ch. 1
Sep 8-10	Constitution	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 2
Sep 11-12	Constitution	Debating Reform, Ch. 6
Sep 15-17	Federalism	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 3; Federalist 39
Sep 18-19	Federalism	Debating Reform, Ch. 3
Sep 22-24	Structural Foundations	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 4
Sep 25-26	Structural Foundations	Debating Reform, Ch. 4
Sep 29	Public Opinion	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 5
Oct 1	Media	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 6
Oct 2-3	Media	Debating Reform, Ch. 5
Oct 6	Interest Groups	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 7; Federalist 10
Oct 8	Ian Rayder (Groups)	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 7
Oct 9-10	Campaign Finance	Debating Reform, Ch. 8
Oct 13	Social Movements	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 8
Oct 15	Midterm Exam	
Oct 16	Midterm Review	
Oct 17	Homecoming	
Oct 20	Parties	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 9
Oct 22	Elections	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 10
Oct 23-24	Elections	Debating Reform, Ch. 9
Oct 27-29	Congress	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 11
Oct 30-31	Congress	Debating Reform, Ch. 14
Nov 3-5	Presidency	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 12; Federalist 70
Nov 6-7	Presidency	Debating Reform, Ch. 16
Nov 10-12	Bureaucracy	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 13
Nov 13-14	Bureaucracy	Debating Reform, Ch. 17
Nov 17	Courts	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 14; Federalist 78
Nov 19	Tim Corrigan (Courts)	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 14
Nov 20-21	Courts	Debating Reform, Ch. 18
Nov 24-28	Thanksgiving Break	
Dec 1	Tom Rooney (Congress)	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 11
Dec 3	Civil Rights & Epilogue	Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 16
Thurs, Dec 11, 7:30 - 9:30 am	Final Exam	

\*In addition to the assigned texts, the instructor may assign up to two articles from *The New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* each week (maximum 3500 words total).

## Assignment Schedule:

Date	Topic	Brief description of assignment
Aug 27	Power	Short essay on “What is politics” using an article from WSJ or NYT (dated August 21-26). Briefly explain what the issue is about. Is there conflict? What is a political actor doing?
Sep 3	Constitution	Using both arguments in <i>Debating Reform</i> Chapter 1, write a short essay that assesses whether making it easier to amend the US Constitution would enhance or diminish democracy.
Sep 10	Constitution	Compare the US Constitution to another constitution using data from <a href="https://www.constituteproject.org/">https://www.constituteproject.org/</a> .
Sep 17	Federalism	Compare Florida to another state using data from <a href="#">Kaiser Family Foundation</a> , <a href="#">New York Times</a> , and the <a href="#">Tax Foundation</a> .
Sep 24	Structural Foundations	Compare the USA to another country using specified indicators from the <a href="#">United Nations</a> , the <a href="#">World Bank</a> , <a href="#">World Data.info</a> , <a href="#">Our World in Data</a> , <a href="#">Clearly Cultural</a> , and the <a href="#">Pew Research Center</a> .
Oct 1	Media	Short essay comparing or contrasting two different media outlets' coverage of an event or political issue (dated Sept 22 – October 1).
Oct 6	Interest Groups	Submit a question for the guest speaker (Ian Rayder).
Oct 8	Interest Groups	Compare interest group ratings from <a href="#">AFL-CIO</a> , <a href="#">National Right to Life Committee</a> , and <a href="#">Center for Legislative Accountability</a> for Florida's two US Senators and two of Florida's US Representatives.
Oct 13		Post questions for the midterm study guide.
Oct 15	Midterm Exam	
Oct 22	Parties	Short essay comparing or contrasting either two parties' or two presidential candidates' positions on an issue of your choice.
Oct 29	Congress	Short essay based on article from NYT or WSJ on how Congress (or a Representative, Senator, or committee) is exercising power (dated October 20-29).
Nov 5	Presidency	Short essay based on article from NYT or WSJ on how the President is exercising power (dated October 27-November 5).
Nov 12	Bureaucracy	Short essay based on article from NYT or WSJ on how a bureaucratic agency is exercising power (dated November 3-12).
Nov 17	Courts	Submit a question for the guest speaker (US District Judge Timothy Corrigan)
Nov 19	Courts	Listen to a Supreme Court oral argument at <a href="#">Oyez</a> .
Nov 21	Congress	Submit a question for the guest speaker (Former US Representative Tom Rooney)
Nov 24-28	Thanksgiving Break	
Dec 3		Post questions for the final exam study guide.
Thurs, Dec 11, 7:30 - 9:30 am	Final Exam	

## Contacting Prof. Martinez or Your TA

Please contact me or your TA if you need to discuss matters related to class. To protect your privacy rights, we cannot discuss your grade(s) over the phone, in front of other students, or via non-official email. *Always email from Canvas or your UFL email.*

### Prof. Michael D. Martinez

209 Anderson Hall

[martinez@ufl.edu](mailto:martinez@ufl.edu)

Office Hours: W 1-4 pm

[Request an appointment](#)

### Discussion Leaders (TAs):

TA office: Anderson 321

#### Payton Capes-Davis

[pcapesdavis@ufl.edu](mailto:pcapesdavis@ufl.edu)

Class Nos. 15511

Office Hours: T 10:00 – 11:00 am

#### Rory Church

[rwentworth.churc@ufl.edu](mailto:rwentworth.churc@ufl.edu)

Class Nos. 15510, 20183

Office Hours: M 10:30-11:30 am

#### Roshaun Colvin

[r.colvin@ufl.edu](mailto:r.colvin@ufl.edu)

Class Nos. 20151, 20153

Office Hours: W 1:00-2:00 pm

#### Rolland Grady

[gradyjanerolland@ufl.edu](mailto:gradyjanerolland@ufl.edu)

Class Nos. 15523, 15524

Office Hours: W 9:30-10:30 am

#### Abida Sultana

[sultana.a@ufl.edu](mailto:sultana.a@ufl.edu)

Class Nos. 15522, 21910

Office Hours: F 10:30-11:30 am

#### Hunter Tierman

[h.tierman@ufl.edu](mailto:h.tierman@ufl.edu)

Class Nos. 15525, 20152

Office Hours: R 9:25-10:25 am

## The Fine Print: Course, Department, and University Policy in Brief

**Attendance:** Attendance is required, consistent with [university policies](#).

Please contact your TA if you will miss more than two lectures or more than one discussion section, and provide verifiable documentation of illness, quarantine, serious family emergency, special curricular requirement (e.g., professional conference), military or legal obligation (e.g., jury duty or subpoena), severe weather conditions (as verified by the National Weather Service), or participation in official university activities. Documentation for excused absences must be received within one week of absence. Please request excused absences for religious observances as soon as foreseeable.

**Make up Exams:** If you have an emergency on exam day, please email the instructor and your TA immediately. Makeup exams are allowed with documentation, and will be scheduled by a designated TA. No one will be permitted to take any exam early.

**Course Evaluations:** Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online. Students can complete evaluations in three ways: [1] The email they receive from GatorEvals; [2] Their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals; or [3] The central portal at <https://my-ufl.bluer.com>. Guidance on how to provide constructive feedback is available at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

**Disability Services:** Students who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center by visiting <https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>

**Plagiarism/Cheating:** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code.” On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. See the [UF Conduct Code](#) website for more information. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

**Recording lectures/discussion:** Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. *In such a proceeding, the recording may be used as evidence either in support of or against the interests of the person making the recording.* All other purposes are prohibited. Recording other students during discussion is prohibited. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

**Cell phones (and cookies):** If a cell phone rings audibly during class, the owner of the phone will be required to bring cookies or alternative healthy treats for all Discussion Section participants (including the TA) at the next discussion section.

**Extra-Credit:** We do not offer extra credit on an individual basis. Any opportunities for extra credit will be announced on Canvas.