

## **POLI 2051: Introduction to American Government**

MWF 12:30 PM-1:20 PM  
220 Tureaud Hall

Instructor: Mr. Stephen Savage (ssavag5@lsu.edu)  
Office: 311 Stubbs Hall  
Office Hours: Wednesday 1:30 PM-2:30 PM and by appointment

### *Aim of the Course:*

This course has been designed with the aim of getting students to engage critically with issues and themes related to American Government, and to know the basic structures of decision making in the American political system.

This course is a general education course and has been designed with the LSU learning competency statement in mind: "LSU graduates will demonstrate an understanding of the informing factors of global interdependence, including economic forces, political dynamics, and cultural and linguistic difference."

### *Structure of the Course:*

The course will be divided into 3 units, with an exam being given at the end of each unit to test student mastery of course material covered in that unit. To reinforce student mastery of course material and to ensure students are keeping up to date on the reading, pop quizzes will be given throughout the course. Most Fridays will also be "discussion days", where the instructor and class discuss news articles or readings posted to Moodle. The purpose of these discussion days is to have students critically engage the course material and learn to discuss issues with others in a respectful manner.

### *Grading:*

15% Pop Quizzes  
25% Exam 1 (on Unit 1)  
25% Exam 2 (on Unit 2)  
35% Final Exam (Cumulative): **Final Exam is Thursday, May 3 from 7:30 AM-9:30 AM**

The pop quizzes given throughout the semester will account for 15% of the course grade. In addition to the quizzes, students will take three multiple choice exams throughout the semester. The first exam will cover the material discussed in the first unit and will be worth 25% of the student's final grade. The second exam will cover the material discussed in the second unit and will be worth 25% of the student's final grade. The third exam is the final exam and will be cumulative, covering material discussed in the third unit as well as the most pertinent information from the first two units. The final exam is worth 35% of the course grade.

Grading scale: A+ = 100-97 A = 96-93 A- = 92-90 B+ = 89-87 B = 86-83 B- = 82-80 C+ = 79-77 C = 76-73 C- = 72-70 D+ = 69-67 D = 66-63 D- = 62-60 F = 59 and Below

*Course Materials:*

There is one required textbook for this course, **The Irony of Democracy: An Uncommon Introduction to American Politics (17<sup>th</sup> Edition) (ISBN: 978-1-285-87028-1).**

*Attendance:*

Students are expected to attend every class and pay attention to the instructor. Roll will not be taken at every class, but the pop quizzes cannot be made up, even with a valid excuse, so it is in your best interest to attend class. Low quiz grades will be dropped, which will serve as a means of overcoming a quiz missed due to illness.

*Classroom Etiquette:*

Since the course will depend on discussion, it is important that you conduct yourselves in an appropriate manner in the classroom. Classroom etiquette requires that students be attentive and respectful to one another (this means listening when others are making comments or asking questions). Please make sure that your phones and other devices are turned off or are silenced during class time so they do not serve as a distraction to you and those around you.

*Student Obligations:*

It is your responsibility to come to class having read the material and to be ready to discuss the material assigned. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask. The only way I can know the items you are struggling with is for you to let me know. As a student it is also your responsibility to do your own work. Under no circumstances will cheating be tolerated.

*Students with Special Needs Policy:*

If you have special needs that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the Office of Disability Services so that such accommodations may be arranged. The Office of Disability Services is located in 115 Johnston Hall and may be reached at 225- 578- 5919.

## Course Calendar:

### Unit I: Examining the Irony of American Democracy

- Chapter 1: The Irony of Democracy
- Chapter 2: The Elite Consensus of the Founding Fathers
- Chapter 3: Elites in America
- Chapter 4: Masses in the United States
- Moodle readings/News articles as assigned

### Unit II: Interacting with Government

- Chapter 5: The Media: Elite-Mass Communication
- Chapter 6: Elections, Parties, and Democracy
- Chapter 7: Elites and Organized Interests
- Chapter 13: Civil Rights: Diversifying the Elite
- Moodle readings/News articles as assigned

### Unit III: The Structures of Government

- Chapter 8: Congress: The Legislative Elite
- Chapter 9: The Presidency
- Chapter 10: Courts: Elites in Black Robes
- Chapter 11: The Federal Bureaucracy
- Chapter 12: Federalism: State and Community Elites
- Moodle readings/News articles as assigned.