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## Introduction to American Government (Spring 2017)

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Political Science 2051-3  
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Mon, Wed, Fri 8:30-9:20  
112 Audobon Hall  
Office Hrs: Wednesday 9:20-11:20;  
by appointment

### Introduction

The purpose of this course is to provide you with an overview of American government. Discussion will center on how the American system of government came to exist and the various forces that have shaped its subsequent development. Thus, much of our focus will be on the structure of our government including executive, judiciary, legislative, and electoral institutions, among others. Throughout the course I will contrast the American system with other systems around the world. Additionally, I will be attempting to integrate discussions about how the phenomena discussed in theories of rational choice and collective action may influence or constrain the way our government was formulated and the way it works.

### General Education Objectives

This course also aims to educate students about and instill an enduring desire to understand our political and social system. Through completion of the course, students will be able to demonstrate their factual knowledge of the subject matter therein. This course falls under LSU's General Education curriculum, the purpose of which is described as follows on the Faculty Senate website (<http://www.cae.lsu.edu/genedhome/>):

The general education of LSU students spans the four years of undergraduate study. In courses designated as general education, students begin a process of developing competencies or essential learning outcomes which continues through their study in upper-level elective courses and courses in the major field of study. LSU's General Education Component represents a conviction on the part of the faculty that LSU graduates will be able to communicate effectively through multiple media; will have a basic appreciation of historical, cultural and philosophical complexity; will be aware of the economic, political, cultural, and linguistic factors which inform global interdependence; will be able to identify and solve important problems through research-based inquiry which employs scientific and mathematical methods, and appropriate technology; and will have the requisite abilities and motivation to participate effectively in the civic life of communities.

### Required Textbook

The textbook for the course is *Gateways to Democracy: The Essentials, 3rd Edition* (2016) by John G. Geer, Wendy J. Schiller, Jeffrey A. Segal, Richard Herrera, and Dana K. Glencross.

## Course Requirements

Students should read the chapter under discussion **prior** to the class meeting so that they can participate in class discussion and ask informed questions. There will be four exams over the course of the semester. Each exam is worth 100 points and consists of 45 multiple choice questions and one short answer question (no more than one paragraph). The exams will not be cumulative in nature. Should you miss an exam, we can make arrangements for a makeup exam. However, the onus is on you to contact me letting me know you desire to take the makeup. I do not need to be made aware of why you missed an exam unless you miss more than one exam. If you miss more than one exam, you will be required to provide a doctors' note, funeral notice, or some form of documentation pertaining to a family, or other, emergency. The makeup will consist of two essay questions worth 50 points each and will require much more extensive answers than the short answer question on the standard version of the exam.

The lectures I give during our class meetings are intended to prepare you for the exam. Material may be presented in the lecture that is not in the textbook and **will be** on the exam. Class begins at 8:30 am. In spite of the ungodly hour, students should come to class prepared and be attentive and responsive during the lecture with cellular devices silenced at the very least. I reserve the right to penalize students who engage in disruptive behavior using electronic devices. Students are **expected to attend class regularly, punctually, and for the duration of class meeting**. I reserve the right to penalize those who arrive late or leave class early without clearing it with me before hand.

Throughout the semester, I will be giving small one question quizzes. These will be administered at my discretion. I will say, however, that the likelihood that I will give one of these quizzes will be much higher on days where attendance to our class meeting is low. The question will be an easy one that anyone present in class should have no trouble answering. This is a mechanism for encouraging class participation in the form of attendance.

Students are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct which can be located at <http://students.lsu.edu/saa/students/code>. Violators will be referred immediately to the Dean of Students. During exams, **all** electronic devices must be turned off and put away. Failure to abide this rule is considered cheating.

## Bonus

You can earn 5 bonus points by showing me your voter registration card. I do not care about your partisanship or other personal information. I would just like to see that you are indeed registered. Additional bonus opportunities may arise throughout the semester. Should they do so, I will provide the details to you during our class meetings.

## Grading

There will be 4 exams worth 100 points each and ten quizzes worth 5 points each for a total of 450 possible points in the course (excluding bonus). Final grades will be determined based on how many points you have earned out of this total.

## Readings Schedule and Topic Outline

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January 18 <sup>th</sup>	No readings, Topics: Rational Choice and Collective Action
January 20 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 1: Gateways to American Democracy
January 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Chapter 2: The Constitution
January 25 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 2: The Constitution
January 27 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 2: The Constitution
January 30 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 3: Federalism
February 1 <sup>st</sup>	Chapter 3: Federalism
February 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Chapter 3: Federalism
February 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Exam One</b>
February 8 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 4: Civil Liberties
February 10 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 4: Civil Liberties
February 13 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 4: Civil Liberties
February 15 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 5: Civil Rights
February 17 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 5: Civil Rights
February 20 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 5: Civil Rights
February 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Chapter 6: Public Opinion and the Media
February 24 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 6: Public Opinion and the Media
February 27 <sup>th</sup>	No class for Mardi Gras Break
March 1 <sup>st</sup>	No class for Mardi Gras Break
March 3 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Exam Two</b>
March 6 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 7: Interest Groups
March 8 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 7: Interest Groups
March 10 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 8: Political Parties
March 13 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 8: Political Parties
March 15 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 9: Elections, Campaigns, and Voting
March 17 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 9: Elections, Campaigns, and Voting
March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 10: Congress
March 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Chapter 10: Congress
March 24 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 10: Congress
March 27 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Exam Three</b>

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## Readings Schedule and Topic Outline (*Cont'd*)

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March 29 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 11: The Presidency
March 31 <sup>st</sup>	Chapter 11: The Presidency
April 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Chapter 11: The Presidency
April 5 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 12: The Bureaucracy
April 7 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 12: The Bureaucracy
April 10 <sup>th</sup>	No class for Spring Break
April 12 <sup>th</sup>	No class for Spring Break
April 14 <sup>th</sup>	No class for Spring Break
April 17 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 12: The Bureaucracy
April 19 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 13: The Judiciary
April 21 <sup>st</sup>	Chapter 13: The Judiciary
April 24 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 13: The Judiciary
April 26 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 14: Economic, Domestic, and Foreign Policy
April 28 <sup>th</sup>	Chapter 14: Economic, Domestic, and Foreign Policy
May 1 <sup>st</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Final Exam</b> (Exact Date TBA)