

COURSE SYLLABUS



Course Title: Democracy in the United States of America (MA LEVEL)

Course code: POS365/665

Semester and year: Fall 2017

Day and time: Wednesdays, 18:30

Instructor: Alexei Anisin, PhD

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Consultation hours: Before and after class and by appointment, Office 402

Credits US/ECTS	3/6	Level	Advanced
Length	15 weeks	Pre-requisite	N/A
Contact hours	42 hours	Course type	Master Elective

1. Course Description

This course provides a basic introduction to the politics and government of the United States of America. It focuses on the US national government and assumes no prior knowledge of the system. We will cover both formal and informal American political institutions (Congress, Judiciary, Interest Groups, Parties, etc.) and how individuals behave as members and participants in these institutions. We also will examine and evaluate the American system of government as designed by the "Founding Fathers" in light of the changes in political culture, institutions, and the composition of the electorate occurring in the United States over the past century. Students will also be assessed according to their understanding of key theoretical frameworks that have been used to explain reoccurring empirical phenomena in U.S. Democracy, such as (but not limited to): Presidential election outcomes; Mid-term election outcomes; Policy preference alignment; among others.

Given that this is a MA course, the difficulty of content will be reflected in the mid-term ; presentation content; final-exam essay questions, and in reading loads.

2. Student Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand and coherently explain the U.S. system of governance;
- Understand the Constitution, its origin and the Founders;
- Be familiar with the function of three branches of government;
- Understand checks and balances;
- Give concrete examples of checks and balances;
- Demonstrate the ability analyze law making in U.S. Democracy (Congressional behavior);
- Understand the medium-voter theorem;
- Give concrete examples of third-party dynamics in U.S. elections;
- Produce a research paper (research and writing skills)

3. Reading Material

Required Materials

- Ginsberg, B., Lowi, T., and Weir, M., *We the people: An introduction to American politics*. New York: Norton, 2011. (9th edition) (the 8th, 10th, 11th editions are also acceptable)
- All journal article readings will be provided to you online via NEO – these are listed in the class schedule in subsequent sections of this syllabus.

Recommended Background Reading Materials (the following texts are available in AAU's library)

Henretta, J., 1987. *America's history: since 1865*. Chicago: The Dorsey Press. [This is particularly useful if you have little background knowledge on the U.S. and major historical developments]

Shank, A., 1993. *American politics, policies, and priorities*. 6th ed. Madison: Brown Publishers.

Bloomfield, M., 2000. *Peaceful revolution: constitutional change and American culture from Progressivism to the New Deal*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

4. Teaching methodology

Each week we will meet once and our time will be split up between a first half lecture, followed by a seminar/discussion. In the latter, please feel free to utilize this time to ask questions related to either previous readings or lectures. Discussion may involve a more focused inquiry as how recent political science literature addresses the topic, current events surrounding the topic, or a talk comparing American perspectives on the subject to those of another country or countries. Principally, you will be required to partake in a discussion of the readings assigned for that week.

5. Course Schedule

Date	Class Agenda
Class 1 Sept. 6	Topic: Introduction Description: The Background of American Democracy – Historical Context – Geographical Dynamics Reading: <i>We the People</i> , Chapter 1: Introduction, The Citizen and Government.
Class 2 Sept. 13	Topic: Origin of U.S. Democracy Description: Ancient Greece; Tocqueville Reading: Exert from Euben, J.P. and Wallach, J.R., 1994. <i>Athenian political thought and the reconstruction of American democracy</i> . Cornell University Press. Skocpol, T., 1997. The Tocqueville problem: Civic engagement in American democracy. <i>Social Science History</i> , 21(04), pp. 455-479.
Class 3 Sept. 20	Topic: The Constitution Description: The Constitution – Interpretation – Agents of Interpretation Reading: <i>We the People</i> , Chapter 2: The Founding and the Constitution.

	<p>We the People, Chapter 12: The Federal Courts</p> <p>Court case - Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896</p> <p>Court Case – Brown v. Board of Education, 1954</p>
<p>Class 4 Sept. 27</p>	<p>Topic: Federalism and the Presidency Description: Federal vs. State Governments; Presidency dynamics; Reading: We the People, Chapter 3: Federalism.</p> <p>Howell, W.G. and Rogowski, J.C., 2013. War, the presidency, and legislative voting behavior. <i>American Journal of Political Science</i>, 57(1), pp.150-166.</p>
<p>Class 5 Oct. 4</p>	<p>Topic: Congress Description: Overview of the Senate and House of Representatives; Incumbency Advantage(s) Reading: We the People, Chapter 9: Congress.</p> <p>Bondurant, E.J., 2010. The Senate Filibuster: The Politics of Destruction.</p>
<p>Class 6 Oct. 11</p>	<p>Topic: The Bureaucracy Description: Executive Agencies; Congressional Oversight; Senate Approval Reading: We the People, Chapter 11: Bureaucracy.</p> <p>Rockoff, H., 1998. <i>By way of analogy: The expansion of the federal government in the 1930s</i>. In <i>The Defining Moment: The Great Depression and the American Economy in the Twentieth Century</i> (pp. 125-154). University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>Weingast, B.R. and Moran, M.J., 1983. Bureaucratic discretion or congressional control? Regulatory policymaking by the Federal Trade Commission. <i>The Journal of Political Economy</i>, pp.765-800.</p> <p>Calvert, R., McCubbins, M.D. and Weingast, B.R., 1989. A theory of political control and agency discretion. <i>American journal of political science</i>, 33(3).</p>
<p>Class 7 Oct. 18</p>	<p>Topic: take home Mid-Term exam + Public Opinion Description: What is public opinion? Who are the public? Geographical Dynamics; Polling issues Reading: We the People, Chapter 5: Public Opinion.</p> <p>Enns, P.K. and Wlezien, C., 2011. Group opinion and the study of representation. Who gets represented, pp.1-25.</p> <p>Downs, A., 1957. <i>The Statics and Dynamics of Party Ideologies. An Economic Theory of Democracy</i>. Harper Collins Publisher.</p>
<p>Class 8 Oct. 25</p>	<p>No class - break</p>

Class 9 Nov. 1	<p>Topic: Elections and Representation Description: Reading: We the People, Chapter 7: Political Parties, Participation, and Elections</p> <p>Clarke, H.D., Kornberg, A., Scotto, T.J., Reifler, J., Sanders, D., Stewart, M.C. and Whiteley, P., 2011. Yes we can! Valence politics and electoral choice in America, 2008. <i>Electoral Studies</i>, 30(3), pp.450-461.</p>
Class 10 Nov. 8	<p>Topic: Political Participation and Turnout Description: Social Capital in the U.S.A; Voter turnout Reading: Putnam, R.D., 1995. Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. <i>Journal of democracy</i>, 6(1), pp.65-78.</p>
Class 11 Nov. 15	<p>Topic: Interest Groups Description: Money in U.S. Politics; Citizens United (2010) Reading: We the People, Chapter 8: Interest Groups.</p> <p>Jezer, M. and Miller, E., 2012. Money Politics: Campaign Finance and the Subversion of American Democracy. <i>Notre Dame Journal of Law, Ethics & Public Policy</i>, 8(2), p.467.</p>
Class 12 Nov. 22	<p>Topic: Geography and Representation Description: Who votes for who and why? Reading: Scala, D.J. and Johnson, K.M., 2016. Red Rural, Blue Rural: The Geography of Presidential Voting in Rural America. <i>The Geography Teacher</i>, 13(3), pp.118-123.</p> <p>Gimpel, J.G., Lee, F.E. and Kaminski, J., 2006. The political geography of campaign contributions in American politics. <i>Journal of Politics</i>, 68(3), pp. 626-639.</p>
Class 13 Nov. 29	<p>Topic: Race Description: Assessing the legacy and institutionalization of racism in U.S. Democracy Reading: Thoreau, H.D., 1849. On the duty of civil disobedience.</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. A letter from a Birmingham Jail.</p>
Class 14 Dec. 5	<p>Topic: Inequality – Socio-economic problems Description: Overview of U.S. Democracy's most salient problems Reading: Page, B.I., Bartels, L.M. and Seawright, J., 2013. Democracy and the policy preferences of wealthy Americans. <i>Perspectives on Politics</i>, 11(01), pp.51-73.</p> <p>Fukuyama, F., 2015. Why is democracy performing so poorly?. <i>Journal of Democracy</i>, 26(1), pp.11-20.</p>
Final Exam Dec. 13	

6. Course Requirements and Assessment (with estimated workloads)

Assignment	Workload (average)	Weight in Final Grade	Evaluated Course Specific Learning Outcomes	Evaluated Institutional Learning Outcomes*
Attendance and Class Participation	40	15%	Regular contribution to class discussions, critique of readings	1; 2; 3
Mid-Term take home	30	25%	Ability to research and write an essay on a set question that is persuasive and logically structured, using evidence from related course material and relevant academic sources	1; 3
Presentation	30	15%	Ability to carry out an in-class presentation, speak clearly and contextualize the topic in reference to the readings	2; 3
Final Exam - in class	50	45%	Ability to demonstrate an understanding of course material with sufficiently detailed answers of core concepts relevant to U.S. Democracy	1; 3
TOTAL	150	100%		

*1 = Critical Thinking; 2 = Effective Communication; 3 = Effective and Responsible Action

7. Detailed description of the assignments

[Participation]: You are required to attend and participate in every week of instruction, this entails the following

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Procedural: 1. Being physically present 2. Be in possession of the assigned readings for that week (electronic or print form acceptable) 3. Verbally contribute to discussion according to the time limits provided for responses	50%
Applicational: 1. Analyze assigned readings 2. Raise questions or bring up discussion point(s) 3. Responding to questions and criticize classmates' opinions 4. Base responses in theories and concepts from the syllabus 5. Defend your argument's validity through reference to assigned readings	50%

[Mid-Term]: This will be provided to you in the beginning of Week 7. You will then have 48 hours to complete and turn in your essay(s) on the class website. Along with submitting

your take home exam online via NEO, you are also required to send it via email (to alexei.anisin@aauni.edu)

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
<p>Procedural:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Answer the required number of essay questions (2) 2. Follow the guidelines and instructions provided 3. Put first and last name on first page of both essays 4. Upload the essay on the class website 5. Email your essay(s) to the provided address 	50%
<p>Applicational:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Articulate arguments that are logical and clearly understandable 2. Critically explain major concepts and theories from the course 3. Show an ability to explain themes drawn from the primary readings from 6 weeks of instruction 4. Use relevant empirical examples to back up your argument 5. Ensure that each paragraph in your essay is logically connected to the next 6. Establish a direct and clearly articulated connection between the introduction and conclusion of your essay(s) 	50%

[Presentation]: Each student will carry out a short presentation (10-15 minutes) summarizing one executive order that was signed and either carried out (or rejected) after initiation. The age of the executive order must not pre-date FDR (1930s). Topics must be chosen by students by Class 5.

The power point presentation must include a bibliography with accurate citations and acceptable academic sources.

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
Pick a Presidential executive order (from the time of FDR – present) and research it independently.	5%
Email a presentation topic for approval (to alexei.anisin@aauni.edu) before class of week 5	5%
Email a PowerPoint file of your presentation before class of week 7	5%
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a 10-15-minute power point presentation 2. Explain the order’s origin 3. Highlight the order’s institutional setting/characteristics 4. Include information about key actors + identities; interests 5. Negotiation attempts / bargaining 6. Make a prognosis and or assessment about its effect on U.S. democracy 	85%

[Final Exam]: Each student will write three in-class essays in response to comprehensive questions about the readings. By comprehensive, I am referring to an ability to base an

argument with reference to at least 7 weeks of readings (1 reading from each of these 7 weeks as a minimum).

Assessment breakdown

Assessed area	Percentage
<p>Procedural:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be on time and present 2. Use the full provided time to write the essays 3. Use standard citation formatting throughout the essay 4. Answer the stated question with a logically structured argument 5. Write only in print, not cursive 6. Use no materials other than knowledge from classes and studying (i.e. no paper notes) 7. Put first and last name on essay 	50%
<p>Applicational:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show an ability to be reasoned and convincing in your explanation of theories and concepts drawn from assigned readings 2. Demonstrate (in your writing and argument) understanding of key concepts from readings assigned for the entire course 3. Use at least 4 sources (from 4 individual weeks of readings) in support of your argument 4. Ensure that each paragraph in your essay is logically connected to the next 5. Establish a direct and clearly articulated connection between the introduction and conclusion of your essay 	50%

8. General Requirements and School Policies

General requirements

All coursework is governed by AAU’s academic rules. Students are expected to be familiar with the academic rules available in the Codex and Student Handbook and to maintain the highest standards of honesty and academic integrity in their work.

Electronic communication and submission

The university and instructors shall only use students’ university email address for communication. It is strongly recommended that any email communication between students and instructors take place in NEO LMS.

Each e-mail sent to an instructor that is about a new topic (meaning not a reply to an original email) shall have a new and clearly stated subject and shall have the course code in the subject, for example: “COM101-1 Mid-term Exam. Question”.

All electronic submissions are carried out through NEO LMS. No substantial pieces of writing (especially take home exams and essays) can be submitted outside of NEO LMS.

Attendance

Attendance is required. The university recommends, as a minimal policy, that students who are absent 35 percent of the course should be failed (or administratively withdrawn from the course if the absences are excused).

Absence excuse and make-up options

Should the student be absent from a class for relevant reasons (illness, serious family matters), s/he needs to submit an Absence Excuse Form supplemented with documents

proving the reasons for absence to the Assistant Dean. Should a student be absent during the add/drop period due to a change in registration this will be an excused absence if they submit an Absence Excuse Form along with the finalized add/drop form. The form and documents must be submitted within one week of absence. If possible, it is recommended to inform the instructor about the absence in advance.

Students whose absence has been excused by the Dean are entitled to make up exams they missed provided that the nature of the exam allows for a make-up. The students are responsible for contacting their instructor within one week from the date the absence was excused, and for making arrangements with the instructor about make-up options as necessary.

Unexcused absences

Students are allowed two unexcused absences. Absences above this number may result in failure of the course.

Late work: No late submissions will be accepted – please follow the deadlines.

Electronic devices

Any electronic devices (phones, tablets, laptops...) may be used only for class-related activities (taking notes, looking up related information...). Any other use will result in being marked absent and/or being expelled from the class. No electronic devices may be used during the tests.

Eating is not allowed during classes.

Cheating and disruptive behavior

If a student engages in disruptive or other conduct unsuitable for a classroom environment of an institution of learning, the instructor may require the student to withdraw from the room for the duration of the activity or for the day and shall report the behavior to the Dean.

Students engaging in behavior which is suggestive of cheating (e.g. whispering or passing notes) will, at a minimum, be warned. In the case of continued misbehavior the student will be expelled from the exam and the exam will be marked as failed.

Plagiarism and Academic Tutoring Center

Plagiarism is “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2nd Edition, Random House, New York, 1993)

Turnitin’s White Paper ‘The Plagiarism Spectrum’ (available at <http://go.turnitin.com/paper/plagiarism-spectrum>) identifies 10 types of plagiarism ordered from most to least severe:

1. CLONE: An act of submitting another’s work, word-for-word, as one’s own.
2. CTRL-C: A written piece that contains significant portions of text from a single source without alterations.
3. FIND-REPLACE: The act of changing key words and phrases but retaining the essential content of the source in a paper.
4. REMIX: An act of paraphrasing from other sources and making the content fit together seamlessly.
5. RECYCLE: The act of borrowing generously from one’s own previous work without citation; To self plagiarize.
6. HYBRID: The act of combining perfectly cited sources with copied passages—without citation—in one paper.

7. MASHUP: A paper that represents a mix of copied material from several different sources without proper citation.
8. 404 ERROR: A written piece that includes citations to non-existent or inaccurate information about sources
9. AGGREGATOR: The "Aggregator" includes proper citation, but the paper contains almost no original work.
10. RE-TWEET: This paper includes proper citation, but relies too closely on the text's original wording and/or structure.

As the minimum policy the types of plagiarism from 1 through 8 results in the failing grade from the assignment and must be reported to the Dean. The Dean may initiate a disciplinary procedure pursuant to the Academic Codex. Allegations of bought papers and intentional or consistent plagiarism always entail disciplinary hearing and may result in expulsion from AAU.

If unsure about technical aspects of writing, students are encouraged to consult their papers with the tutors of the AAU Academic Tutoring Center. For more information and/or to book a tutor, please contact the ATC at: <http://atc.simplybook.me/sheduler/manage/event/1/>.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are asked to contact their instructor as soon as possible to discuss reasonable accommodation.

9. Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage*	Description
A	95 – 100	Excellent performance. The student has shown originality and displayed an exceptional grasp of the material and a deep analytical understanding of the subject.
A-	90 – 94	
B+	87 – 89	Good performance. The student has mastered the material, understands the subject well and has shown some originality of thought and/or considerable effort.
B	83 – 86	
B-	80 – 82	
C+	77 – 79	Fair performance. The student has acquired an acceptable understanding of the material and essential subject matter of the course, but has not succeeded in translating this understanding into consistently creative or original work.
C	73 – 76	
C-	70 – 72	
D+	65 – 69	Poor. The student has shown some understanding of the material and subject matter covered during the course. The student's work, however, has not shown enough effort or understanding to allow for a passing grade in School Required Courses. It does qualify as a passing mark for the General College Courses and Electives.
D	60 – 64	
F	0 – 59	Fail. The student has not succeeded in mastering the subject matter covered in the course.

* Decimals should be rounded to the nearest whole number.

Prepared by and when: Alexei Anisin, August 16, 2017

Approved by and when: