

# **POLI 201. American National Government**

Department of Political Science  
University of South Carolina  
Fall 2020  
Carolina Core: GSS and VSR

Instructor: Dr. Joshua Meyer-Gutbrod (Dr. MG)

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Office Hours: Mondays - 9:30-11:30AM

Section 6: 9:30-10:30AM

Section 10: 10:30-11:30AM

By Appointment: Wednesday 9:30-10:30

## **Course Overview**

### Academic Bulletin Description

The formation and development of the national government, its organization and powers.

### Course Description

This course is an introduction to the formation and development of U.S. national government, its politics, organization, powers, and citizenship practices. We will apply basic political science methodology as we survey and analyze many of the fundamental ideals, institutions, and outcomes of the American national government towards the end of assessing the health of American democracy and citizenship. We will examine elements of American politics including the founding era, federalism and separation of powers, civil rights and civil liberties, elections, voting, and political participation, various mediating groups (i.e. interest groups, political parties, the media), the main political institutions (Congress, the courts, the president) and public opinion. Students will be expected to learn various descriptive facts about American politics; to employ theoretical frameworks from political science and related disciplines such as economics and psychology to explain political phenomena; and to consider alternative interpretations of the ways politics works in practice as well as the influence of cultural diversity on contemporary political issues. Moreover, students will consider the source and relevance of values in decision making with respect to the resolution of political conflict and controversies.

Due to the nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, this course will be conducted online with opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

Courses are dynamic arrangements and I reserve the right to change this syllabus at my discretion at any point during the semester.

### Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course

## Learning Goals

### *Official Goals*

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- Express an informed opinion about the health of the American democracy and citizenship based the upon the various social and political science theories and analytical methodologies we examine in class;
- Define and explain not only the broad principles, ideals, and ethical values, but also the debates and compromises that accompanied the founding of the American republic and that still often animate its politics, including the role of cultural diversity;
- Explain and analyze the logic of the American constitutional system, as envisioned by its framers, as well as the tensions and shortcomings of that system, and its relationship to social well-being and the resolution of conflict;
- Explain and analyze the internal dynamics and interplay of the three main branches of the U.S. government and the questions of separated authority, check-and-balance, and accountability that still exist;
- Demonstrate understanding of what shapes American citizenship and participation and the various processes, barriers, opportunities, institutions, and mediating groups that have helped or hindered equity and democratic responsiveness.

### *My Goal for the Course*

- Learn to effectively participate in American politics by navigating our existing political institutions with the goal of effecting change and making your voice heard!

## Course Materials

### *Readings*

There is only one required textbook for this course:

#### **Theodore Lowi et al., American Government: Power and Purpose – Core edition**

You can use either edition:

- 15th edition
  - E-Text ISBN: 978-0-393-67503-0
  - Paper-Text ISBN: 978-0-393-67500-9
- 14th edition
  - Paper-Text ISBN: 978-0-393-67500-9 978-0-393-28376-1

Note that an e-book version of Lowi et al. is available from the publisher for \$40.00 ([www.wwnorton.com](http://www.wwnorton.com)).

In addition to the required textbook reading, there are additionally scholarly articles designed to engage you in active research within the discipline of political science. All of these readings can be found on Blackboard. Students should view lectures after having

read the assigned readings for that section of the course. This approach will greatly help with understanding the material in class.

### *Software*

Required access to online platform: Packback Questions: ISBN- 978-0-692-09460-0.  
Cost \$25 (on website).

Packback Questions is an online discussion platform powered by artificial intelligence. This platform is specifically designed to encourage curiosity and increase critical thinking & writing skills. On Packback, students will be required to apply reading and lecture topics to pose and respond to questions related to current issues in American politics.

How to Register on Packback: An email invitation will be sent to your email on record from [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co) prompting you to finish registration. If you don't receive an email (be sure to check your spam, or you use a different email), you may register by following the instructions below:

- Create an account by navigating to <https://questions.packback.co/login> and clicking "Sign up for an Account" Note: If you already have an account on Packback you can login with your credentials.
- Then enter our class community's lookup key into the "Join a Community" module in Packback.  
Community Lookup Key: 3affeb4e-5f11-479a-8343-13448e603c83
- Follow the instructions on your screen to finish your registration.

Packback may require a paid subscription. Refer to [www.packback.co/product/pricing](http://www.packback.co/product/pricing) for more information.

## **Course Details**

### Course Format

This is a fully online course. Online classes are not easier than face-to-face lecture classes. To succeed in an online class, you must be extremely motivated and well organized. Regular Internet access is essential for successful completion of the course. You will need to purchase the required material listed above by the first day of the course.

The class structure will consist of three learning modules ("Course Modules"). These modules will be divided into weekly sub-modules which will include:

- Short Videos of PowerPoint-type lectures, and links to videos, animations and other materials related to the subject.
- The class notes / slides in PDF format.
- Packback response submission (through the Packback Questions link).

Assignments for each course module will include:

- Post 2 questions on the Packback discussion forums per module.

- Post at least two responses per module week to Packback questions submitted by your peers. - All posts will be due by the Module midterm day.
- A midterm exam at the end of the module. (The final exam will occur upon completion of the final module in lieu of a midterm and will be cumulative)

This is an entirely Web-based course. We have no face-to-face class meetings, and you will complete your work asynchronously - which simply means that you will be working on it at different times than your colleagues. You can log into the class to do your work at whatever time is convenient for you as long as you are meeting class deadlines.

It is important to understand that this is not a self-paced class or an independent study. You will have assigned deadlines, and work must be submitted on time. You may not save up your assignments to complete in the last weeks or days of the semester. One critical part of this class is regular interaction with other students and with me, your instructor. Each assignment sequence must be completed on schedule – you can't work ahead or get behind and be successful.

### General Assignment Information

- All coursework (assignments, exams, etc.) is secured in Blackboard with a username and password.
- All online tests are secured in Blackboard with a password.

### Feedback on assignments

Some of the assignments are automatically graded on Blackboard, and by the PackBack platform. Other assignments will be graded as soon as possible. Specific feedback will be provided as necessary through Blackboard.

### Course Communication

I will be communicating with you regarding grades and assignments. If you need to get in touch with me, the best method is via email. Generally, I will reply to emails within 24 hours during the work week and will provide feedback on assignments within 72 hours. You may also post questions pertaining to the course on the Blackboard Discussion Board. These questions will be answered within 24 hours during the work week.

If you are having trouble with this course or its material, you should contact me via email to discuss the issues.

Announcements will be posted to this course whenever necessary. If there is any other information I think is important, I will send it to your email address you have in Blackboard. It is your responsibility to ensure that your email account works properly in order to receive email.

Below is how you check your email address in Blackboard:

- Access [blackboard.sc.edu](http://blackboard.sc.edu)
- Click your name on the main Blackboard navigation panel on the left

- Review your email address. By default, Blackboard uses your university-issued email address
- Your email address in Blackboard coincides with your preferred university email. If you are unsure of your preferred email, [check your account \(myaccount.sc.edu\)](#). For more information on setting your preferred university email, please see the [How To Change Your Primary University Email Address \(https://scprod.service-now.com/sp?id=kb\\_article\\_view&sysparm\\_article=KB0011464\)](https://scprod.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0011464) Knowledge Base article.

### Module Schedule

All course deadlines are listed in Eastern Time Zone. Blackboard will record all deadlines in this time zone. If you are in a different time zone, plan accordingly. Each week will begin on a Monday and will end on Friday.

### Technology Requirements

You must have access to the Internet to view/hear lectures. No special software is required.

The PowerPoint lecture presentations, links to articles, assignments, quizzes, and rubrics are located on the Blackboard site for the course. To participate in learning activities and complete assignments, you will need:

- Access to a working computer that has a current operating system with updates installed, plus speakers or headphones to hear lecture presentations (transcripts provided);
- Reliable Internet access and a USC email account;
- A current Internet browser that is compatible with Blackboard (Google Chrome is the recommended browser for Blackboard);
- Microsoft Word as your word processing program; and
- Reliable data storage for your work, such as a USB drive or Office365 OneDrive cloud storage.

If your computer does not have Microsoft Word, Office 365 ProPlus package is available to you free of charge and allows you to install Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, OneNote, Publisher, and Access on up to 5 PCs or Macs and Office apps on other mobile devices including tablets. Office 365 also includes unlimited cloud storage on OneDrive. To download Office 365 ProPlus, log into your student (University) email through a web browser, choose Settings (top right corner), and select software. If you have further questions or need help with the software, please contact the [Service Desk \(https://www.sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/university\\_technology\\_services/support/servicedesk.php\)](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/servicedesk.php).

### Minimal Technical Skills Needed

Minimal technical skills are needed in this course. All work in this course must be completed and submitted online through Blackboard. Therefore, you must have

consistent and reliable access to a computer and the Internet. The minimal technical skills you have include the ability to:

- Organize and save electronic files;
- Use USC email and attached files;
- Check email and Blackboard daily;
- Download and upload documents;
- Locate information with a browser; and
- Use Blackboard.
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### Technical Support

If you have problems with your computer, technology, IT-related questions, support, including Blackboard, please contact the Division of Information Technology (DoIT) Service Desk at (803) 777-1800 or submit an online request through the [Self-Service Portal \(https://scprod.service-now.com/sp\)](https://scprod.service-now.com/sp) or visit the [Carolina Tech Zone \(https://www.sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/university\\_technology\\_services/support/ctz.php\)](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/university_technology_services/support/ctz.php). The Service Desk is open Monday – Friday from 8:00 AM – 6:00 PM (Eastern Daylight Time). If you are located in the Columbia, SC area, the Thomas Cooper Library at USC has computers for you to use in case you encounter computer issues/problems. If you are not located in the Columbia, SC area, most regional campuses and public libraries have computers for public use.

### How to Get Help for the Packback Questions platform:

If you have ANY questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please contact their customer support team directly at [help@packback.co](mailto:help@packback.co). For a brief introduction to Packback Questions and why we are using it in class, watch this video: [vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions](https://vimeo.com/packback/Welcome-to-Packback-Questions)

## **Course Assignments and Evaluation**

### Requirements

Midterm Exams (1 @ 20%, 1 @ 25%):

The midterms will be assigned at the end of the first two modules and will cover lectures and readings from that module. Midterms will be conducted online using blackboard.

Final (30%):

The final will be scheduled in accordance with university policy and will act as the exam for the third and final module. Unlike the midterms, the final will be cumulative, covering material for the entire course. The final will be conducted online using blackboard at the University appointed time.

Online Participation (25%):

We will be making use of the online software Packback for discussions. Packback allows students to contribute questions and respond to the questions of other students. Students are responsible for posting 2 questions per module and 2 responses per module week. This means students will need to post ten responses in the first module, eight in the

second, and 10 in the third. Responses are due by the midterm/final exam for that module. Questions are due at intervals during the module, as noted in the schedule. Late posts will not be accepted.

More information on this can be found in the Evaluations section.

## Evaluation

### *Packback and Online Discussions*

Students are responsible for posting 2 questions per module and 2 responses per module week. All responses are due by the module midterm. Question due dates are listed below.

### *To post a Packback Question*

Find a current news article from the list of online news sources (listed below) about a subject that is related to American National Politics. The article has to have been posted within the last 15 days.

- First, write a brief summary of the article. What is it talking about?
- Then, post a question / discussion / counterpoint, that emerges from the article. It may be something that intrigued you, or something that sparked your curiosity by reading the article. It may be some personal reflection if the article is related close to you, your lifestyle, or your hometown, etc.... It may be a view that the article did not consider but you think it is relevant. Add something to the article!
- Finish the article by posting a question that could be addressed with material from the course. The question should relate directly to your discussion of the article!

The entire paragraph (summary and question) should be at least 100 words. In addition to the word count, the paragraph should include the URL of the article, the title of the article and the original author (if available).

### *To post a Packback Response*

You need to respond to one of your fellow students' posts for each week in the module. You should provide thoughtful and well-developed arguments that engage with the original question and the answers posted by your peers by incorporating arguments and material from the course. You can include references from other news sites to support your point of view / response.

### *Grading*

Grading is based on the "curiosity" points students are awarded per Packback's AI scoring system. The required points for completion are 60 "curiosity points" for your question and 40 for your answers. The Packback system will help guide you to achieve this score.

### *Approved online news sources*

BBC  
Bloomberg  
Fox News  
Washington Post

Los Angeles Times  
New York Times  
Wall Street Journal  
The Hill

USA Today  
NPR  
The Guardian  
Politico

**Reminder:** If the article you want to access is behind a Paywall, use the Library to gain access.

*Some advice for posting*

- **Use the course material to help you engage with the news.**
- **Check your partisanship at the door.** We all have opinions on the policies. The goal is not to debate the policies but to understand the politics.
- **Get some perspective.** Think like a politician, your peers, a voting constituent. How would they react to what is being said.
- **Broaden your search.** Bring in an article from a different news sources that covers the same material. Compare the frames being used and understand the motivation for those frames
- **Add something personal.** How does this relate to you and your peers?

## **Class Schedule**

*Introduction – Aug. 20-21*

### Module 1: Elected Institutions and Checks and Balances

*The Constitutional System – Aug. 24 – Aug. 28*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 1-2

*Checks and Balances, Federalism – Aug. 31 - Sept. 4*

- Lowi et al., - Ch. 3
- Madison, Federalist Papers #9, #10 and #51

### First Packback Question Due – September 4

*Presidency – Sept. 7 – Sept. 11*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 7
- Jacobs, L. R., & Shapiro, R. Y. (2000). *Politicians don't pander: Political manipulation and the loss of democratic responsiveness.* University of Chicago Press. - Ch. 2

*Congress – Sept. 14 – Sept. 18*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 6



- Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. *Setting the agenda: Responsible party government in the US House of Representatives*. Cambridge University Press, 2005. – Ch. 2

### **Second Packback Question Due – September 18**

*Polarization – Sept. 21 – Sept. 25*

- Lee, F. E. (2016). *Insecure majorities: Congress and the perpetual campaign*. University of Chicago Press. – Ch. 2-3

### **Midterm Exam - 1 – September 25**

### **Module 2: Public Policy and Implementation**

*Public Policy – Sept. 28 – Oct. 2*

- Lowi, Theodore, "Four Systems of Policy, Politics, and Choice", *Public Administration Review* 32 (July/August, 1972): 298-310.
- Mettler, S. (2011). *The submerged state: How invisible government policies undermine American democracy*. University of Chicago Press. - Ch. 1

### **Third Packback Question Due – October 2**

*Civil Rights/Civil Liberties – Oct. 5 – Oct. 9*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 4-5
- McAdam, D. (1999). *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency 1930-1970*. The University of Chicago Press. –Ch. 3

*Executive Office – Oct. 12 – Oct. 15*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 8
- Carpenter, Daniel P. "Groups, the media, agency waiting costs, and FDA drug approval." *American Journal of Political Science* (2002): 490-505.

### **Fourth Packback Question Due – October 15**

*Courts – Oct. 19 – Oct. 23*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 9
- McGuire, Kevin T., and James A. Stimson. "The least dangerous branch revisited: New evidence on Supreme Court responsiveness to public preferences." *The Journal of Politics* 66.4 (2004): 1018-1035.

### **Midterm Exam 2 – October 23**

### **Module 3: Public Opinion Formation and Identity**

*Campaigns and Elections – Oct. 26- Oct. 30*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 11
- Valentino, Nicholas A., Fabian G. Neuner, and L. Matthew Vandenbroek. 2017. “The Changing Norms of Racial Political Rhetoric and the End of Racial Priming” *Journal of Politics* 80(3).

*Public Opinion – Nov. 2 – Nov. 6*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 10
- Zaller, John R.. (1992). *That Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press. – Chapter 4

**Fifth Packback Question Due – November 6**

*Parties and Partisanship – Nov. 9 – Nov. 13*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 12
- Aldrich, John H. *Why parties?: The origin and transformation of political parties in America*. University of Chicago Press, 1995. – Ch. 2

*Interest Groups – Nov. 16 – Nov. 20*

- Lowi et al., Ch. 13
- Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page. 2014 “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.” *Perspectives on Politics*.

**Sixth Packback Question Due – November 20**

*The Media – Nov. 23 – Nov. 27*

- Lowi et al., Ch.1 4
- Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, H. (2018). *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. Oxford University Press. – Ch. 2

**Final Exam - TBD**

## **Final Notes**

### Honor Code

Every student has a role in maintaining the academic reputation of the university. It is imperative that you refrain from engaging in plagiarism, cheating, falsifying your work and/or assisting other students in violating the Honor Code. Two important components of the Honor Code:

- Faculty members are required to report potential violations of the Honor Code to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity.

- When a student is uncertain as to whether conduct would violate the Honor Code, it is their responsibility to seek clarification from the appropriate faculty member.

Your enrollment in this class signifies your willingness to accept these responsibilities and uphold the Honor Code of the University of South Carolina. Any deviation from this expectation can result in a (insert academic penalty here) and a referral to the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity. You can learn more about the University's policies on academic integrity at:

[https://www.sc.edu/about/offices\\_and\\_divisions/student\\_conduct\\_and\\_academic\\_integrity/index.php](https://www.sc.edu/about/offices_and_divisions/student_conduct_and_academic_integrity/index.php)

### Student Disability Resources

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, contact the Student Disability Resource Center: 777-6142, TDD 777-6744, email [sads@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:sads@mailbox.sc.edu), or stop by LeConte College Room 112A. All accommodations must be approved through the Student Disability Resource Center.

### Diversity and Inclusion

The university is committed to a campus environment that is inclusive, safe, and respectful for all persons, and one that fully embraces the Carolinian Creed. To that end, all course activities will be conducted in an atmosphere of friendly participation and interaction among colleagues, recognizing and appreciating the unique experiences, background, and point of view each student brings. You are expected at all times to apply the highest academic standards to this course and to treat others with dignity and respect.