

FEATHER RIVER COLLEGE
POL 101: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course Description

In this course you will examine national, state and local government. You will look at ideas that inform American democracy, the processes and actors in this political system, as well as the institutions of government and how these structures determine and frame politics. This class will give you a greater understanding of power and politics in the system, particularly how, where, and why policy is made and how government decisions are shaped by ideologies—or ideas about what government *should* do. You will also look into how groups struggle over power and resources in the system and how this process, though often critiqued, is about balancing the many interests in society. There are many topics and issues to discuss in this class, especially in a presidential transition year. The goal of this class is to help you better understand the role of government and its relationship with society, and the tensions between the values of equality, freedom, and order that are held so dearly in American political culture. You will then start to see how this tension underscores many political debates in this country. Because of this election year, it is very important to gain a fuller appreciation of citizen participation and its function in this democracy.

This course:

- ✓ Partially satisfies FRC graduation requirements
- ✓ Partially satisfies CSU requirement for instruction in U.S. and California ideals and institutions of government (Area E)
- ✓ Partially satisfies requirements for Political Science AA-T and AA degrees
- ✓ Transfers - CSU (Area D8)
- ✓ Transfers - UC (IGETC) Area 4H
- ✓ Transfers - most private and out of state colleges (consult transfer college catalog)

Course Student Learning Outcomes

In addition to promoting the mission of [FRC](#), I hope this class helps you build written communication and critical thinking skills, and that it makes you more comfortable and confident in your understanding of American politics and institutions of government. Ultimately, I hope this class prepares you for your academic and professional futures.

Upon the completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the founding and development of the U.S. Constitution.
2. Identify and evaluate institutions and political processes (state and federal).
3. Discuss and analyze contemporary political issues and operations (state and federal).
4. Analyze the role of culture, diversity and ideology in shaping public opinion and public policy.
5. Appraise the importance of citizen participation in politics at all levels.

Course Materials

The required book is a FREE ONLINE TEXTBOOK. You are required to access and READ this material.

Website access for the PDF document:

<https://florida.theorangegrove.org/og/file/2e74506d-6095-0531-a2fb->

Lenz, Timothy O., and Holman, Mirya. 2013. *American Government*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida.
ISBN: 9781616101633

Recommended Reading: *Guide to California Government by the League of Women Voters*, 15th edition (or most recent).

You also need to know what is going on in the world! As a culturally and politically literate student, you will read news (those with editorial boards...not blogs) sources daily.

Course Requirements

1. **Constitution Day display and reflection (300 points):** Each student is responsible for creating a display (200 points) that celebrates the US Constitution or brings up debates around constitutional issues. This may be a poem, song, poster display, trivia handout, survey, etc. If there are 30 students in the class, I expect 30 products. Students will assist me in setting up the campus Constitution Day displays on Sept. 15th. You will then submit a two page, 2-point font, double spaced reflection (100 points) of what you learned, or are thinking, about the importance of the Constitution and political participation today. (*SLOs #1 and #5*)
2. **Political Briefs (3 X 100 points):** These short essays should be 1½ to 2 typed pages (one inch margins, 12 point font, double spaced). Each will have specific topics and instructions. These will be submitted on the Canvas site (TurnItIn). (*SLOs #2 and #3*)
3. **Paper Assignment: (400 points)**. The purpose of this four to five-page paper is to develop your analytical thinking. It is not an in-depth research paper; it involves locating and using a government site and two appropriate articles. I am looking for organization, and the exploration of diverse perspectives in your analysis. This will be submitted on the Canvas site (TurnItIn). (*SLO #4*)

POL Writing Criteria: used to assess written work

	<u>EXCELLENT</u>	<u>GOOD</u>	<u>AVERAGE</u>	<u>UNACCEPTABLE</u>
Answers the question(s) ~20% of grade	The work clearly and thoroughly addresses the assignment instructions and stays on track. It effectively relates to the topic(s) in the course material.	The work is understandable and adequately addresses the assignment instructions. It relates to the topic(s) in the course material.	The work only partially relates to the assignment instructions. It doesn't relate adequately to the topic(s) conveyed in the course material.	The work is not on topic; instructions were not followed.
Shows an understanding of the topic/ issues ~30% of grade	The work shows an outstanding grasp of the topics. Specific and relevant examples are used and the main ideas around an issue are clear. Concepts and terms from the course material are used accurately and Debates are pointed out. Relevant current events are referenced.	The work shows a general grasp of the topics. A few relevant examples are used that show this understanding. Current issues are mentioned.	There is vague evidence of understanding the topic. Examples and specifics are missing in the work or are not relevant to the topic.	The work shows little or no grasp of the assigned material.
Analyzes a topic/issue ~30% of grade	The work highlights different perspectives towards issues from different groups discovered from various and legitimate sources. Presentation of these perspectives shows an understanding of the topic's complexity. The work shows a thoughtful consideration and evaluation of the different perspectives and concludes with an argument or position based on this analysis.	The work discovers and addresses different perspectives towards an issue and looks at its importance for society. There is some thoughtful consideration of more than one position, and a good evaluation of perspectives to inform a position.	The work vaguely addresses diverse perspectives. Concluding opinions or positions are not clearly tied to an evaluation of the various perspectives.	The work is descriptive or simply opinion. There is no mention or evaluation of diverse perspectives.
Organization & Writing ~20% of grade	The writing is well-developed, appropriate in length, and clearly organized. When appropriate, this may include a clear introduction, thesis, answer or argument, supporting examples, and a conclusion. Writing is original few errors. Citations are accurately cited when required by the assignment.	The writing is original, and organized using an introduction, examples, and conclusion. Writing errors do not detract significantly from the work. Citations/ references are cited when required.	There are organizational and grammatical problems that detract from the clarity of the writing. When necessary or required, references are missing or incorrect.	The writing lacks clarity and coherence.

