

POLA 2100 – American Government Fall 2017

**Lecture: MW 10-10:50 in Boggs
105**

Discussion Sections listed below

Instructor of Record:

J. Celeste Lay

Office: 121C Norman Mayer Building

Office Hours: M 11-12, T 2-4 & by
appointment

Email: jl原因@tulane.edu

Teaching Assistants:

Wesley Hill (whill3@tulane.edu)

Section 01: 1-1:50 MI 3

Section 03: 10-10:50 BO 105

Antonio Baiz (abaiz@tulane.edu)

Section 02: 1-1:50 RB 104

Section 04: 10-10:50 HE 125D

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the theories, institutions and processes that define the workings of the government of the United States. There is no better time to learn about the founding of the United States government and how it works today. We will look at these issues, and many others, as we cover the basics of who, where, when and how of U.S. politics. As such, students should be prepared to keep up with current events.

Learning Outcomes & Methods of Assessment:

- Students will have demonstrated a basic understanding of the operations of American government.
- They should have reached a threshold of political knowledge that will enable them to understand what they read and hear in the news, and to allow them to fully participate as active democratic citizens.
- Students will demonstrate this knowledge through exams and written assignments, as well as active class participation.

Structure of Course:

On Mondays and Wednesdays, class will meet in Boggs 105 for a lecture with Prof. Lay. On most Fridays (except those designated on the schedule below), students will meet in smaller sections with a Teaching Assistant. A different room has been assigned to your section number. **You can find your section # on your [registration materials](#). You will be in either POLA 2100-01, -02, -03, or -04.**

Attendance at both lecture and discussion section is required, and you must attend the discussion section in which you are registered.

Your TA is the point person for this course. If you have questions or concerns about course material, class absences, your performance, or any other class-related issue, you should **FIRST** go to your TA. In most cases, he or she will be able to help you with any issue that arises, particularly as it related to class material and performance.

You can come to Prof. Lay if you are unable to resolve the issue with the TA. Prof. Lay's first question is likely to be about how the issue has been handled with your TA. That is not to say that Prof. Lay is off-limits; only that she expects you to communicate more regularly with your assigned TA.

Required Materials:

Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics (The Essential)*, 8th Edition (Sage Press, 2017)

This book is available in the bookstore or students may purchase a copy elsewhere. Make sure to get the proper edition with **ISBN # 978-1-5063-4998-5**. In any case, note that readings in this book are due immediately, and you are expected to complete the readings on time. It is not a valid excuse to say that you are still waiting for your book to arrive.

Course Requirements:

Regular Attendance, Active Class Participation, Quizzes: 15%

All students are expected to attend class, **be on time**, and be prepared for class by having read the assigned material for that day. Despite the larger class size, the lectures will often involve contributions from the class, so students should not expect to be passive learners.

- In discussion sections, participation **is a function not only of attendance, but also the quality of contributions**. This means students must demonstrate through their questions and discussion that they have done the assigned reading and attended lecture, and that they have thought about the issues under examination.

- TAs may also give **pop quizzes** on the reading throughout the semester. Note that active participation will not compensate for poor performance on quizzes, nor will a perfect quiz average compensate for inactive participation.

Exams: 70%

- Exam 1 – 20%
- Exam 2 – 20%
- Final Exam – 30%

Exams 1 and 2 will be held on Fridays in Boggs 105 at 10-10:50 even if your discussion section is later in the day or in a different room. On exam days, there will be no discussion sections.

Final examinations are to be held at the times publicized in the Final Examination Schedule posted on the Registrar's website – **NO EXCEPTIONS**. In this case, the final exam date & time correspond to the time/date of the lecture (MW 10-10:50).

Any student who is absent from a final examination will be given permission to take a make-up examination only if an acceptable excuse is presented to an associate dean in Newcomb-Tulane

College before the exam or within 24 hours after the exam. A student whose absence from a final examination is not excused is to be given an "F" in the course.

Writing Assignment: 15%

See the attachment at the end of course schedule for the writing assignment prompts.

Grading Scale:

A	92.5 - 100
A-	89.5 - 92.4
B+	87.5 - 89.4
B	82.5 - 87.4
B-	79.5 - 82.4
C+	77.5 - 79.4
C	72.5 - 77.4
C-	69.5 - 72.4
D	59.5 - 69.4
F	Lower than 59.4

Advice: The highest correlating factor with good grades in college is **class attendance**. You will only know what the instructor thinks is important by showing up to class. Beyond showing up, students who take notes during class and read assigned material prior to class earn higher grades, on average, than their counterparts who don't write anything down and don't open a book until test time (or worse). **This class is a note-heavy course, meaning you should never come to class without a notebook and a pen.**

Special Circumstances:

If you believe you may encounter barriers to the academic environment, please feel free to contact me and/or the Goldman Center for Student Accessibility. This information is confidential. Any student with approved academic accommodations is encouraged to contact me during office hours or to email me to schedule an appointment.

If you have questions regarding registering a disability or receiving accommodations, please contact the [Goldman Center](#) online or at 504.862.8433.

Students needing accommodations must provide me with a Course Accommodation Form and if applicable, an Exam Request Form ("blue sheet") to schedule an exam to be taken at the Goldman Center.

Accommodations involving exams must be requested **well in advance**. Any student receiving an exam-related accommodation should plan to take the exam at the Goldman Center.

If you have any other special circumstances, such as involvement with a university activity that requires you to miss class, let me know as soon as possible. If, during the semester, issues arise that are likely to affect your participation, attendance or performance, it is in your interest to let me know as soon as they arise. You

may consult with your academic advisor or [Erica Woodley in Student Affairs](#) if issues are serious enough that you need temporary accommodations.

Absence Policy:

Attendance is mandatory at both lecture and discussion. If you miss class due to an excused absence, your TA will make arrangements with you to make up what you missed.

Whether excused or unexcused, it is **your responsibility** to communicate with the TA and to get notes from a classmate.

Excused absences include:

- University-sponsored events (not athletic practices – games only),
- Deaths in the family,
- Religious observance,
- Jury duty,
- Illnesses with appropriate documentation.

They do not include:

- Family reunions, weddings, graduations,
- Illnesses without documentation,
- Traffic, parking difficulties,
- Court dates, getting pulled over,
- Computer crashes, lines for the printer, running out of paper/ink,
- and most of the other reasons students commonly miss class.

Note the university academic calendar and the syllabus's schedule of assignments (**we have class the Monday before Thanksgiving**). I am not responsible for reminding you about due dates or holidays that are listed on the syllabus.

Any unexcused absence on an exam or quiz means you forfeit all points. There are no exceptions and do not bother to ask for one. If absences, tardiness, or under-preparation becomes a problem, your grade will suffer.

Any student with perfect attendance in discussion sections will earn **five points on his or her final exam.**

Academic Dishonesty:

Academic honesty is expected of all students at Tulane. Your responsibilities as a Tulane student include being familiar with the [honor code](#) and the plagiarism policy of the University.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the [Honor Board](#), and may result in a failing grade for the class, academic probation, or expulsion.

Ignorance is not a valid excuse.

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to the following actions:

- a) presenting another's work, ideas, expressions or research as if it were one's own;
- b) failing to acknowledge or document a source even if the action is unintended (i.e., plagiarism);
- c) fabricating or altering citations;
- d) giving or receiving, or attempting to give or receive, unauthorized assistance or information in an assignment or examination;
- e) submitting the same assignment in two or more courses without prior permission of both instructors;

- f) having another person write a paper or sit for an examination (includes online paper-mills);
- g) using tests or papers from students in prior semesters;
- h) sabotaging the work of another through destroying or preventing work from receiving fair assessment (especially in group projects)

Plagiarism includes copying & pasting material from any source (Wikipedia, paper mill, other internet site, book, journal, newspaper, magazine, etc.) without proper attribution. Plagiarism also includes non-verbatim borrowing of words or ideas through paraphrasing or summarizing another's work(s) without proper attribution.

Sexual Harassment & Classroom Conduct

Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As [“One Wave.”](#) Tulane is committed to **providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination** based on race, ethnicity, creed, religion, gender, gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as all forms of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, and stalking.

If you (or someone you know) have experienced or experiences discrimination, domestic violence, sexual assault or sexual harassment, know that you are not alone. [Resources and support are available.](#) You can [report](#) any incident confidentially. All of your

communications on these matters will be treated as either “Strictly Confidential” or “Mostly Confidential.”

Strictly Confidential
<i>Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one's self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission</i>
Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) (504) 314-2277
Student Health Center (504) 865-5255
Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE) (504) 654-9543

Mostly Confidential
<i>Conversations are kept as confidential as possible, but information is shared with key staff members so the University can offer resources and accommodations and take action if necessary for safety reasons.</i>
Coordinator of Violence Prevention (504) 314-2161
Tulane University Police (TUPD) (504) 865-5911
Office of Institutional Equity (504) 862-8083

Please note: **Your instructors and teaching assistants are Mostly Confidential sources.** We are required by law to report instances of sexual harassment, assault, or discrimination to university authorities.

Classroom Rules

1. **No electronic devices may be used in class**, including lap top computers (unless you have a documented disability), cell phones, tablets, I-watches, etc.

This policy extends to audio and video recording of lectures and discussion sections. Students are expected to respect the intellectual property of course instructors. All course materials are copyrighted property of the instructor. As such:

- Students must obtain permission to record classroom activities.
- When permission is given, such content is restricted to personal use.
- Recordings are not to be shared with other students and should not be posted online.

Devices are not allowed to be out of backpacks or purses during quizzes and exams. **Any student who is caught with one of these devices out will have his/her test/quiz taken and will be charged with the Honor Code violation of cheating.**

2. Students must not be chronically late, absent or disruptive; otherwise, your grade will suffer.

If you have an activity (class, work, athletic practice, etc.) that meets just before this class, you are still expected to make it to class on time. **If you cannot make it to class on time, then do not take this course.**

Once class has started, students should only leave the room in cases of emergency. This means students should

take care of all personal business before class begins. **Except in emergencies, students will not be allowed to leave and return to the classroom during an exam.**

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1: Politics & US Founding

Aug 28: Introductions

Aug 30: Chapter 1

Sept 1: Discussion Section

- Read [Spotting Fake News](#) & Thinking Critically about Politics
- What are your main sources of information about politics? What are the potential biases in these sources? How can you broaden your base or improve the quality of your sources?

Week 2: The Constitution

Sept 4: No Class – Labor Day

Sept 6: Chapter 3 + pp 111-113 on amending the Constitution

Sept 8: LECTURE

No Discussion Section – Class in Boggs 105 at 10AM

Week 3: Federalism

Sept 11: Chapter 4

Sept 13: Chapter 4

Sept 15: Discussion Section

- Read ["Alcohol Policy"](#) & ["Not There Yet."](#) Be prepared to discuss the following: What are the appropriate issues that should be decided by states and what should be federal issues? Does it create confusion to have different laws in different states, or is this a strength of the U.S. system?

Week 4: Civil Liberties

Sept 18: Chapter 5 (thru p 145)

Sept 20: Chapter 5 (thru p 155)

Sept 22: Discussion Section

- Free speech is often easier to support in the abstract than in

reality. Recently, several speakers at college campuses have been attacked, some speeches cancelled. Read ["The Limits of Freedoms of Speech"](#) and think through these questions:

- Should student groups be able to prevent a speaker from giving a speech at Tulane? What if this speaker espouses beliefs that are inconsistent with your beliefs? What if the speaker is likely to incite violence or causes other groups to feel unsafe?

Week 5: Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

Sept 25: Chapter 5 (remainder)

Sept 27: Chapter 6 (thru p 184)

Sept 29: Test 1 in Boggs 105 at 10AM

Week 6: Civil Rights cont'd

Oct 2: Chapter 6 (thru p 198)

Oct 4: Chapter 6 (remainder)

Oct 6: Discussion Section

- On average, women in the United States are paid less than men. This is true for nearly every career (e.g. male doctors earn more than female doctors, etc.). Read [the evidence](#) about the wage gap and discuss the following questions:
- What are the most common rationales for a gender wage gap? What does the AAUW argue can be done to ameliorate the gap? Is this an issue that should be a part of a social movement, like suffrage?

Week 7: Congress

Oct 9: Chapter 7 (thru p 227)

Oct 11: Chapter 7 (thru p 238)

Oct 13: No Class – Fall Break

Week 8: Congress/Presidency

Oct 16: Chapter 7 (remainder)

Oct 18: Chapter 8 (thru p 268)

Oct 20: Discussion Section

- The Constitution includes few qualifications for presidents. Read [“Is Donald Trump Qualified to Be President?”](#) and think about the following questions: Should we amend the Constitution to include additional qualifications? What would they be? Should we remove the qualifications on age, residency or citizenship?

Week 9: Presidency/Bureaucracy

Oct 23: Chapter 8 (remainder)

Oct 25: Chapter 9 (thru p 303)

Oct 27: Discussion Section

- Executive power has always been a central question in American government. Re-read [“Let’s Revisit: What’s at Stake?”](#) on p 287 and discuss the following questions: Does President Trump have too much power vis-à-vis the other branches? Should Congress control foreign policy? What would happen if Pres. Trump engaged in the actions of his predecessor, FDR, in the lead-up to WWII?

Week 10: The Judiciary

Oct 30: Chapter 10

Nov 1: Chapter 10

Nov 3: Test 2 in Boggs 105 at 10AM

Week 11: Public Opinion

Nov 6: Chapter 11

Nov 8: Chapter 11

Nov 10: Discussion Section

- Read [“Vox Populi”](#) think about these questions: What role should public opinion have in a democracy? Some

argue elected officials should stick closely to the views of the public. Others contend the public is uninformed.

Week 12: Political Parties

Nov 13: Chapter 12

Nov 15: Chapter 12

Nov 17: Paper Due

Discussion Section

- Read [“The More the Merrier”](#) and think through these questions: Should we have more than two-parties? What are the advantages and disadvantages? What reforms would be necessary to US gov’t system to make multiple parties viable?

Weeks 13-14: Interest Groups/Campaigns

Nov 20: Chapter 13

Nov 22-24: No Class

Nov 27: Chapter 13

Nov 29: Chapter 14

Dec 1: Discussion Section

- Watch [“Last Week Tonight”](#) about the sugar industry. Interest groups have a bad reputation among many Americans. Be prepared to discuss the following: What roles ought interest groups play in American politics? When is their participation or influence inappropriate? What’s the difference between the NAACP’s role in the civil rights movement and the NRA’s role in gun rights today?

Week 15: The Media

Dec 6: Chapter 15

Dec 8: Chapter 15

Final Exam – Dec 17 8AM-12PM

Writing Assignment Prompts

Select **one** assignment from the following. These exercises are designed to get you engaged in contemporary U.S. politics.

Paper is due no later than Nov 17, but can be turned in earlier.

To get full credit for the assignment, you need to:

- Complete all the required elements of the activity you choose, and
- Write a brief paper (about 800 words).
- Turn it in **at the beginning of class**. Any paper turned in after class has begun will be docked 5 points; papers turned in after class ends are docked one letter grade per day.
- The quality of the writing is as important as the content. Grammatical errors and typos are often the result of sloppiness and poor proofreading; they will count against you.
- Hard copies should be provided and **papers must be stapled**. Font size, margins, etc. are up to the student.

1. Register to vote and analyze registration laws. Analyze the registration laws of your voting state and compare them to two other states in different regions. Include a table comparing these states. What are the requirements and documentation needed to register? What are the deadlines? Discuss how the requirements and processes are similar and different across these states.

Provide turnout statistics for each state in the last presidential election and evaluate how the rules of registration might affect voter turnout. Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of having different election laws in the varying states.

2. Define “fake news” and find evidence of a fake news story.

Attach a copy of the story to your paper. What is the source? Who is the author? What is the purpose of the story? Who are the readers/viewers of this source? How large is the readership/viewership? What was/is the effect of this particular news story? Why would anyone believe the story? What was/is the effect of fake news more generally? What can or should be done to limit fake news or the effects of fake news?

3. Write a formal letter to your U.S. Representative or one of your U.S. Senators about a current public policy issue.

Tell your representative what you want him or her to do on this issue. If it is a bill before the legislature, reference it specifically. If you want your rep to introduce legislation, be specific about what this bill should look like. Why should your rep support your position on this issue? Include your research about this person’s statements or record on this issue. **Send the letter no later than September 22** to increase your chances of a response before the paper is due. The letter is your paper – so it should be professionally written, cited, and well researched. If you receive a response, include it.