

**POLA 2100 – American Government
Spring 2020**

**Lecture: MW 9-9:50 in Mayer 200A
Discussion Sections listed below**

Instructor of Record:
J. Celeste Lay
Office: Cudd Hall
Office Hours: F 8-10am
Email: jlay@tulane.edu

Teaching Assistant:
Pamela Pareja
Office: Norman Mayer
Office Hours: TBD
ppareja@tulane.edu
Section 01: F 9-9:50 (Mayer 200A)
Section 02: F 11-11:50 (Navy 210)

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 Mayer 200A 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 or -02.** Attendance at both lecture and discussion section is required.

By Week 2, students must pick and stay either section. Some students from Section 01 may move into Section 02, but not after the second week.

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, she will be able to help you with any issue that arises, particularly as it related to class material and performance.

Come to Prof. Lay if you are unable to resolve the issue with the TA, or if the TA suggests this. 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:

Author: Matthew Kerbel

Title: AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: Your Voice, Your Future, Sixth Edition Election Update

Step #1: Please visit the Academic Media Solutions' website at: <https://academicmediasolutions.textbookmedia.com/default.aspx>

Step #2: Please go thru the registration process by clicking the "**Register Now**" link. Select **STUDENT** as the type of user. Save the username (email address) and password for future visits.

Step #3: To find your textbook used in class, **AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: Your Voice, Your Future, Sixth Edition Election Update** by Matthew Kerbel click on **Booklist**. Select the format you want to purchase. Click on "**Add to Cart**", then Checkout. Once the order is placed, you will receive a confirmation by email. Print orders may take up to seven business days, but you'll have access to the online eBook immediately in My Account. In addition, there are a variety of affordable study aids also available for purchase that go with your textbook.

- Paperback (Full Color): 978-1-942041-36-8
- Paperback (B/W): 978-1-942041-34-4
- Loose-Leaf (B/W): 978-1-942041-35-1
- Online eTexbook Access Card: 978-1-942041-37-5

You may purchase any edition. You do not need to bring the textbook to class, so an online edition will work fine.

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.

- We will 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: 65%

- Exam 1 – 20%
- Exam 2 – 20%
- Final Exam – 25%

Exams 1 and 2 will be held on Fridays in Mayer 200A at 9-9:50 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.

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: 20%

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.**

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.

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1: Politics

Jan 13: Introductions & Chapter 1

Jan 15: Chapter 1

Jan 17: Discussion Section – Wealth Inequality & Fairness, Tradeoffs, & Misperceptions

- Watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QPKKQnijnsM&spfreload=1>
- Questions to consider: What assumptions does the narrator make about fairness? Why do you think the perceived distribution of wealth is so different from the actual distribution? What trade-offs might be necessary to bring the actual levels of wealth inequality in line with desired levels?

Week 2: The Constitution

Jan 20: No Class – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Jan 22: Chapter 2

Jan 24: LECTURE – Chapter 2

No Discussion Section – Class in Mayer 200A at 9am

Week 3: Federalism

Jan 27: Chapter 2

Jan 29: Chapter 2

Jan 31: Discussion Section

- Read [“Alcohol Policy”](#) [“Why Federalism Keeps Me Up at Night”](#) and [“Both Democrats and Republicans care about ‘states rights.’”](#) 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: Public Opinion & Participation

Feb 3: Chapter 3

Feb 5: Chapter 4

Feb 7: 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 5: Political Parties

Feb 10: Chapter 6

Feb 12: Chapter 6

Feb 14: Test 1 in Mayer 200A at 9AM

Week 6: The Media

Feb 17: Chapter 5

Feb 19: Chapter 5

Feb 21: Discussion Section

- Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kvl3ySb8HE>
- Read [Spotting Fake News](#)
- 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 7: Campaigns & Elections

Feb 24: No Class – Mardi Gras Break

Feb 26: No Class – You're Welcome

Feb 28: LECTURE – Chapter 7

No Discussion Section – Class in regular classroom at 9am

Week 8: Congress

March 2: Chapter 9

March 4: Chapter 9

March 6: Discussion Section

- Impeachment readings TBD

Week 9: The Presidency

March 9: Chapter 10

March 11: Chapter 10

March 13: Discussion Section

- Read: [“Why the United States Needs a Woman in the Presidency.”](#) and [“Have We Had Enough of the Imperial Presidency Yet?”](#) Consider the following questions: Would it make a difference if a woman were president? Why or why not? What is the imperial presidency and why do many historians argue it is dangerous? Is President Trump an imperial president?

Week 10: Interest Groups

March 16: Chapter 8

March 18: Chapter 8

March 20: Test 2 in Mayer 200A at 9AM

Week 11: The Judiciary

March 23: Chapter 12

March 25: Chapter 12

March 27: Discussion Section

- Watch https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wjAwH_OOmI and read <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/inside-pete-buttigieg-s-plan-overhaul-supreme-court-n1012491>
- What was/is the motivation for expanding the Supreme Court's size? Does changing the size of the Court affect its legitimacy? Is there a way to remove politics from the Court? How does the Court maintain its legitimacy and popularity among the American people?

Week 12: Establishing Civil Rights

March 30: Chapter 13

April 1: Chapter 13 --- **Paper due no later than April 1**

April 3: Discussion Section

- Watch <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2Ybx1VnY2Q> and read "[It Was Never about Busing.](#)" Why was there so much resistance to the prospect of integrated schools? How has this continued into the present era? What can the government do to uphold civil rights and create an equitable system for disadvantaged students?

Week 13: Spring Break – April 6-10

Week 14: Establishing Civil Liberties

April 13: **No Class – Spring Break cont'd**

April 15: Finish Civil Rights (Chapter 13)

April 17: Lecture – Chapter 14

No Discussion Section – Class in regular classroom at 9am

Week 15: Establishing Civil Liberties

April 20: Chapter 14

April 22: Chapter 14

April 24: 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?

April 27: Final Class – Catching up, answering questions

Final Exam – May 7 – 8AM in Mayer 200A

Course Policies & Resources

Absence Policy:

Attendance is mandatory. I take attendance in every class, *but* I do not police my students. I only need to hear from you about excused absences; do not bother contacting me about unexcused absences. If absences, tardiness, or under-preparation becomes a problem, your grade will suffer. Because of the size of this class, I will often pass a sign-in sheet. **Note that signing in for anyone other than yourself is a form of academic misconduct.**

Regardless of the reason for your absence, it is the student's responsibility to figure out what you missed. Excused absences include university-sponsored events (not including athletic practices – games only), deaths in the family, religious observance, and illnesses *with appropriate documentation*. They do not include family reunions, weddings, or graduations; illnesses without documentation; car problems, including traffic and parking; most police incidents - court dates, getting pulled over, etc.; computer problems – hard drive crashes, empty ink cartridges, paper jams, busy library printers; and, most other unfortunate but commonplace life events.

Take note of the university academic calendar and the syllabus's schedule of assignments. **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. Any student with perfect attendance in discussion sections will earn **five points on their final exam.**

Academic Misconduct:

The Code of Academic Conduct applies to all undergraduate students, full-time and part-time, in Tulane University. Tulane University expects and requires behavior compatible with its high standards of scholarship. By accepting admission to the university, a student accepts its regulations (i.e., [Code of Academic Conduct](#) and [Code of Student Conduct](#)) and acknowledges the right of the university to take disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion, for conduct judged unsatisfactory or disruptive. 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;
Note: Plagiarism includes copying & pasting material from any source without proper attribution. Plagiarism also includes non-verbatim borrowing of words or ideas through paraphrasing or summarizing another's work(s) without proper attribution.
- 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 & essay gurus);
- g) using tests or papers from students in prior semesters

Accessibility:

Any students with disabilities or other needs, who need special accommodations in this course, are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor and should contact [Goldman Center for Student Accessibility](http://accessibility.tulane.edu): <http://accessibility.tulane.edu> or 504.862.8433.

Electronic Devices

No electronic devices may be used in class, including lap tops, cell phones, tablets, I-watches, etc. If this poses a learning challenge for you, please provide the appropriate documentation and we are happy to accommodate you. **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.

Extra Credit Events:

When there are public lectures or other scholarly events on campus (or off) that focus on U.S. government or politics, students may attend the event for extra credit. These events must be free and open to the public and available to everyone in class. Events cannot retroactively be counted as extra credit. You may get credit for no more than three events. Students must write a 2-page paper analyzing the speaker’s remarks; papers are due one week from the class immediately following the event. It is the student’s responsibility to remember to turn in the papers. At the end of the semester, I will add the extra credit to the part of the grade most in need of help.

Emergency Preparedness & Response:

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION SYSTEM: TU ALERT		RAVE GUARDIAN	
<p>In the event of a campus emergency, Tulane University will notify students, faculty, and staff by email, text, and phone call. You were automatically enrolled in this system when you enrolled at the university.</p> <p>Check your contact information annually in Gibson Online to confirm its accuracy.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Download the RAVE Guardian app from the App Store • Communicate with dispatchers silently by selecting “Submit Tip” feature in the app • Use the Safety Timer feature to alert your “guardian” (TUPD, family, friend) when travelling alone at night <p>For more information, visit publicsafety.tulane.edu/rave-guardian</p>	
ACTIVE SHOOTER / VIOLENT ATTACKER		SEVERE WEATHER	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RUN – run away from or avoid the affected area, if possible • HIDE – go into the nearest room that can be locked, turn out the lights, silence cell phones, and remain hidden until all-clear message is given through TU ALERT • FIGHT – do not attempt this option, except as a last resort <p>For more information on Active Shooter emergency procedures or to schedule a training, visit emergencyprep.tulane.edu</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow all TU Alerts and outdoor warning sirens • Seek shelter indoors until the severe weather threat has passed and an all-clear message is given • Do not attempt to travel outside if weather is severe • Monitor the Tulane Emergency website (tulane.edu/emergency/) for university-wide closures during a severe weather event 	



Title IX:

Tulane University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. As such, Tulane is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination including sexual and gender-based discrimination, harassment, and violence like sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or is experiencing these types of behaviors, know that you are not alone. Resources and support are available: you can learn more at allin.tulane.edu. Any and all of your communications on these matters will be treated as either “Confidential” or “Private” as explained in the chart below. Please know that if you choose to confide in me I am mandated by the university to report to the Title IX Coordinator, as Tulane and I want to be sure you are connected with all the support the university can offer. You *do not* need to respond to outreach from the university if you do not want. You can also make a report yourself, including an anonymous report, through the form at tulane.edu/concerns.

Confidential	Private
<i>Except in extreme circumstances, involving imminent danger to one’s self or others, nothing will be shared without your explicit permission.</i>	<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>
Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) (504) 314-2277 or The Line (24/7) (504) 264-6074	Case Management & Victim Support Services (504) 314-2160 or srss@tulane.edu
Student Health Center (504) 865-5255	Tulane University Police (TUPD) Uptown - (504) 865-5911. Downtown – (504) 988-5531
Sexual Aggression Peer Hotline and Education (SAPHE) (504) 654-9543	Title IX Coordinator (504) 314-2160 or msmith76@tulane.edu

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 April 1, 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 800-1000 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.
- Turn in a hard copy AND an electronic copy on Canvas. **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 any three states. 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 and midterm 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. Go to a public meeting and write about the role that citizens play in their democracy. This can be a local public meeting (city council, school board(s), zoning board, etc.) or a town hall with a local, state, or federal official. What issues were on the agenda? Did the official(s) address the public? Did members of the public address the official(s)? What did each say? What was voted on? Were the issues on which they voted clear and transparent to those in attendance? Note: schedules for City Council meetings and [Orleans Parish School Board](#) meetings are online. Each public school in New Orleans is a charter school, which means they have their own private boards. These meetings are open to the public and schedules can be found on the school or network's website.

3. Write a formal letter to your U.S. Representative or one of your U.S. Senators about a current bill before the Congress. Tell your representative what you want him or her to do on the bill. What stage is the bill in (in committee? Up for a vote soon? In conference committee? Waiting for the other house to take action?)? Should it be supported? Opposed? Amended? Discuss why and provide evidence for your position. Include your research about this person's statements or record on this issue. The letter is your paper – so it should be professionally written, cited, and well researched.