

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: **The Polarization of American Politics**

Course Number and Section

POLISCI

2295F 550

Instructor Name(s): Zheger Hassan

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Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL Brightspace is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the workings of the American political system and government. The course will highlight the ways that political polarization contributes to the dysfunction we are observing in America. It will do this by focusing on the institutional setting (e.g., the Constitution, electoral system), the political process (i.e., elections, legislative and judicial processes), and actors (e.g., president, Members of Congress, interest groups, and the media). We will survey the central debates surrounding these institutions and actors with emphasis on how they function and interact within the constitutional “rules of the game.” The goal of the course is to help students arrive at a deeper understanding of the American political system and issues of polarization and dysfunction.

Learning Outcomes: one outcome per entry

Develop an understanding of the ways in which history, political culture, and demographics shape the American political system and government;

Explain the development and evolution of the US Constitution and how this has impacted American public opinion, shaped the role of the media;

Understand and explain how political parties, the electoral system, and interest groups shape and influence elections and outcomes;

Compare and contrast the US political system with other comparable democratic systems, such as that of Canada; and

Develop the ability to critically assess these ideas and information and to clearly communicate your knowledge in written and oral form.

Textbooks and Course Materials:

Stephen Brooks, Donald E. Abelson, and Melissa Haussman, Understanding American Politics. Third Edition (University of Toronto Press, 2024).

Methods of Evaluation: one assignment per entry

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Tutorial	Ongoing	20
Writing Assignment Outline	October 2, 2026	10
Writing Assignment	November 13, 2026	20
Midterm Test	November 4, 2026	20

Wednesday, August 12, 2026

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In-course Costs \$070.00

For Textbooks and Course Materials (below), you are required to include the cost of each textbook or other learning material.

Note whether there are any restrictions that would prevent a student from using a second-hand copy. Here is some suggested text:

- Required textbook: [author, title, edition, publisher, date]. Cost: [insert amount].
 - Or include the weblink of the textbook’s publisher site that includes the cost information.
- Students need to purchase this edition. Second-hand or older editions will not be sufficient.
- OR Students are welcome to purchase second-hand or earlier editions of this textbook.
- This course has an optional field trip that costs [insert amount].
- This course has a required field component that costs [insert amount].

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.