

Brief Course Outline

Course Title: American Government and Politics

Course Number and Section:

POLISCI

2295F 550

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Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL 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 polarisation 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:

- 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:

1. Students will be required to read the following textbook for the course (students may also use a used version or earlier edition of the textbook):

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

Cost: Paperback \$70.00; EBook \$56.00

2. Students are encouraged to consult the media on a regular basis to stay informed about

political developments in the US. Some suggestions include reading The New York Times, The Washington Post, and The Wall Street Journal. You can also listen weekly podcasts on current affairs programs from outlets such as NPR and The New Yorker.

Methods Of Evaluation:

Assignment	Due Date mm/dd/yy	Weight - %
Tutorial	ongoing	20%
Writing Assignment	November 28, 2025	25%
In-Class Test	October 27, 2025	25%
Final Exam	Final Exam Period	30%

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

Wednesday, July 30, 2025