



PSCI-143 AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Fall 2025

Instructor	Rodd Freitag
E-mail	freitard@uwec.edu
Course Meeting Days and Time	Tuesdays and Thursdays 1:00-2:15
Course Mode	In-Person
Required Experiential Learning Dates	None
Student Drop-in Office Hours	Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00-4:00 or by appointment Visiting Faculty Office

Catalog Description:

Provides a broad overview of the institutional arrangement of the American political system, its constitutional and traditional underpinnings, and the ways in which various political actors operate within it. Encourages critical analysis of political information and active citizens participation in our democratic system.

Credit Hour Policy Statement:

This class meets the federal credit hour policy of 1 hour of class with an expected 2 hours of additional student work outside of class each week for approximately 15 weeks for each hour of credit, or a total of 45-75 total hours for each credit.

General Education Requirements:

This course meets the General Education requirements for Outcome 9.

Course Learning Outcomes:

Students who complete this course successfully will be a(n):

- informed citizen who understands and can follow current political issues and events.
- political analyst able to evaluate political arguments and outcomes.
- political problem solver with ideas to make American government and politics more effective.

Required Materials:

Cal Jillson (2025). *American Government: Political Development and Institutional Change*. 13th edition.
Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson, eds (2021) *Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System*, 4th edition.

Methods of Instruction:

This class will be a combination of lectures, discussions, and student presentations.

Withdrawal and Attendance policies:

Harlaxton College expects regular class attendance by all students. Students are considered sufficiently mature to appreciate the necessity of regular and punctual attendance, to accept this personal responsibility and to accept the consequences of failure to attend. When absences occur due to emergency or medical reasons, students are expected to notify their instructors of the absence prior to class or to seek the assistance of the College nurse or a member of the Student Experience Team for help in notifying instructors.

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Instructors have the authority to grant excused absences for medical, psychological, or personal reasons upon review of appropriate documentation and professional recommendation supporting such a request. In the event of long-term illness, reasonable accommodations will be made to allow a student to complete a course. In these cases, the Dean will need to approve the long-term nature of the accommodation.

The Dean of Harlaxton College has the authority to grant excused absences for medical, psychological, or personal reasons.

Each instructor is expected to maintain an attendance policy in keeping with the nature of the Harlaxton program and may consider it in evaluating performance in their courses.

Policy Governing Unexcused Absences:

Harlaxton College operates an attendance policy that is binding on all faculty and students. The number of unexcused absences that are allowed before incurring a penalty is related to the number of times a class meets each week. For courses which meet three times a week, students are allowed a maximum of three unexcused absences during the semester without attracting penalty points. For courses meeting twice a week two such absences are permitted, and for courses meeting once a week a single absence is allowed. Additional unexcused absences will attract a grade penalty.

Students will receive a third-letter grade penalty (A- to B+, for example) to their final grade for each unexcused absence beyond two.

Policy Governing Excused Absences:

- Excused absences are not given to facilitate student travel independent of College-sponsored travel.
- Students may be permitted to miss class because of participation in academic field trips.
- Instructors must co-ordinate and confirm academic fieldtrips with the Dean, prior to the commencement of the Semester to ensure their inclusion in the Semester timetable.
- Where authorization for an academic fieldtrip is requested after the commencement of the semester, the request must be submitted to the Dean.

The following information is required:

- Purpose and brief description of the official Harlaxton event or academic fieldtrip.
- Dates, location, and times (as applicable).
- Alphabetical list of students involved [Last Name/First Name] along with their student identification number.

If approval is granted:

- Instructors affected will be notified at least one week prior to the class period during which absence is anticipated, or as soon as possible.
- Missed class time due to student participation is to be considered an excused absence.
- The grade of a student may not be lowered in any class due to excused absences.
- It is the student's responsibility - to take the initiative by consulting with their instructors before the absence occurs, and - to do what is required by the instructor to make up all missed assignments and/or examinations.
- Instructors are required to assist students in these occasional situations of excused absences.

Grading Criteria:

Course grades are based on the following distribution:

Essay Exam 1	100 points
Essay Exam 2	100 points
Essay Exam 3	100 points
<i>Debating Reform</i> Positions	40 points
Reform Presentation	40 points



Reform Paper	60 points
Participation	60 points

Three Essay Exams

The exams will assess your mastery of the course central concepts. Each exam will consist of two parts: **term identifications** and **essays**. The term identifications will require you to identify and describe the significance of Key Terms from the assigned *American Government* chapters. The essays will require you to analyze and synthesize more broadly the course material.

Debating Reform Positions

Students will be assigned to positions (pro or con) from the *Debating Reform* chapters and, on the assigned day, summarize (5 minutes) the author’s main arguments to the class. You should be prepared to take your own position on the reform idea as well.

Reform Presentation

Student groups (assigned) will present what is wrong with the American political system and what should be done to fix it. Groups will present (10 minutes) to the class. Reform presentations will be evaluated according to the following criteria: Do you make a convincing case (with sound evidence) for what’s wrong with the political system? Is your reform clear and does it address adequately the problem you identify?

Reform Paper

Students will write a paper (minimum 1000 words, single-spaced, in .docx or .pdf format) explaining what you think is wrong with the American political system and what should be done to fix it. You must support your argument by referring to a *Debating Reform* position and at least two recently published articles. You should include a list of references (author, article name, article source, and publication date) at the end of your paper and incorporate parenthetical source citation into your text. Reform papers will be evaluated according to the following criteria: Do you make a convincing case (with sound evidence) for what’s wrong with the political system? Is your reform plan clear and does it address adequately the problem you identify? Reform Papers are due by **Tuesday, December 9**.

Class Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to engage fully in the class activities. The Attendance and Absence policies are described above. Students will receive a third-letter grade penalty (A- to B+, for example) to their final grade for each unexcused absence beyond two.

All scores earned in the class can be applied to the following **percentage scale**:

A 93.3 - 100	B 83.3 - 86.6	C 73.3 - 76.6	D 60. - 66.6
A- 90.0 - 93.2	B- 80.0 - 83.2	C- 70.0 - 73.2	F 59.9 or less
B+ 86.7 - 89.9	C+ 76.7 - 79.9	D+ 66.7 - 69.9	

Honor Code:

All students at the University of Evansville agree to the University honor code: *I will neither give nor receive unauthorized aid, nor will I tolerate an environment that condones the use of unauthorized aid.*

Course AI Policy:

In this course, submission of any work that is not entirely your own is considered academic dishonesty. The use of generative AI tools such as ChatGPT are prohibited and constitute a violation of academic integrity as examples of unauthorized aid.



Course Schedule:

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
9/2	Introduction: What's Wrong with the American Political System?	
9/4	American Political Culture	Chapter 1 (Jillson)
9/9, 9/11, 9/16	The Constitution	Chapter 2 (Jillson) <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapters 1, 6
9/18, 9/23	Federalism	Chapter 3 (Jillson) <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapter 3
9/25, 9/30	Civil Liberties	Chapter 13 (Jillson)
10/2	Civil Rights	Chapter 14 (Jillson)
Exam 1 Tuesday, October 7		
10/9	Ideology and Public Opinion	Chapter 4 (Jillson)
10/14, 10/16	Voting and Elections	Chapter 8 (Jillson) <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapters 4, 7 <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapters 9, 15
10/21, 10/23	Mid-Term Break: Class Will Not Meet	
10/28, 10/30	Political Parties	Chapter 7 (Jillson) <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapter 11
11/4, 11/6	Interest Groups	Chapter 6 (Jillson) <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapter 8
Exam 2 Tuesday, November 11		
11/13, 11/18	Congress	Chapter 9 (Jillson) <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapter 12, 13 <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapter 10, 14
11/20, 11/25	Presidency and Bureaucracy	Chapter 10, 11 (Jillson) <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapter 1, 16 <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapter 17
11/27, 12/2	Federal Courts	Chapter 12 (Jillson) <i>Debating Reform</i> , Chapter 18
12/4, 12/9	How Can the American Political System Be Fixed?	
Exam 3 Date and Time TBD		

Disability Policy

The University of Evansville is committed to providing an accessible and supportive environment for students with disabilities. It is the policy and practice of the University of Evansville to make reasonable accommodations for students with properly documented disabilities. Students should contact Disability Services at 812-488-2663 to seek services or accommodations for disabilities. Written notification to faculty from Disability Services is required for academic accommodations.

The University of Evansville Disability Services office will share the request for academic accommodations with the Academic Support team at Harlaxton College. Staff members at Harlaxton will meet individually with students to discuss needs and provide additional information related to examinations or other assessments.



Students from partner institutions should provide the appropriate letter of accommodation from their institution to the Academic Support team at Harlaxton College.

Institutional Equity and Title IX

UE is committed to fostering an atmosphere free from harassment and creating an inclusive campus for all members of the University community regardless of their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, ability, or veteran status. All Faculty members are considered Responsible Employees and required to report instances of discrimination, harassment, or sexual violence to the Office of Institutional Equity

You may also choose to speak to a Confidential Resource about your experience. Confidential Resources at the University include:

Counseling Services: 812-488-2663, counselingservices@evansville.edu

Crayton E. and Ellen Mann Health Center: 812-488-2033, healthcenter@evansville.edu

Spiritual Formation Coordinator: 812- 488-5265, spiritualformation@evansville.edu

If you or someone you know has been harassed, assaulted, or discriminated against you can find the appropriate resources by contacting the Assistant Director of Institutional Equity and Title IX Coordinator: email titleix@evansville.edu ; phone (812) 488-5261. For more information visit <https://www.evansville.edu/offices/titleix/policy.cfm>.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The University of Evansville expects all members of its community to treat each other with respect and civility. Harassing behaviors directed towards any member of our community will not be tolerated. As part of its commitment to non-discrimination, the University specifically prohibits harassment based on any other characteristics set forth in its nondiscrimination statement as follows: including race, color, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, creed or religion, national origin, age, disability, veteran status and all federally protected groups/classes. Any form of harassment undermines the mission of the University and negatively impacts the University community as a whole. For more information contact the [Center for Inclusive Excellence](#).

You may also choose to speak with a Confidential Resource about your experience. Confidential Resources at the University are required to maintain confidentiality and cannot report violations to the Office of Institutional Equity.

Campus Safety

All members of the UE community are automatically enrolled in the Ace Alerts Emergency Alert System. When the system is activated, emergency notification information is sent in the following manner: calls to campus IP phones, text messages, emails, campus housing speaker system, active threat sirens (non-weather related), digital signage, and AlertUS desktop on campus-owned computers.

To contact the Office of Public Safety:

Emergencies: 812-488-6911

Non-emergencies: 812-488-2051

Complaints, Grievances, and Appeals

The University of Evansville seeks to resolve all student concerns in a timely and effective manner through policies and processes documented in the University [Course Catalog](#) and [Student Handbook](#).

Student Resources

- College Nurse: Lesley Selby, RGN, +44 01476 403027, lselect@harlaxton.ac.uk
- Counselling Services: counselling@harlaxton.ac.uk