

3 credits

Dr. Michael D. Martinez, University of Florida

Lecture Meets:**10:40 am-11:30 am Tues****10:40 am-12:35 pm Thurs****Dauer 342****Class number 13780****INSIDE****Course Overview & SLOs, p. 1****Weekly Pattern, p. 2****Required Texts, p. 2****iClicker, p. 2****Assessment & Grading, p. 3****Grading Rubrics, p. 4****Course Schedule, p. 5-6****Office Hours, p. 7****Instructor/TA Info, p. 7**

Course goals: The underlying theme of this class is democracy. We will discuss various conceptions of democracy, and how to assess various aspects of the political system using those concepts. We will also read about possible alternatives to the current structures of American politics. By the end of the course, students should be able to critically evaluate claims about the U.S. political system using empirical evidence.

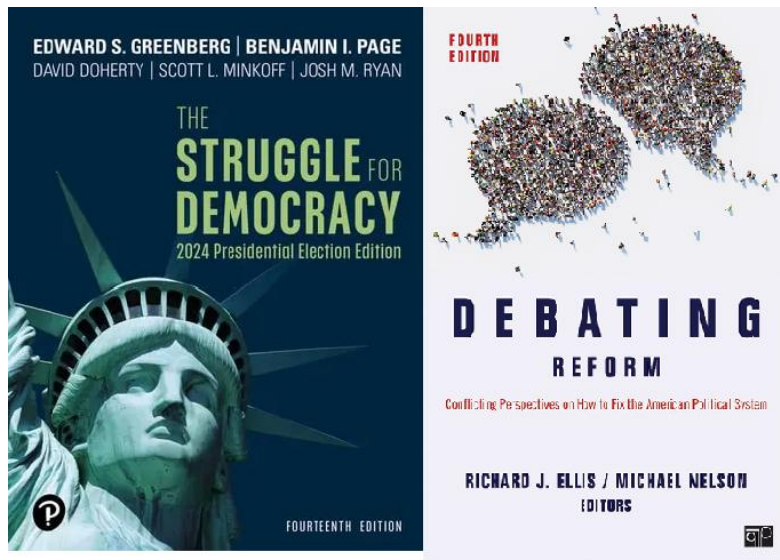
Course description: In this course, students will investigate how the national government is structured and how the American constitutional republic operates. It covers the philosophical and historical foundations of American government, including but not limited to the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution and all its Amendments, and the Federalist Papers. The course examines the branches of government and the government's laws, policies, and programs. It also examines the ways in which citizens participate in their government and ways their government responds to citizens.

This course satisfies a [Social and Behavioral Science \(S\) General Education requirement](#).

State Core Student Learning Outcomes and Civic Literacy Competencies:

	<i>Students will demonstrate ...</i>	<i>Assessed by ...</i>
Content	... understanding of the basic principles and practices of America's constitutional republic;	Midterm exam; Final Exam; Assignments; Quizzes
Content	... knowledge of the nation's founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and its amendments, and The Federalist Papers;	Midterm exam; Final Exam; Assignments; Quizzes
Content	... knowledge of landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions;	Midterm exam; Final Exam; Assignments; Quizzes
Content	... knowledge of the history and development of the American federal government and its impact on law and society;	Midterm exam; Final Exam; Assignments; Quizzes
Critical Thinking	... an ability to apply course material to contemporary political issues and debates; and	Assignments; Discussion Section Participation
Communication	... the ability to engage in discussion and civil debate on American politics that are associated with multiple points of view.	Assignments; Discussion Section Participation

American Federal Government (POS 2041)



Weekly Pattern

This course includes lectures on Tuesdays and part of Thursdays that will introduce material, and discussions on Thursdays that provide opportunities for students to engage synchronously in political discussions and civil debates with multiple points of view and to master the ability to synthesize information that informs civic decision making.

Readings from either [The Wall Street Journal](#) or [The New York Times](#) will usually be announced on Canvas.

Weekly assignments and weekly quizzes will be due on Wednesdays at 11:59 pm to help ensure that students are prepared for Thursday discussions.

Weekly discussions (on Thursday) will allow you, along with your instructor, to discuss complex issues in American politics to illustrate the themes of the course. Students should be prepared to read, evaluate, gather data, and discuss different points of view in discussion sections and in weekly assignments.



We will use the iClicker technology, [available free to UF students](#), to enable snap polling, and stimulate discussion.



We will make extensive use of Canvas, including (a) submission of assignments (b) weekly quizzes (c) discussion boards for introductions and exam preparation (e) posting of lecture slides and (f) posting of grades for your participation and exams.

How to Succeed

Go to class. Lectures emphasize and explain important concepts and theories beyond the text. Discussions provide opportunities to debate important related topics. **PowerPoints will be available on Canvas, but will not replace notetaking.**

Read required readings, including:

- Greenberg, Edward et al. *The Struggle for Democracy: 2024 Presidential Election Edition* (ISBN-13: 9780138361334). (pricing options [here](#))
- Ellis, R and M Nelson. 2019. *Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System*. (Fourth Edition; ISBN: 9781544390604) (pricing options [here](#))
- [The Federalist Papers](#). (selected; [public domain](#))
- [Anti-Federalist No 1](#) ([public domain](#))
- [The New York Times](#) ([free subscription](#))
- [The Wall Street Journal](#). ([free subscription](#))

You must opt-in to UF All Access to read the books.

Visit your instructor during office hours if necessary.

Complete all the assignments and quizzes on time.

Materials and Supplies Fee: N/A, but students must purchase two examination books ("blue books"), one each for the midterm and final exams. Students must also download the [iClicker app](#).

Assessment & Grading

Exams: You will take two exams, which will be a combination of true/false justify and essay. Exams cover material from lecture, discussion, and readings. While the final exam is not cumulative, some concepts are revisited later in the semester and could appear on the final exam. **Each exam must be taken on the scheduled date, except in documented emergencies.** The Midterm will be on Thursday, March 5, at 10:40 am, and the Final Exam will be Tuesday, April 28, at 3:00 pm. Each exam is worth **25%** of your grade.

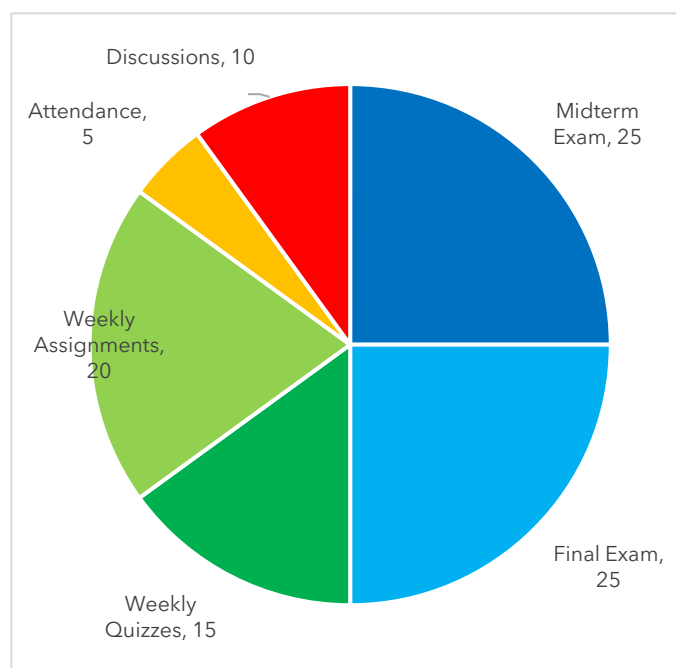
Attendance: Attendance is required. Two free absences are allowed. Additional absences may be waived with a documented excuse. Counts as **5%** of your course grade.

Weekly Assignments will be due Wednesdays at 11:59 pm on Canvas; they form the basis of most Thursday class discussions. Assignments may take a variety of formats, including (1) a reflection on how a contemporary political issue or event is related to the readings, or (2) an empirical analysis using specified data. These will be graded using the rubric on page 4. Together, these assignments are worth **20%** of your course grade. Unless otherwise noted, students may not submit AI generated text (or edited versions of AI generated text) as their own work. All assignments are required (no "drop worst").

Weekly Quizzes are due Wednesdays at 11:59 pm on Canvas. They are multiple choice and short answer, and cover assigned readings to ensure that students are prepared for discussion. They are worth **15%** of your final course grade. All quizzes are required (no "drop worst").

Discussions: Weekly discussion groups are not mini lectures, but are active discussions of the assigned readings (from *Debating Reform*) and/or the weekly assignments. **10%** of the course grade is based on participation in these discussions. Please see grading rubric for participation on page 4. Tentative grades will be posted every two weeks.

Late Work: Canvas will assess a 5% per day penalty automatically to late work. Ordinarily, late work will not be accepted after Friday 11:59 pm following the due date, unless you provide documentation of prolonged extenuating circumstances.



Grading Scale

Grade	Grade Pts	Percent
A	4.00	93.0% - 100%
A-	3.67	90.0% - 92.9%
B+	3.33	87.0% - 89.9%
B	3.00	83.0% - 86.9%
B-	2.67	80.0% - 82.9%
C+	2.33	77.0% - 79.9%
C	2.00	73.0% - 76.9%
C-	1.67	70.0% - 72.9%
D+	1.33	67.0% - 69.9%
D	1.00	63.0% - 66.9%
D-	0.67	60.0% - 62.9%
E	0.00	Below 60.0%

See [UF grades and grading policies](#)

A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

Grading Rubric: Discussion Participation

This portion of your grade (10%) is based on the quality of your participation in discussion, including listening, preparation, quality of contributions, impact on the class, and frequency of participation. Opinions held by other students, the instructor, and the guest speakers should be respected in discussion, and conversations that do not contribute to the discussion should be held at minimum, if at all.

	Strong (A+ to B+)	Needs Development (B to C)	Unsatisfactory (C- or Lower)
Listening (15 points possible)	Actively and respectfully listens to peers and instructor (15-13 points)	Sometimes displays lack of interest in comments of others (12-11 points)	Projects lack of interest or disrespect for others (including browsing other materials during class) (10-0 points)
Preparation (15 points possible)	Arrives fully prepared with all assignments completed, and notes on reading, observations, questions (15-13 points)	Sometimes arrives unprepared or with only superficial preparation (12-11 points)	Little evidence of having completed or thought about assigned material (10-0 points)
Quality and impact of contributions (45 points possible)	Comments are relevant and reflect understanding of assignments, previous remarks of other students, and insights about assigned material; comments frequently help move discussion forward (45-39 points)	Comments sometimes irrelevant, betray lack of preparation, or indicate lack of attention to previous remarks of other students; sometimes advances the conversation, but sometimes does little to move it forward (38-33 points)	Comments reflect little understanding of either the assignment or previous remarks in class; comments do not advance the conversation or are actively harmful to it (32 - 0 points)
Frequency of participation (25 points possible)	Actively participates at appropriate times (25-22 points)	Sometimes participates but at other times is "tuned out" (21-18 points)	Seldom participates and is generally not engaged or absent (17-0 points)

Grading Rubric: Weekly Assignments

The following rubric is for your weekly assignments; together they are worth 15% of your grade. Use of AI (e.g., ChatGPT) is not permitted.

Criteria	Exceeds	Proficient	Competent	Below
Analysis & Critical Thinking (75 points possible)	Synthesizes new concepts and formulates evidenced based conclusions; makes connections to other readings and/or current events. Key issues fully identified. (68-75 points)	Evaluates and analyzes the concepts provide some examples. Most key issues are identified. (60-67 points)	Understand and discusses basic concepts. Minimal use of readings and examples. Some key issues identified. (53-59 points)	Gathers and understands simple concepts related to the topic; discussion superficial; few or no examples given; key issues missing. (0-52 points)
Conventions (25 points possible)	Minimal spelling or grammar errors; well organized. Key organizing thesis present. (23-25 points)	Occasional spelling or grammar errors. Some sense of a thesis statement. (20-22 points)	Frequent errors, thesis not clear. (17-19 points)	Multiple grammatical and spelling errors, no thesis present. (0-16 points)

Course Schedule

Weekly assignments and weekly quizzes will be due on Wednesdays at 11:59 pm.

*In addition to the assigned texts, the instructor may assign up to two articles from *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal* each week (maximum 3500 words total).

Each Chapter in *Struggle for Democracy* is 25-30 pp. Each Chapter in *Debating Reform* is 18-23 pp. Each assigned *Federalist Paper* and *Anti-Federalist Paper* is approximately 3000 words.

Lecture topics have a white background.

Holidays and conferences are shaded in pink.

Guest Speakers are shaded in yellow.

Assignments are shaded in green.

Exams are shaded in aqua.

Jan 13 Introduction

Jan 14 Quiz and Assignment: Complete the class survey and introduce yourself on the class welcome board.

Jan 15 No class – Southern Political Science Association meetings

Jan 20 Power – Readings: *Struggle for Democracy*, Ch. 1 (16 pp.) *Debating Reform*, Ch. 2 (24 pp.)

Jan 21 Quiz and Assignment: One page essay on “What is politics” using an article from WSJ or NYT (dated Jan 13-21). Briefly explain what the issue is about. Is there conflict? What is a political actor doing?

Jan 22-29 Constitution – Readings *Struggle for Democracy*, Ch. 2 (26 pp); *Federalist* 51 (1921 words); *Anti-Federalist* 1 (1905 words); *Debating Reform*, Ch. 1 (18 pp.); *Debating Reform*, Ch. 6 (19 pp.)

Jan 28 Quiz and Assignment: Using both arguments in *Debating Reform* Chapter 1, write a one page essay that assesses whether making it easier to amend the US Constitution would enhance or diminish democracy.

Assignment: Compare the US Constitution to another constitution using data from <https://www.constituteproject.org/>.

Feb 3-5 – Federalism; *Struggle for Democracy*, Ch. 3 (30 pp); *Federalist* 39 (2614 words); *Debating Reform*, Ch. 3 (17 pp.)

Feb 4 - Quiz and Assignment: Compare Florida to another state using data from [Kaiser Family Foundation](#), [New York Times](#), and the [Tax Foundation](#).

Feb 10-12 - Structural Foundations; Readings: *Struggle for Democracy*, Ch. 4 (26 pp.); *Debating Reform*, Ch. 19 (17 pp.)

Feb 11 - Quiz and Assignment: Compare the USA to another country using specified indicators from the

[United Nations](#), the [World Bank](#), [World Data.info](#), [Our World in Data](#), [Clearly Cultural](#), and the [Pew Research Center](#).

Feb 17 - Public Opinion – Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 5 (28 pp.)

Feb 19 – Media; Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 6 (18 pp.); Debating Reform, Ch. 5 (18 pp.)

Feb 18 - Quiz and Assignment: One page essay comparing or contrasting two different media outlets' coverage of an event or political issue (dated Sept 22 – October 1).

Feb 24-26 - Interest Groups; Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 7 (23 pp.); Federalist 10 (3005 words); Debating Reform, Ch. 8 (18 pp.)

Feb 25 - Assignment: Submit a question for the guest speaker.

Quiz and Assignment: Compare interest group ratings from [AFL-CIO](#), [National Right to Life Committee](#), and [Center for Legislative Accountability](#) for Florida's two US Senators and two of Florida's US Representatives.

Feb 26 - Guest Speaker: Ian Rayder

Feb 27 Assignment: Submit two questions for the midterm study guide, and answer another student's question on the study guide.

Mar 3 Social Movements: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 8 (25 pp.)

Mar 5 Midterm Exam

Mar 10 Parties – Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 9 (27 pp.)

Mar 12 Elections – Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 10 (36 pp.); Debating Reform, Ch. 9 (15 pp.)

Mar 11 Quiz and Assignment: One page essay comparing or contrasting either two parties' or two presidential candidates' positions on an issue of your choice.

Mar 17-19 Spring Break

Mar 24-26 Congress – Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 11 (29 pp.); Debating Reform, Ch. 14 (20 pp.)

Mar 25 Quiz and Assignment: One page essay based on article from NYT or WSJ on how Congress (or a Representative, Senator, or committee) is exercising power (dated Mar 13-23).

Mar 31 Guest speaker (tentative)

Mar 31-Apr 2 Presidency – Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 12 (32 pp.); Federalist 70 (3070 words); Debating Reform, Ch. 16 (17 pp.)

Apr 1 Quiz and Assignment: One page essay based on article from NYT or WSJ on how the President is exercising power (dated Mar 20-April 1).

April 7-9 Bureaucracy – Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 13 (24 pp.); Debating Reform, Ch. 17 (18 pp.)

April 8 Quiz and Assignment: One page essay based on article from NYT or WSJ on how a bureaucratic agency is exercising power (dated Mar 27 – April 8).

Apr 14-16 Courts – Readings: Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 14 (32 pp.); Federalist 78 (3021 words); Debating Reform, Ch. 18 (20 pp.)

Apr 15 Assignment: Submit a question for the guest speaker

Quiz and Assignment: Listen to a Supreme Court oral argument at [Oyez](#). (1 hour 53 minutes)

Apr 16 Guest speaker (tentative)

Apr 21 Civil Rights & Epilogue – Readings; Struggle for Democracy, Ch. 16 (25 pp.)

Apr 22 Quiz and Assignment: Submit two questions for the final exam study guide, and answer another student's question on the study guide.

Tues, Apr 28, 3:00 – 5:00 pm - Final Exam

The Fine Print: Course, Department, and University Policy in Brief

Prof. Michael D. Martinez

martinez@ufl.edu

Office phone (352) 273-2363

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-4 pm
209 Anderson Hall

<https://ufl.zoom.us/my/mdmartinez>

Please feel free to contact me if you need to discuss matters related to class.

It is usually a good idea to [request an appointment](#) for Office Hours. I can usually meet in person, over Zoom, or via the phone. However, to protect your privacy rights, we cannot discuss your grade(s) over the phone, in front of other students, or via non-official email. *Always email from Canvas or your UFL email.*

Attendance: Attendance is required, consistent with [university policies](#). Each student is permitted two “freebie” absences. Other absences may be excused with verifiable documentation of illness, quarantine, serious family emergency, special curricular requirement (e.g., professional conference), military or legal obligation (e.g., jury duty or subpoena), severe weather conditions (as verified by the National Weather Service), or participation in official university activities. Documentation for excused absences must be received within one week of absence. Please request excused absences for religious observances as soon as foreseeable.

Make up Exams: If you have an emergency on exam day, please email the instructor immediately. Makeup exams are permitted with appropriate, verifiable documentation of absence for an excusable reason (noted above in the attendance policy). No one will be permitted to take any exam early.

Cell phones (and cookies): If a cell phone rings audibly during class, the owner of the phone will be required to bring cookies or alternative healthy treats for all participants (including the instructor) at the next class period.

Extra-Credit: I do not offer extra credit on an individual basis. Any opportunities for extra credit will be announced on Canvas.

General Academic Policies: For information on general academic policies, accommodations for disabilities, course evaluations, academic honesty, in-class recording, academic resources, and campus and wellness resources, click [here](#).