

LAKES REGION COMMUNITY COLLEGE

379 Belmont Road
Laconia, NH 03246
(603) 524-3207

COURSE OUTLINE/SYLLABUS SHEET

• **COURSE NO:** POLS 231L

• **COURSE TITLE:** American Government

• **CREDIT HOURS:** 3 Semester Hours

• **SEMESTER:** Fall, 2020

• **CLASS MEETINGS:** Online Class

• **INSTRUCTOR:** E. Scott Cracraft

• **INSTRUCTOR'S EMAIL:** ecracraft@ccsnh.edu

• **OFFICE LOCATION:** Room # 109 C.A.T. Building
524-3207 (work) 528-6692 (home)

**Note: I do not mind students calling me at home,
especially in and online class!**

CONFERENCE HOURS: Mondays, 12-1 p. m. and 4-5 p. m.
Wednesdays, 10-1 p. m.

Or, by appointment

• **PREREQUISITES:** None

• **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This introductory course in government examines the relationship between government, politics and power. Students discuss how people in a representative democracy can effect change in government to address current and future needs.

• **TEXT/INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT NEEDED:**

Text:

The good news is that in this course, you will NOT have to purchase a textbook! Instead, as a primary text, we will be using an Online Educational Resource which is free to you. Here is the link to the OER:

American Government <https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-2e>

“Outside” Book:

One monographic work dealing with a political issue or problem of interest to the student Chosen in collaboration with and with the approval of the instructor.

Other materials:

These materials will be posted in the Modules on Canvas. These will include the U.S. Constitution, the NH Constitution, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation and other primary documents. These will also include links to websites, yy Online written lectures, articles, videos, and very likely recorded ZOOM lectures.

Note: Students are responsible for all material posted in the Canvas Modules.

• **GRADING:**

Grades are assigned based on a percentage of total points earned:

Weekly Assignments (13 of 14 at up to 50 pts. ea.):	650 points
Weekly Discussion Board Questions (14 of 14, up to 50 pts. ea.):	700 points
Book Review:	100 points
Letter to Public Official:	50 points
Position Paper:	200 points
Total:	1700 points

Grading Scale:

A 93-100	B 83-86	C 73-76	D 63-66
A- 90-92	B- 80-82	C- 70-72	D- 60-62
B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	D+ 67-69	F 0-59

NOTE: Grades will be posted on an electronic grade books on Canvas which class members can access.

- **COURSE OUTCOMES/COMPETENCIES**

At the conclusion of the course, the student will be able to

1. Analyze how our political system is supposed to work.
2. Define government, politics, power, and democracy.
3. Analyze the shift in the balance of power and the rise of a strong national government within the American federal system.
4. Evaluate the impact of the media on political campaigns and elections.
5. Assess our individual importance for the quality of American society and American Government.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Class members are expected to adhere to the highest standards of *academic honesty*. Other people can take your house, your money, your car, or even your freedom. Time will certainly take your youth, health, and good looks. Only *you*, however, can give up your integrity. Examples of academic dishonesty include cheating on exams and other assignments as well as plagiarism, which means presenting someone else's work as your own.

Proven cases of academic dishonesty may result in an "F" for the course as well as other disciplinary action per NHCTC policy. When in doubt, the instructor reserves the right to investigate suspected cases of academic dishonesty, such as by ascertaining independently the student's knowledge of the material.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Students should be aware that since all work is submitted online, I will be using an app that shows the percentage of how much of what you write can be found elsewhere. A small percentage is to be expected but if it comes up with a high percentage of things that can be found elsewhere, that is not good and will be reflected in your grade for the assignment.

Even if I know where you got it and you cite it but quote it verbatim, it might not be true plagiarism but here is the problem: if you copy something directly from a source, all the instructor knows is that you are good at copying! He will not be sure that you really understand the question or the course material. Make sure you put your answers into your own words as much as possible so I will know you know what you are talking about!

- **ACADEMIC FREEDOM, COURTESY, AND RESPECT**

A class dealing with social and political issues is hardly "neutral." The social sciences are different from the "hard" or "natural" sciences. Opinions matter and everyone, including the instructor, has one! We will be having weekly discussions and debates in this course on discussion boards.

The instructor is dedicated to *academic freedom*. All opinions and viewpoints are welcome in this class. A class member will never be graded based on his or her opinion or ideology but only on performance on such measures as exams and other activities.

The only rule is that all members of the class should conduct themselves as mature members of an academic community. This means *listening* to the positions of people with whom one disagrees. It is always O.K. to express one's one opinion but respect should be shown to those of opposing opinions, no matter how unpopular they may be at a given time. Debate and argument—even *intense* debate and argument--are welcome but disagreement should never descend to *personal* attacks.

After all, one can learn more about her or his own viewpoint when there is an understanding of, and even grudging respect for, the “other” point of view.

CANVAS AND COLLEGE EMAIL

Since this is a completely online class, we will be doing everything on Canvas. That is where you will learn the material and submit your work. If you are not familiar with Canvas, I expect you to be before the class starts. If you have problems, there is a Canvas help desk or you can contact me. The Canvas site for this course will be available in advance of when the class actually starts and that will give you time to familiarize yourselves.

Since some of you may be at another college or taking this course in high school, you should contact someone at your school who is familiar with Canvas such as your IT person, a teacher, or a librarian. Not being functional in Canvas is not an excuse for not submitting your work on time! You should be checking the Canvas site for this course regularly

When I communicate with you, it will be through your COLLEGE email and not your Personal email account like Gmail, Hotmail, or Yahoo. So, you should also be checking your college email regularly. Typically, when I have something to say to the entire class, I will post an announcement on Canvas and send it to everyone.

CANVAS MODULES

The Canvas site for this course will be divided into weekly Modules. To make it easy for you, everything will be accessible to you in the Canvas Modules. I will be posting your OER readings and other material for that week as well as the assignments and discussion board questions.

The assignments and discussion boards as well as the material for that week will be posted no later than the Monday beginning that week. Assignments and Discussions should be completed and submitted the following Sunday by 5 p. m.

I will likely be putting things up in the module in advance so that even though something is not yet due, you can “study ahead.”

DUE DATES

I will be posting the assignments and discussion questions for the week in the weekly Modules on Canvas as well as the course material to help you complete the assignment. I will have everything posted for the week no later than the Monday beginning the week and all work must be finished and submitted no later than 5 p. m. on the following Saturday. As noted earlier, It is very likely that I will be posting the materials and assignments in advance so even if they are not due yet, you can “study ahead.”

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS

There will be 14 assignments (almost every week) during the semester. These assignments can vary. They could be an essay, a couple of short essay, a test with short answer questions, definitions and I.D. tests, or a combination. They are due by 5 p. m. on the Saturday ending the week in which they were assigned.

Each assignment will count for up to 50 points toward the final grade. Only the highest 13 scores will be counted BUT if you do all 13, your lowest score will be added as extra credit points!

WEEKLY DISCUSSION BOARDS

Throughout the semester, there will be a discussion board almost every week where I will post one or more questions for discussion and debate. Each discussion board discussion is worth up to 50 points toward your final grade. You should start posting no later than the Wednesday in which it is assign and have your posts completed by 5 p. m. Saturday.

HOWEVER: The first discussion board will simply be an icebreaker where you introduce yourselves. While usually you have until the following Sunday to complete the discussion board posts, please at least introduce yourself immediately. This is important because this is how I “take attendance” in an online class. If you do not post any work, I will have to report you to the registrar’s office as “not attended” and this could affect your financial aid status.

BOOK REVIEW

Each student will choose, in collaboration with me and with my approval, one monographic work (not a textbook) that deals with a political problem, question, or issue. By the end of the fourth week of the course, you should have contacted me with your book so I can approve them. You should also have a general idea of what you are going to write your position paper on by the end of the fourth week. This book should be something related to the course that interests you. A good idea is to send me the title,

author and subject of two or three books you think you might like to read and I may tell you that any of them are fine or suggest one as better than the others.

Once your book has been approved, you will write a review of the book. Book reviews should be 2-3 double-spaced pages in length based on a #12 font. If you use a larger font, you must compensate in the page length. The book review should also be carefully *proofread* for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, and style.

Your book review should contain the following: the title of the book, the name of the author, the place and date of publication (e.g. New York, 2015) a bit of information about the author (you may find this in the book itself or you may have to google it) and a brief synopsis of the book and its main points or theses. You should conclude the book review with a critical conclusion. Did the author make his or her point? What did you think of the book? Would you recommend it?

The book review is worth up to 100 points toward the final grade. If the book is on the same topic as your position paper and you can use it, you may use it as ONE of the required five sources for the position paper. More information on the book review will be provided on Canvas.

POSITION PAPER

Each student will pick a topic (with the help and approval of the instructor) relating to a social or political issue of interest to the student and write a position paper. You will be taking a position or stand on that issue. You have the option of playing “devil’s advocate” which means you defend a position that you do not agree with but pretend as though you do! This is often a great learning experience when you understand how someone who disagrees with you thinks about the issue! Even if you are one of those people who never has an opinion on political issues, in your paper you will at least *pretend* you have an opinion!

Like the book review, I would like a general idea of your topic by the end of the fourth week of the course. This is so I can help you narrow the topic down and give you some suggestions.

The position paper is an “opinion” paper but it is also like a research paper. You need to use at least five sources to back up your argument and these sources need to be CITED using the APA format. It should also include an ANNOTATED bibliography or works-cited page.

Your position paper should be 4-5 double-spaced pages in length (not counting any cover or works-cited pages). It should be carefully proofread for errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage and style. The position paper is worth up to 200 points toward the final grade. More information on the position paper will be provided on Canvas.

- **LETTERS TO PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

Each student will write a letter to a public official regarding an issue, problem, or concern that is important to him or her.

Letters should be addressed to the recipient using their full address, name and title. I would like it to be a business letter. I suggest that you “snail mail” it to the recipient since politicians tend to take those more seriously than an email because you took the time to mail it to them!

Part of this exercise is finding out who is the best person to send your letter to. For example, if your trash is not being picked up, the White House is probably not the best place to write. A town official would be more appropriate.

A letter will not be judged on the opinion that it expresses but rather on grammar, structure, and knowledge of the issue or issues involved. If you get a reply, I would like to know about it. Just post what they said in the discussion board for the week you receive the reply. The letter is worth up to fifty (50) points toward your final grade. More information on the letters will be provided online in the Canvas Modules.

EXTRA CREDIT

The instructor *may* provide opportunities for extra credit. This is solely at the discretion of the instructor. It should be remembered that any extra credit offered will be not “substitute” credit. In other words, it will only be offered to all members of the class and not just to individual students who have done poorly on other assignments and exams.

- **MAKEUP AND LATE WORK**

Students are expected to turn in their work on time. All work should be submitted by 5 p. m. on the Sunday after the week in which it was assigned. If you are having any problems which prevent you from submitting your work on time, technical or otherwise, please contact me immediately. Except in bona fide emergencies, if you know in advance you are going to have a problem getting something in on time, it is your responsibility to contact me and let me know the reason so I can decide if it is a good excuse. In emergency situations, the instructor reserves the right to ask for proof.

NEED HELP?

Every student sometimes needs additional help. That is part of the instructor’s job. Student’s experiencing difficulty with the course material or any other difficulties or issues should contact the instructor as soon as possible. **THE INSTRUCTOR DOES NOT MIND STUDENTS CALLING HIM AT HOME AND IS COMMITTED TO THE SUCCESS OF EVERY STUDENT!**

If the student has an issue, problem, question. or needs help the instructor cannot help him or her with, he will do his best to refer the student to resources that can help!

The instructor is not a psychic or a mind reader. He does not know if a student is having difficulty unless the student makes him aware!

DEPARTMENT CHAIR INFORMATION:

It is my hope that this course meets your every expectation as a challenging, engaging, and respectful learning experience. If you find this not to be the case, I would welcome the opportunity to address your concerns. This is not only a courtesy, it is a matter of process and procedure. Should be fail to arrive at a mutually satisfactory understanding, you should take the matter to my immediate supervisor, Professor Julie Steve Freeborn, sfreeborn@ccsnh.edu.

- **COURSE SCHEDULE/OUTLINE**

Wk. Ending	<i>Tentative Topics</i>	Readings
Sept 5	introduction to course; political theory comparative political systems; background of the American political system; the U.S. Constitution; the New Hampshire Constitution and other state constitutions;	<i>The OER and other readings and materials for the week will be posted in the Canvas Module for that week.</i>
Sep 12	federalism; advantages and disadvantages of federalism; federal relationships	
Sep 19	Congress; comparative legislative and parliamentary systems; Congressional elections; the duties of Congress; state	

Sep 26	legislatures; the term limits debate; direct democracy; state referenda and initiatives the Federal executive branch; powers and roles of the U.S. President; comparative Presidents; Presidential elections; the Vice President; the Cabinet; Remember, by the end of this week you must have had your position paper topic and book to review approved by the instructor!
Oct 3	the Federal bureaucracy; state governors; state executive branches; Federal and state budgetary processes
Oct 10	law and comparative legal systems; the Federal judiciary; the U.S. Supreme Court; Supreme Court history; the military justice system state court system.
Oct 17	the Bill of Rights; civil liberties; limits on civil liberties
Oct 24	civil rights and civil rights movements
Oct 31	political ideologies: public opinion; political participation; political parties
Nov 7	interest groups; PACs; lobbying;
Nov 14	the media and politics; elections
Nov 21	domestic issues and policy
Nov 28	Happy Thanksgiving! No Work This Week!
Dec 5	foreign policy
Dec 12	foreign policy
Dec 19	Position Paper Due

- **NOTE: These dates are the Saturdays ending the week. Work is due on the Sunday after the Saturday ending the week by 5 p. m.**