



POLI 2335: Politics, Government and Society in the United States Fall 2026

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Introduction: The United States is one of the longest lasting democratic experiments in history. While it has faced incredible challenges including a bloody civil war, the eradication of slavery, terrorist attacks and civil rights protests, the U.S. has shown a remarkable ability (so far) to see its way through them. It has established a mostly very stable democracy, built tremendous wealth and military capacity, and has usually played a leading role in world affairs. Today it is being challenged once again from within and from without and the foundations of the democratic republic are being tested. As students of political science, our task is to understand the principles embedded in those foundations, and to become familiar with its evolving political system. In order to assess the health of the American democracy and to recognize more fully some of the challenges it now (or will soon) faces, we will also need to gain a grasp of the hopes and frustrations of the American people themselves. Some of these frustrations have been evident in partisanship, ongoing demonstrations, and in the storming of the capitol in January of 2021. We shall also see how these develop into tendencies in political discussion and debates today.

Required Text:

O'Connor & Sabato, *American Government: Roots and Reform* (2026 Revel edition; this digital edition is necessary in order to complete course requirements; a hard copy of the text is also available through the publisher's website and in other places). Estimated cost: \$75.00

Requirements:

1. **Contributions to class discussions** (30%): You will be asked to respond to some questions every week based on our readings, viewing, and lectures. In addition to providing your own response, you will also be asked to comment upon at least two classmates' responses and are encouraged to follow up on each other's responses. *Any use of outside sources or AI assistance must be acknowledged.*
2. **Revel textbook assignments** (20%): these will be accessible through your digital text for the class.
3. **Essay** (25%): Information about this requirement will be supplied in lecture early in the term. The essay will allow you to display a familiarity with the course readings and materials and to develop your ability to understand and assess ongoing developments in the U.S. government and society.
4. **Final Exam** (25%): Your responses to questions about course themes, people and events. You will be given plenty of time to complete this requirement. More details to come.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Expand knowledge of the U.S. political system, its people, and its history.
2. Develop and defend your own point of view on major political and social questions in the U.S..
3. Increase your ability to think critically about information presented by both traditional and nontraditional media.
4. Foster an ability to assess the effects of U.S. foreign policy both domestically and internationally.

Topics and Readings: each lecture will provide detailed slides, notes, and other media links.

1. September 8: An introduction to the study of American government, politics, and society. Discussion of course and requirements.

READ: *American Government: Roots and Reform (AG)*, Ch. 1

2. September 15: The Constitution and the Federal System

READ: *AG*, Chs. 2 & 3

3. September 22: Congress

READ: *AG*, Ch. 6

4. September 29: Presidency and the Executive Branch

READ: *AG*, Chs. 7 & 8

5. October 6: The Judiciary

READ: *AG*, Ch. 9

6. October 20: Political Parties

READ: *AG*, Ch. 11

7. October 27: Campaigns, Elections and Voting

READ: *AG*, Ch. 12

8. November 3: The Media and Interest Groups

READ: **AG**, Chs. 13 & 14

9. November 10: Midterm election results discussion; Rights and Liberties

READ: **AG**, Chs. 4 & 5

10. November 17: Social and Economic Policy

READ: **AG**, Ch. 15

11. November 24: Foreign and Defense Policy

READ: **AG**, Ch. 16

12. December 1: Review and Exam Assignment Information (no assigned reading)

Academic Honesty: Academic honesty is expected of all Lakehead University students. It should go without saying that cheating, collusion, and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students are expected to make themselves fully familiar with Lakehead's policies in this area. Although all these policies will be enforced in full, it is worth emphasizing the following:

PLAGIARISM INVOLVES PRESENTING ANOTHER'S WORK, IDEAS, THEORIES, OR INTERPRETATION AS ONE'S OWN OR RELYING ON AI IN WHOLE OR PART. To avoid plagiarism, always:

- 1) Put quotation marks around any words taken from sources.
- 2) Paraphrase material completely; do not simply rearrange words from a source or change them using a thesaurus, etc.
- 3) Whether it is being quoted or paraphrased in your work, always give accurate and complete citations for all material that comes from another source.
- 4) Avoid borrowing entire arguments or ideas from another writer or technological source (ex: AI summaries). Your arguments should be original to you.