

Course Information

Number:	PS213
Name:	American National Government (Previously: U.S. Government I)
Description:	This survey course provides an introduction to the organization and functions of American government. Topics covered include the principles of the U.S. Constitution, and the powers and limitations of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government.(Offered in alternate years with Comparative Political Systems.)
Credit(s):	3
Offered (DAY schedule):	In alt yrs with Comp Pol Sys
Instructor Permission Required:	N
Pre-Requisite(s):	

This course was previously titled U.S. Government I

Course Objectives

Students will have primary knowledge of:

- (1) basic political concepts, such as human nature, liberty, equality and democracy,
- (2) the roles, powers and interactions of the three branches of the federal government,
- (3) the democratic political process in the U.S.,
- (4) civil liberties protected by the U.S. Constitution, and
- (5) how federal agencies formulate and implement public policies.

PS 213: American National Government

Thomas College

Fall 2015

Professor: Dr. John D. Majewski

Day and Time: MWF | 9:00–9:50

Office: AL-141 (Academic Bldg.)

✉ Email: majewskij@thomas.edu

☎ Phone: 859-1323

Hours: M/W/F 10:00–10:30, T/Th 10:00–12:15, or other times by appointment

Course Webpage available on Moodle

Catalog description for 213: *This course covers the Constitution as an instrument of government and the powers and limitations of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the federal government. (3 Credits)*

1. Summary and Learning Objectives

This course is designed to introduce students to the Constitutional principles and formal institutions of American government. Central topics include the philosophical foundation of our political system, the structural components of the federal government, the relationship between federal and state governments, and politics as the struggle to balance freedom and equality. The main goals of the course are (1) to examine the institutional arrangement of the national government for the purpose of increasing the student's understanding of the meaning of "good government" and how political representation in the United States is designed to work, (2) to develop your ability to communicate effectively in both oral and written form, and (3) to enhance your ability to think critically and make more informed choices and reasoned arguments about contemporary political issues.

By the end of the course, successful students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of:

- the Founders' thinking on basic political concepts, such as human nature, liberty, equality, and democracy
- the structure, purpose, and reasons for the U.S. Constitution
- the interplay of order, liberty, and equality in the American political system
- the main features of the democratic process and political culture in the U.S.
- the structure of the federal system, and intergovernmental relations
- the roles, powers and interactions of the three branches of the federal government, as established by the Constitution (i.e., "rules of the game")
- how federal agencies formulate and implement public policies

Sophomore standing is recommended. Students are not required to have any background in political science, but if you're not particularly interested in politics or government, I really would take a different course...seriously.

2. Requirements and Evaluation

Textbooks (available through the [Bookstore Website](#))

Walter E. Volkmer, *American Government*, 14th edition (Pearson, 2012) | ISBN: 978-0205251735

Please let me know immediately if you have trouble getting the textbook.

Supplemental readings will be posted on Moodle as PDF files or available externally online. Since many of our class discussions will relate to current political events, additional readings may be added during the semester but these should be fairly minimal in length. Hard copies will not be provided; copies can be printed from Moodle. Note: All students are assumed to have access to computers and leading office software, e.g., MS Word, as well as basic skills navigating the World Wide Web.

Recommended: Robert E. DiClerico, and Allan S. Hammock, *Points of View: Readings in American Government and Politics*, 11th edition (McGraw-Hill, 2007).

Grading: Grades are based on the instructor's judgment of student comprehension of course material presented in lectures, assigned readings and class discussions. The following methods of assessment will be used.

✓ Exams (150 points)

There will be three exams, each worth 50 points. Examination material will be drawn from course readings, lectures, classroom discussions, and films and video clips reviewed in class. A study guide will be posted on Moodle prior to each exam. Format will consist of some combination of multiple-choice, short-answer and/or short-essay questions. To prepare for the exams, you should review your class notes weekly. If you get less than 37.5 points on an exam (the equivalent of below a C), you should come to see me as soon as possible. Make-up exams will be given only if you have a valid medical or personal (e.g., death of an immediate family member) reason for not being at the exam, communicate with me either by email or telephone before the exam, and provide corroborating documentation; otherwise, a zero will be given for that exam. A make-up exam must be taken within one week of the original exam date unless there are very special circumstances.

✓ Debate (15 points)

Developing the ability to express ideas and persuade others in an oral argument is essential in politics (or any career). Therefore, each student is required to participate in one of several in-class debate sessions (the number of debates will be determined by class size). Two teams will debate a controversial issue in front of the class, and a general class discussion will take place after each team has presented its position. Debate topics will correspond to regular class meetings and assigned readings; however, to do well in the debate, you likely will have to do a fair amount of research and analysis on the issue. More details will be provided during the first few weeks of the semester.

✓ Quizzes (15 points)

There will be a number of short quizzes throughout the semester. Format will consist primarily of True/False and/or ID questions. Make-up quizzes generally are not given unless you have a valid medical or personal (e.g., death of an immediate family member) reason for not being in class, communicate with me either by email or telephone before class, and provide corroborating documentation; otherwise, a zero will be given for that quiz.

✓ **Participation (20 points)**

Each student is expected to *actively participate* in classroom in an informed and thoughtful manner. Most of our class discussions will use the readings and/or current political developments as a departure point. This means you will need to complete the assigned readings before each class session. This also means that you should read a leading newspaper daily and be prepared to discuss current national events. Two very good daily news sources are *The NY Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*, however you may read any reputable newspaper. (See [US Newspapers](#) or [Online Newspapers](#) for an extensive list of news sources available online. Additionally, you may want to review news magazines for more thorough coverage of particular topics and events. I recommend the *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* or *National Journal*.) Discussion is a key part of the learning process. By actively taking part, you not only will improve your critical thinking skills but also increase your chances of doing well on the exams and written assignments. Accordingly, each student's verbal contribution in class will be evaluated. Grading will be based on the quantity (i.e., number of classes throughout the semester in which you participate) and quality (i.e., substantive value) of your contributions. Note: This part of your grade also may incorporate homework, including Web assignments, and in-class group activities.

The course grade will be based on the following point system:

Grade	Total Points	Demonstrated Level of Understanding
A	190-200	Excellent mastery of the material
A-	180-189	
B+	174-179	Very Good
B	166-173	Good
B-	160-165	
C+	154-159	Satisfactory
C	146-153	
C-	140-145	
D+	134-139	Poor
D	126-133	
F	<120	Does not meet college level expectations

An Incomplete is given at the instructor's discretion. As a general rule, this will not be an option to the student without a valid medical reason. In this case, students must (1) provide documentation from a physician stating that you are unable to complete the course, (2) have a passing course grade and be near completion of all required coursework, and (3) complete the missed work within a specific, assigned period of time. Note: Per the registrar's office, an Incomplete is a temporary grade and will revert automatically to an F if the required work is not completed within the time limit.

Deadline for dropping the course: *"The last date to drop a course is November 11th. All students registered after that date will receive a grade for the course. No grades of L or W will be issued after that date."*

Attendance Policy: Regular attendance is mandatory, and will be taken throughout the semester. If a serious problem arises during the semester, please see me. Missing more than three classes during the semester will result in a 5% penalty against your final course grade for each absence. For example, you accumulate 175 points toward your final grade but have missed four classes, your final grade will be based on 166 points. Excessive unexcused absences will result in a failing grade. Tardiness counts as an unexcused absence. If you anticipate an excused absence, please talk to me before the day you plan to be absent. (Note: ***The only excused absences are medical and family emergencies, with proper documentation*** from a physician or some other authoritative source submitted within two weeks of the missed class.) Keep in mind that you are responsible for announcements made and material covered in any class you miss.

Also please note the course instructor *may drop a student from a course because of excessive absences or because of student conduct judged inappropriate or disruptive by the faculty member.*

Additional Policies and Comments

Academic honesty: All students are expected to comply with Thomas College's policy governing academic honesty (the policy outlining academic conduct can be found in the [Student Handbook](#)). Simply put, do your own work. Violation of the College's policy will result in a "0" for the exam or assignment. A second offense will result in course failure and other appropriate sanction.

Students with disabilities: Any students with special learning needs or a documented disability that may require some modification of seating, testing or other class requirements should inform me as soon as possible so that appropriate arrangements can be made. For more information, please contact the Student Affairs Office or the [Center for Academic Support](#).

General support: Tutors are available in the [Student Success Center](#), Room AL-112 (email tutorcoord@thomas).

Written work: Unless otherwise specified, written assignments are to be typed, meet basic style guidelines (APA, MLA, [Chicago](#), etc. – see [Research and Citation Resources](#)). Please submit all assignments electronically via Moodle by the beginning of class on the assignment's due date, unless another time is expressly stated. (After class begins, assignments will be considered late

so do not skip class just to finish an assignment.) Late assignments will not be accepted without a penalty. Note: A computer mishap will not excuse a late paper; you should make frequent and multiple back-ups of your work. As a student, you are ultimately responsible for communicating *proactively* with me regarding any necessary issues. Also note that in order to maintain a fair playing field for all students, I do not accept rewritten or substitute assignments.

Class etiquette: *Thomas College views as unacceptable any behavior which infringes on the right, safety, property, and respect of another person or which impedes the educational process of any member of the College community (see Student Conduct Code in the Student Handbook).* This means students are to treat the classroom and each other with respect; we can engage in lively debate while maintaining an open attitude and respecting a diversity of viewpoints, ideas, and backgrounds as we consider various political issues. Therefore, students are asked to refrain from making comments that may be disruptive to the learning environment. Abusive language, which includes, but is not limited to, derogatory or discriminatory comments, will not be tolerated. Students who disturb class may be asked to leave the class session.

Also:

- Please be to class on time. If you must leave class early, let me know prior to the start of class and leave without disrupting the class.
- Please do not text message, check emails/Facebook, Web surf, listen to music, read a newspaper or engage in any other similar activity during class. Modern conveniences such as cell phones and other electronic devices are a significant distraction and should be turned off and put away during class.
- You are free to bring a beverage to class, but please limit food.

Recording: Recording of any class session through the use of any type of medium or equipment is prohibited.

Accessing Moodle: There is a Moodle page for this course, which will be used to post an electronic version of the syllabus and other course materials, discussion questions, and announcements (e.g., class cancellation, changes in reading assignments, et cetera). Therefore, students must understand the Moodle Learning System and its features as a requirement for this course (for general help with using Moodle, see http://docs.moodle.org/en/Main_Page). You also will need to check the course Webpage on a regular basis. To access the course Webpage, go to the homepage for Thomas (www.thomas.edu), then click on Quick Links and select Moodle. Select User Login and enter your username and password. (For help with your username and/or password, see: www.thomas.edu/it/faq/moodle/password.asp or call the IS Help Desk at 859-1204.) Then, under My Courses, click on PS 213.

Incorporation of E-Portfolio (From College Policy): *E-portfolios allow students an opportunity to store work they feel demonstrates their proficiency in the four Thomas College Core Competencies of Communication, Leadership and Service, Analytical Reasoning and Community & Interpersonal Relations.*

Disclaimer: Any or all parts of this syllabus are tentative and subject to revision based on the needs of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and/or posted on Moodle. It is the responsibility of the student to keep up with any amendments to the requirements, policies,

and schedule for this course. Also please note that **statements made in lectures and during discussion are for teaching purposes only and do not necessarily reflect my personal views.**

Enrollment in this course implies acceptance of all stated policies and requirements.

3. Topic Schedule and Reading Assignments

The course is structured loosely around the following outline and likely will be modified throughout the semester.

PART 1: THE FRAMEWORK OF GOVERNMENT		
Date	Topic	Readings
August 31	Course Introduction	
Sept 2–9	The Democratic Republic	<p>➤ Volkomer, <i>American Government</i>, Chap. 1</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benjamin Franklin's <u>Albany Plan of Union (1754)</u> & <u>The Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776)</u> • Thomas Paine, "<u>Common Sense</u>" [online]
Sept 11 & 14	The Basic Principles of American Government	<p>➤ Volkomer, Chap. 2</p> <p>Peruse the Constitution & Bill of Rights (pages 42-55)</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roger A. Bruns, <u><i>A More Perfect Union: The Creation of the U.S. Constitution</i></u> (1986) • James Madison, <u><i>The Federalist Nos. 10, 47 & 48</i></u> • Robert Dahl, "<u>James Madison: Republican or Democrat?</u>" <u><i>Perspectives on Politics</i></u> (2005) • Charles Beard, <u><i>An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States</i></u>, Chaps. 2 & 6
Sept 16 & 18	Federalism	<p>➤ Volkomer, Chap. 3</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James Madison, <u><i>The Federalist No. 51</i></u> • Brutus essays, <u>Nos. 1, 2 and 6, 7</u> • Samuel Beer, "<u>Federalism, Nationalism and Democracy in America,</u>" <u><i>APSR</i></u> (1978), pp. 9-21
PART 2: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR		
Sept 21–28	Public Opinion and Mass Media	<p>➤ Volkomer, Chap. 4</p>
Sept 30– EXAM 1		

Oct 5–9	Political Parties and Interest groups	<p>➤ Volkomer, Chap. 5</p> <p>Peruse History of American Political Parties</p> <p>Recommended: Morris P. Fiorina, "Parties and Partisanship: A 40-Year Retrospective Political Behavior" [online]</p>
Oct 12	No class – Columbus Day Break	
Oct 14 & 16	Campaigns and Elections	<p>➤ Volkomer, Chap. 6</p> <p>Recommended Film: The War Room</p>
PART 3: THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT		
Oct 19–23	Congress	<p>➤ Volkomer, Chap. 7</p> <p>Peruse data site: Adam Carr's Election Archive - 2014 U.S. House Congressional Districts, by region</p>
Oct 26 & 28	The Presidency	<p>➤ Volkomer, Chap. 8</p> <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ezra Klein, "The Unpersuaded: Who listens to a President?" <i>The New Yorker</i> (3/19/2012) • Richard Neustadt, "Presidential Power and the Modern President" [online]
Oct 30– EXAM 2		
Nov 2–6	The Courts	➤ Volkomer, Chap. 10
PART 4: RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL		
Nov 9 & 11	Civil Liberties	<p>➤ Volkomer, Chap. 11</p> <p>Recommended: David Cole, "The War on Civil Liberties," <i>Nation</i> (7/18/2011) [Academic Search Complete]</p>
Nov 13	No class – Veteran's Day	
Nov 16–20	Debate Week	
Nov 23	Civil Rights	➤ Volkomer, Chap. 12
Nov 25 & 27	No class – Thanksgiving Break	
PART 5: PUBLIC POLICY		
Nov 30–Dec 4	Domestic Policy	➤ Volkomer, Chap. 13
Dec 7–11	Foreign Policy	➤ Volkomer, Chap. 14
December 14–18 Finals Week FINAL EXAM day/time TBA – Please note that the final exam schedule is set by the Registrar's Office and may not be changed.		



Useful Internet Links

General

- James Madison Institute <http://www.jamesmadison.org>
- Internet Public Library <http://ipl.sils.umich.edu>
- Library of Congress <http://www.Lcweb.loc.gov/>
- National Archives and Records Admin. <http://www.archives.gov>
- Gateway for information on federal agencies and departments, government websites, statistics and reports (U.S. Dept. of Commerce) <http://www.fedworld.gov>
- Another gateway for government info (excellent) <http://findlaw.com/11stategov>
- And still another gateway http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/access003.html
- Emory University School of Law (excellent historical document collection) <http://www.law.emory.edu/index.php?id=2553#c9656>
- American Rhetoric – Great Speeches <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/index.htm>
- Guide to political research (R. Jensen) <http://tigger.uic.edu/~rjensen/political.htm>
- Politico <http://www.politico.com/>
- This Nation [online textbook available]

American Political Thinking

- The Political Philosophy of John Locke (The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy) <http://www.iep.utm.edu/l/locke-po.htm>
- John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* <http://www.efm.bris.ac.uk/het/locke/government.pdf>
- Charles de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* <http://www.constitution.org/cm/sol.htm>
- John Adams, “Thoughts on Government” (1776) <http://www.constitution.org/jadams/thoughts.htm> & *A Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, vol. 1 (1787) http://www.constitution.org/jadams/ja1_00.htm
- Selected Writings of Thomas Paine <http://www.constitution.org/tp/paine.htm>
- Selected Works of Thomas Jefferson <http://www.constitution.org/tj/tj-chron.htm>
- Selected Works of James Madison <http://www.constitution.org/jm/jm.htm>
- The Federalists Papers <http://www.law.ou.edu/hist/federalist/> & The Anti-Federalists <http://www.constitution.org/afp/afp.htm>
- Selected Political Works of John Stuart Mill <http://www.constitution.org/jsm/jsm.htm>
 - “Representative Government” http://www.constitution.org/jsm/rep_gov.htm
 - “On Liberty” <http://www.constitution.org/jsm/liberty.htm>

Congress

- Thomas (best available site for Congressional information) <http://www.thomas.loc.gov>
- US House of Representatives <http://www.house.gov>
 - Find your Congressperson <http://www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW.html>
- US Senate <http://www.senate.gov>
 - Find your Senator http://www.senate.gov/senators/senator_by_state.cfm

- Library of Congress (information on Congress) <http://www.loc.gov/global/legislative/congress.html>
- Capweb (gateways to print material and other resources on Congress) <http://www.capweb.net>
- C-SPAN <http://www.c-span.org/>
- Roll Call Online <http://www.rollcall.com/>
- Federal News Service (Congressional Transcripts Online) <http://www.fednews.com/>

The Presidency

- Whitehouse home page <http://www.whitehouse.gov>
- Library of Congress presidency page <http://lcweb.loc.gov/global/executive/fed.htm>
- American Presidents (Univ. of Virginia) <http://millercenter.org/academic/americanpresident/>
- Presidential Speech Archive (Miller Center) <http://millercenter.org/president/speeches>
- Presidential inaugural addresses <http://www.barleby.com/index.html> or http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2009/01/17/washington/20090117_ADDRESSES.html?hp
- Gateway to presidential libraries http://sunsite.unc.edu.lia/president/president_info.html
- Gateway for presidential documents (Texas A&M) <http://www.tamu.edu/whitehouse>
- Dave Leip's *Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections* <http://www.uselectionatlas.org>

The Courts

- U.S. courts (general information) <http://www.uscourts.gov>
- Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decisions and other general law information <http://www.findlaw.com> & <http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/>
- U. S. Code (federal laws) <http://uscode.house.gov/search/criteria.shtml>
- Information on Justices <http://oyez.nwu.edu>

Policy Information and News Sources

- Political Information (search engine) <http://www.politicalinformation.com/>
- General policy discussion <http://www.policy.com>
- Federal News Service <http://www.fednews.com/>
- N.Y. Times <http://www.nytimes.com/yr/mo/day/national/index-politics.html>
- Washington Post <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/politics>
- National Public Radio <http://www.npr.org/>
- CNN - AllPolitics <http://cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS>
- ABCNEWS.com – Politics <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics>
- USA TODAY – Politics <http://www.usatoday.com/news/politics/polifront.htm>
- PBS Democracy Project <http://www.pbs.org/democracy>
- World Political Resources <http://www.politicalresources.net/>
- PoliticalWag.com <http://www.politicalwag.com/>
- Project Vote Smart (great source of political info) <http://www.vote-smart.org/>
- Speakout.com <http://www.speakout.com/>

- The Political Insider <http://www.politicalinsider.com/>
- DemocracyNet <http://www.dnet.org/>

Polling Data

- Pew Research Center for the People and the Press <http://www.people-press.org>
- Gallup <http://www.gallup.com/Home.aspx>
- PollingReport <http://www.pollingreport.com/>