

JRD Submission: American Government
POL 10

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Course Description. This introductory course will help students better understand American politics. We will explore various topics, including Congress, the presidency, the courts, voting and elections, political parties and interest groups, and civil rights and liberties. The course will give you a basic understanding of the American government and challenge you to think critically about politics. We will explore some difficult questions throughout the term, including: Does a Christian worldview mean we should be politically active or disengaged? Should we be concerned about the underrepresentation of persons of color and women in politics? Is political polarization good or bad for America? In short, this course will provide solid foundational knowledge to explore the essential and sometimes intractable questions that dominate today's political scene.

Requirements: Grades are posted on Canvas but are not weighted and may be inaccurate. The penalty for late work is one letter grade per day. Grades are based on the following:

Exams. There are three multiple-choice exams throughout the semester. The first two are unit exams; the final is cumulative. The exams must be taken on the day scheduled; no exceptions to the exam dates will be made unless the student provides written documentation of an illness or emergency.

Papers. Students will write three essays, between 3-5 pages in length, double-spaced, with standard margins and fonts. I grade essays on the argument's quality and the prose's clarity.

Participation. This class will rely heavily on student participation. There are two components to the participation grade. First, you are expected to attend all lectures and classes on time. Second, you are expected to actively and civilly participate in class discussions. Active participation means completing all the readings before class and discussing the course material. Unless otherwise noted, this will be a "no technology" classroom without cell phones, computers, or tablets. Exceptions will be granted for students with accommodations through Westmont's [Accessibility Resource Office](#).

Course Grades:

Exam I	20%
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Exam II	20
Final Exam	30
Papers	20
Participation	10
Total	100%

Canvas: The “total” and “assignments” summaries of your grades on Canvas are wrong! You can determine where your grade stands by calculating the individual scores and weighting them according to the above figures.

Required Texts:

Janda, Kenneth, Jeffrey M. Berry, Jerry Goldman, and Kevin W. Hula. 2022. *The Challenge of Democracy Essentials: American Government in Global Politics*, 15th Edition. Boston, MA: Wadsworth/Cengage Learning. ISBN: 978-0-357-45937-9 eBook ISBN-13: 9780357711149

General Education. Pol-010 fulfills the general education requirements called *Understanding Society and Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity*.

The Westmont College Catalog offers this definition of Understanding Society:

“Students will study social phenomena analyzing and explaining a wide and varied range of human behavior and social institutions and practices. Students should recognize the dynamic interplay among individuals, societal infrastructure, and public policy. Students should also understand the processes of the political economy, the nature of technology and innovation as social phenomena, and the interaction of private enterprise and the public sector. Through exposure to a breadth of literature regarding models or theories that explain social phenomena, students will acquire basic competence to evaluate these phenomena through observation, data collection, and quantitative and qualitative analysis. Students should reflect on the applications of contemporary technological advances and their impacts on personal relationships, research methodologies, the inquiry process, and the accumulation and dissemination of new knowledge” (see <http://www.westmont.edu/offices/registrar/documents/Catalog.pdf> pp. 22-3).

The definition of the JRD requirement is:

[I’ll put this in the syllabus once I find a source I can cut and paste]

Course objectives and learning outcomes. POL 10 gives students an opportunity to:

- understand political behavior, such as voting, protesting, and group membership.

- analyze how institutions, or the rules of the game, influence political outcomes.
- examine the inherent tensions between the values of freedom, equality, and order.
- study the process by which individuals come to hold their political ideology and partisan affiliation.
- survey American public policy, including budgetary, foreign, and domestic policy.
- assess how technological advances (e.g., the Internet, 24-hour news broadcasts) have shaped modern politics.
- reflect on the role that Christians play, or ought to play, in the American political system.
- appreciate the contrast between the American political system and those of other advanced democracies.
- examine what quantitative methods can tell us about political behavior.
- analyze issues of justice and injustice involving race and racism in the United States in biblically and theologically grounded ways
- identify Christian responsibilities to pursue justice and reconciliation in diverse relationships, practices, and structures according to the character of God's loving reign expressed in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty, including the use of AI, will not be tolerated. I am vigilant about checking the authenticity of students' work and have no qualms about prosecuting violators. The penalty for dishonesty is generally an F for the assignment, although serious offenses may result in an F for the course. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please ask me or refer to Westmont's policy at http://www.westmont.edu/offices/registrar/academic_policies/academic-dishonesty.html.

Academic Integrity and Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools

Westmont's [academic integrity policy](#) prohibits us from "present[ing] someone else's work as our own." Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT attempt to do the work of writing (and even thinking) for their users. Therefore, **students should NOT substitute AI-generated text for original academic work**. Westmont professors design assignments for students' incremental and active learning through methods such as reading, summarizing, discussion, and an authentic writing process in which a student does the work of critical thinking and message construction.

It is possible for original academic work (e.g., a student-authored essay) that has been grammar-checked or proofread by AI [editing](#) tools (including ChatGPT and Grammarly) to be flagged by AI detection tools on Turnitin.com, etc. Our [academic integrity policy](#) does not prohibit students from using AI editing tools unless the extent of usage meets the threshold for minimal plagiarism. However, **a student should seek permission from an instructor before an assignment submission if considering using an AI tool for editing or another assignment-related task**.

Failing to do so may result in that student's work being flagged for disciplinary action.

Academic Accommodations

Students who have been diagnosed with a disability (learning, physical/medical, or psychological) are strongly encouraged to contact the Disability Services office as early as possible to discuss appropriate accommodations for this course. Formal accommodations will only be granted for students whose disabilities have been verified by the Disability Services office. These accommodations may be necessary to ensure your full participation and the successful completion of this course. For more information, contact Sheri Noble, Director of Disability Services (565-6186, snoble@westmont.edu) or visit the website http://www.westmont.edu/_offices/disability

Schedule: This schedule is subject to change with prior notification.

Date	Topic	Readings
8/29/2023	Introduction	
8/31/2023	Institutions, Ideology, and Collective Action	Janda ch. 1
9/5/2023	Institutions, Ideology, and Collective Action II	Janda ch. 2; Black ch. 1
9/7/2023	The Constitution	Janda ch. 3; Black ch. 7; readings on the "colorblind Constitution"
9/12/2023	Federalism	Janda ch. 4; How Shelby County v. Holder Broke America
9/14/2023	No Class	
9/19/2023	Public Opinion & Socialization	Janda ch. 5; Black ch. 2
9/21/2023	No Class	
9/26/2023	Media	Janda ch. 6
9/28/2023	Participation and Voting	Janda ch. 7; Black chs. 3 & 5
10/3/2023	Parties	Janda ch. 8
10/5/2023	Elections	Janda ch. 9; Black ch. 6
10/10/2023	Fall Holiday	
10/12/2023	Interest Groups/Exam I Review	Janda ch. 10
10/17/2023	Exam I	
10/19/2023	Congress I	Janda ch. 11
10/24/2023	Congress II	Quiz: If America had Six Parties; How to Fix

Commented [MOU1]: In these first two lectures, we look at how the political rules of the game influence outcomes and behavior. I use the policy of redlining and housing to explain racial inequities. Students also consider their political ideology and why they think as they do. We discuss the role of socialization in forming views of race and ethnicity.

Commented [MOU2]: One of the major themes of the course is whether U.S. law and the Constitution are "colorblind." Students will read two articles, one arguing that colorblindness should be the goal, and that U.S. institutions are colorblind. The other article discusses the era of colorblind racism.

Commented [MOU3]: I use the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Supreme Court's Shelby County decision to discuss federalism.

Commented [MOU4]: We look at a lot of public opinion data, including findings split by race.

Commented [MOU5]: We talk about voting fraud and voter disenfranchisement.

Commented [MOU6]: Part of this lecture includes the concept of demographic representation.

Commented [MOU7]: I use health care and immigration as case studies of congressional policy-making.

		America's Two Party System
10/26/2023	The Presidency I	Janda ch. 12
10/31/2023	The Presidency II	How Do We Fix the American Presidency?
11/2/2023	The Bureaucracy	Janda ch. 13
11/7/2023	The Courts	Janda ch. 14
11/9/2023	Exam II Review	
11/14/2023	Exam II	
11/16/2023	Christianity and Politics	Black chs 9-11
11/21/2023	Civil Liberties	Janda ch. 15; Supreme Court cases on Oyez
11/23/2023	Thanksgiving	
11/28/2023	Civil Rights I	Janda ch. 16;
11/30/2023	Civil Rights II	"What is Owed"
12/5/2023	Economic Policy	Janda ch. 17
12/7/2023	Conclusion	
Dec 15 at 8am	Final	

Commented [MOU8]: We discuss executive orders and presidential actions dealing with race.

Commented [MOU9]: We discuss a lot here, including what it means to love thy neighbor.

Commented [MOU10]: We go deep into Civil Rights in these two lectures.

Commented [MOU11]: Although not explicitly about race, there is a racial component to economic policy

Commented [MOU12]: