

POL 2544G American Government and Politics
Professor Matthew Lebo
WINTER 2026
Class-time: Tuesdays 3:30-5:30, SSC 2028

Office hours: Wednesday 10:00-12:00 SSC 7233, or by appointment at matthew.lebo@uwo.ca

Teaching Assistants: William Poirier (wpoirier@uwo.ca) and Jackson Todd (jtodd45@uwo.ca)

I. Introduction:

This course is an introduction to American politics focusing on the Constitution, the institutions of the United States' government and the processes and bodies that determine public policies. American politics has changed a great deal over the last few years. We will learn about the structure of American government as well as the process of democratic decline there.

II. Learning Objectives

- 1) Students will learn the historical foundations of the United States and its Constitution. This will include the political circumstances and arguments that led to the writing of the Constitution in 1787 and the history that led to major amendments following the Civil War. We will also focus on civil rights and civil liberties and their development over American history.
- 2) Students will focus on the development and evolution of the major political parties and political behaviour including voting, protests, and public opinion.
- 3) Students will learn about the campaigns and elections in the United States with a review of recent contests.
- 4) Students will also learn about the 3 branches of government – the Judiciary, Congress, and the Presidency.

III. Required Text

There is one required textbook for the course:

James A. Morone and Rogan Kersh. 2025. *By the People: Debating American Government 7th Edition*. Oxford University Press. E-book ISBN: 9780197794869. Print ISBN: 9780197794852.

E-Book available here for 6-months: <https://global.oup.com/ushe/product/by-the-people-9780197794852?cc=ca&lang=en&>

A second textbook that I recommend: Paula D. McClain and Steven C. Tauber. 2025. *American Government in Black and White 7th Edition*. Oxford University Press. E-book ISBN: 9780197798690.

Available on Amazon.ca or global.oup.com. I use some content of McClain and Tauber in the class Powerpoints and discussion. But I won't have test questions that appear in the book but not in the other class materials.

Follow American politics in the news. Make a newspaper like the New York Times your home screen and read some articles every day. Visit a history website such as History News Network regularly.

IV. Course Requirements:

Students are expected to attend class and be prepared for questions by completing reading assignments *before* class. The best way to do well is to take notes on the lectures, read the text, and review posted lecture materials. The exams will test material from the lectures that may not be in the textbook or Powerpoints.

For tests and exams, *students are responsible for material covered in lectures that may not be in the text and for material in the text that may not be covered in lectures.* Final grades will be based on the results of a mid-term test (worth 30% of the final grade), one final examination (worth 30% of the final grade), one final writing assignments (worth 20% of the final grade) and quizzes (worth 20% of the final grade). Exams will be composed of multiple-choice questions and essays. The final exam will be comprehensive but will focus primarily on the material covered since the mid-term exam.

V. Course Grading

Quizzes:	20%	There are 6 of these and the best 4 will be counted. The dates will not be announced and there will be no make-ups.
Mid-term	30%	FEBRUARY 24th in class
Final Paper	20%	DUE APRIL 7th at 5pm – hand in on OWL.
Final Exam	<u>30%</u>	
	100%	

VI. Statement on Plagiarism:

Students must write their final paper in their own words. Generative AI is not allowed. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing. It is also a scholastic offence to submit the same work for credit in more than one course. **Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence.** All Final Papers will be evaluated using Turn-It-In in the Assignments portal and are **required to have a Turn-It-In score below 15% in order to be graded.**

Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship in a university. As a result, the University treats cases of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

On tests and exams:

1. Using or possessing unauthorized aids;
2. Using generative AI to write words you claim as your own.
3. Communicating with someone else during an exam or test;
4. Misrepresenting your identity; and
6. When you knew or ought to have known you were doing it.

In academic work:

1. Falsifying institutional documents or grades;
2. Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes; and
3. When you knew or ought to have known you were doing so.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated. If students have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or appropriate research and citation methods, they are expected to seek out additional information on academic integrity from their instructors or from other institutional resources.

VII. Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to American Government, January 6th, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 1.

Week 2: The Constitution I, January 13th, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapters 2&3.

Week 3: The Constitution II, January 20th, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 3.

Week 4: Civil Liberties, January 27th, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 4.

Week 5: Civil Rights I, February 3rd, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 5.

Week 6: Public Opinion and Political Participation , February 10th, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 6.

READING WEEK – FEBRUARY 16th - 20th

Week 7: MIDTERM IN CLASS, February 24th, 2026.

MIDTERM EXAM

Week 8: Interest Groups and Political Parties, March 3rd, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 9.

Week 9: Campaigns and Elections, March 10th, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 8.

Week 10: Congress, March 17th, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 10.

Week 11: The Presidency, March 24th, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 11.

Week 12: The Judiciary, March 31st, 2026.

Reading: Morone and Kersh Chapter 13.

FINAL PAPER DUE APRIL 7th at 5pm.

VIII. Makeup Exam Policy

It is essential that you understand the following policy for the course since *no exceptions will be made*. No exams may be taken early for any reason. A student who misses an exam must provide a *very good* reason supported by evidence such as a hospital admittance form. If you are ill prior to an exam, let me know as soon as possible beforehand if you may miss the exam. Makeup exams will consist entirely of long essays. Failure to write one of the exams without providing a sufficient excuse will result in a grade of zero for that exam.

IX. Accommodations for Disability

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services.