

## POLS 115 American Government 3 Credits

### Course Description

The course examines the principles of American government, political behavior, and the institutions of government. This course provides a general survey of American federal government and politics with an emphasis on the history and development of the federal Constitution and the federal system. The legislative, judicial and executive branches of government and their interrelationship with each other and the bureaucracy are examined. The administration of territories, the two-party system, and the media and current political issues and problems also are explored.

### Required Text

***Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government***, 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. Geer, John G, Wendy J. Schiller and Jeffrey A. Segal. 2016. Boston: Cengage/Wadsworth.  
ISBN 978-1-285-85857-9

Contact Coleen at the NDSCS Bookstore for the most current textbook information (1-800-342-4325, ext. 2239 or [coleen.thoe@ndscs.edu](mailto:coleen.thoe@ndscs.edu)). You may also visit the NDSCS Bookstore web site at [www.ndscsbookstore.com](http://www.ndscsbookstore.com) and search for book information by class by clicking the "Textbook" tab.

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, the student will:

1. Understand the principles of American government: federalism, the separation of powers, and the Constitution.
2. Describe the electoral process (campaigns, elections, political parties, voting).
3. Explain how the media and interest groups affect the political process.
4. Explain the functions of the institutions in the American democratic system and their respective powers.
5. Understand the mechanics of the various sectors of the policy making process (economic, fiscal, monetary, domestic and foreign policy).

### Course Policies and Procedures

#### Access Policy: Computer Failures and Viruses

Online students must maintain computer access at all times to the online course. Lack of computer access as an excuse for late work or missed exam/quiz will NOT be accepted. Review the [Computer Access Policy](#) to learn how you can take a proactive approach to your online success.

#### Student Attendance

Regular attendance and completion of all assignments, on time and as scheduled, is important to your success in this course. An online student who does not regularly attend their online class for a period of seven consecutive days may be dropped from the course. Attendance is evidenced by weekly completion of assignments and/or participation in online discussions. Efforts to contact inactive students are attempted as soon as each semester begins; however, if there is no response

from the student and inactivity continues, a drop will be enacted. See the entire NDSCS Attendance Policy at [www.ndscs.edu/online-attendance](http://www.ndscs.edu/online-attendance).

If your instructor is unexpectedly unavailable and may be delayed in reviewing or correcting assignments, you will be notified of this as a sign of courtesy and respect.

### **Online Student Participation and Conduct Guidelines**

The practices of courtesy and respect that apply in the traditional classroom also apply online. However, the expectations and practice differ in the online classroom to greater extent. Review the Online Student Participation and Conduct Guidelines ([Appendix A](#)) to learn of these expectations.

### **Assignments and Grading**

#### Writing Assignments

- Assignments are expected to be submitted by the due date.
- All written assignments must be submitted via the Dropbox folder associated with the Assignment in the Online Course by the date that the paper is due.
- All papers must be formatted according to the standards set by the rubric, unless otherwise noted.

#### Late Paper Policy

- Late papers will not be accepted. Once the deadline has passed, any absent papers will be counted as a zero for the assignment.

#### Make up Tests

- Make up tests will not be offered. You must be prepared to take the test when it is scheduled. If you have not completed tests or quizzes when they are assigned, they will be marked as a zero for the quiz or test.
- If you know that you will not be able to take the test online when it is scheduled, contact your instructor as soon as possible, so it can be opened up early.

### **Assessment and Grade Scale**

Final Grades will be calculated based on how well you accomplish each of the following components of the Course:

1. Professionalism- Being prepared for each class, turning in your work on time, and generally participating in the class. This grade will be assessed at the end of the semester by your instructor and is designed for your instructor to evaluate your progress, as a professional and a student, holistically and over the entire course.
2. Weekly chapter quizzes- You will be quizzed weekly over your reading. These Quizzes are open book/open notes, and all quizzes will be found in your chapter for the week.
3. Weekly Discussion Forums- Throughout each week, you will participate in online discussion with your classmates on a discussion question I pose. The question will deal with the topic you are working on for the week.
4. Reflection Papers- You will write 4 Reflection papers over the course of this class where you will be asked to analyze current events using your understanding of American Government.
5. Semester Paper- You will be asked to draft your own Constitution which reflects both your attitudes about the mix of the “best” and “most practical” government.

6. Exams- There will be both a Midterm and a Final exam in this class, which will cover the first and second half of the material respectively. Like the weekly quizzes, these will be open book/open note exams.

The percentages for each component of this course are set at the following:

- Professionalism (10%)
- Weekly Chapter Quizzes (15%)
- Weekly Discussion Forums (10%)
- Reflection Papers (total) (15%)
- Semester Paper (15%)
- Midterm Exam (15%)
- Final Exam (20%)

### Grading Scale

Letter grades will be awarded as follows:

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	Below 60%

Completed assignments will normally be scored and returned no later than one week after the due date. If your instructor cannot meet this target, an announcement will be posted to this effect and give you an alternative date.

Points will be awarded for assignments and a letter grade assigned at the end of the term. Watch your grade book and notify your instructor if an assignment has not been scored online, or if you believe the score is incorrect. The online gradebook will often lag behind the assignments in class. Part of this is deliberate.

All written assignments will be graded by rubric which will be available online for the assignment. Your instructor will endeavor to make constructive comments on all work returned, to assist you in improving your skills in writing. That said, the rubric, not the comments, is the method by which you will receive your grade for the paper or exam.

### Extra Credit

There will be liberal use of Extra Credit in this course. Make up work or extra papers will not be assigned as extra credit. Instead, extra credit will be assigned for excellence WITHIN class, in the following means:

- Each time you say something particularly impressive or provocative (to your instructor or the class) in discussion, come up with an impressive insight during a discussion, or clearly step up as a leading member of a discussion, you MAY be rewarded 1 extra credit point, at your instructor's discretion.
- If you submit any of your 4 written reflection papers or your major semester paper to Smart Thinking, which is available on the Online Course Home, you will receive an additional 10 percent of what you earned on the paper- So, if you earned a 90% on your paper after

submitting it to Smart Thinking, you will be awarded an additional 9% on the paper. This offer is good 1 time per paper assignment.

- If your instructor unwittingly violates any of the class policies, the entire class will be awarded 1 extra credit point.
- Any other time the instructor feels like handing out extra credit, any number of extra credit points may be rewarded

At the end of the semester, each point of extra credit will be worth one half of a percent toward your final grade. So if you have 6 extra credit points and a 78 % in the class at the end of the semester, you can expect that your final grade will be 81%, or a B (78% plus 6ecp X .5). Extra Credit may be enough to put you into the next grade category.

## Submitting Assignments

All assignments should be turned in via **Dropbox** unless otherwise specified. You are **strongly encouraged** to make hard copies of your assignments and communications with the instructor to avoid losing data in the case of technical issues. *At the first sign* of problems, contact your Internet Service Provider (ISP) immediately.

It is your responsibility to access the class on another computer in the event of hardware or software problems. If your problems are not cleared up within 12 hours, contact the instructor to make other arrangements.

## Online Discussions

The online discussions are required activities, and full participation is essential for your success of this course. These discussions are an equivalent to the traditional classroom discussions. You are expected to read all postings, and interact with each other.

Participation in **threaded discussions ARE REQUIRED**. When a threaded discussion is posted, you will have a specific time period in which to participate. Make sure to make a posting relevant to the discussion topic - and then respond to other students. Discussions will be closed on a specific date, so **make sure to participate in the discussion before it closes**.

## Student-Instructor Communications

While an online class is available 24 hours a day and offers greater flexibility for the student and instructor, keep in mind that your instructor will not be available 24 hours a day. Instructors will check email, voicemail, and Cyber Office messages on a regular basis, but there may be times when they are unavailable due to other commitments and job responsibilities. Email, voicemail, or Cyber Office Messages will be responded to as time allows. As a general rule, you can expect your direct questions to be answered within 24 hours during week days.

When sending an email, please include your full name so your instructor knows who they are responding to. Often, the email address does not indicate who is sending the message.

## Student E-Mail Accounts

NDSCS students are to use an NDSCS email account exclusively to ensure the lines of communication with your instructor and NDSCS are not broken, which often happens with other email providers. You can access your email account by following instructions at [www.ndscs.edu/It-Setup](http://www.ndscs.edu/It-Setup). If

you need help accessing your NDSCS email, contact the NDSCS IT Service Desk at 800-342-4325 ext 3333 or [ndscs.servicedesk@ndscs.edu](mailto:ndscs.servicedesk@ndscs.edu).

To make your NDSCS email account your preferred email address, log into your CampusConnection account and check the “preferred” box by campus email.

The NDSCS e-mail system provides students with an entire suite of services such as:

- 10 GB storage for email
- Instant messaging through Skype for Business
- Rich calendaring
- Photo sharing
- Multi-browser support
- SMS alerts to mobile phones

## Academic Integrity

Integrity is an NDSCS core value and there is an expectation that all students, as members of the college community, adhere to the highest levels of academic integrity.

Dishonesty in class, laboratory, shop work or tests is regarded as a serious offense and is subject to disciplinary action by the instructor and dean of the respective division. For more information, refer to the NDSCS Student Planner or [College Catalog](#) under College Policies and Basic Regulations of Conduct (page 32).

## Types of Misconduct

**Cheating:** Intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise.

**Fabrication:** Intentionally and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

**Facilitating academic dishonesty:** Intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another to commit an act of academic dishonesty.

**Plagiarism:** Intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own in any academic exercise.

## Disabilities and Special Needs

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the **Student Accessibility Coordinator** (phone 671-2623, or toll-free 1-800-342-4325 ext. 3-2623) as early as possible in the term.

## APPENDIX A ONLINE STUDENT PARTICIPATION AND CONDUCT GUIDELINES

Online courses are based on the premise that students learn best in a community. The instructor plays an important role, but this is a different role than most instructors play in the traditional, face-to-face classroom. While you may see a shift in the way classes work, you'll also notice that some things don't change: the practices of courtesy and respect that apply in the ordinary classroom also apply online, and may actually require more attention in this venue. Here are some guidelines:

1. **Get involved.** In the online environment, it's not enough to show up! Your voice must be heard in order to show your presence. Your comments are needed to add to the information, the shared learning, and the sense of community in each class.
2. **Be persistent.** Remember that for many this is a fairly new environment. Each instructor still sets the rules, and you need to abide by them; however, if you run into any difficulties, don't wait! Send your instructor an email immediately or post in the Discussion Area. Most problems are easily solved, but your instructor and your fellow students need to hear from you before they can help.
3. **Share tips, helps, and questions.** For many, taking online courses is a new experience. There are no dumb questions, and even if you think your solution is obvious, please share it by posting it in the Discussion Area. For every student who asks a question, there are 10 others wanting to know the same thing.
4. **Think before you push the Send button.** Did you say just what you meant? How will the person on the other end read the words? While you can't anticipate all reactions, do read over what you've written before you send it.
5. **Consider the context.** Remember that we can't see the grin on your face when you make a sarcastic comment, we can't see the concern on your face if you only say a couple of words, and we can't read your mind and fill in the gaps if you abbreviate your comments. So: help us "see" you by explaining your ideas fully.
6. **Ask for feedback.** Not sure how your ideas and comments will be taken? Remember there's a person on the other side. If you disagree with what someone has said, practice all your communication skills as you express that disagreement. "Flaming," or flying off the handle and ranting at someone is unacceptable; it is the equivalent of having a tantrum, something most of us wouldn't do in an onsite, face to face classroom.
7. **Act with respect.** Any discriminatory, derogatory or inappropriate comments are unacceptable and subject to the same disciplinary action that they would receive if they occurred in the face to face classroom. If you have concerns about something that has been said, please contact your instructor.
8. **Exercise integrity.** Plagiarism, cheating, and other violations of ethical student behavior are serious actions in a learning community. See Academic Integrity Policy in the course syllabus.
9. **Recognize the consequences.** Consequences of online student behavior that contradicts the NDSCS Academic Integrity policy will be addressed on an individual basis and in accordance with NDSCS Academic Integrity policy. Refer to the NDSCS Student Planner or College Catalog for more information.

\*Adapted with permission from Dr. C. A. Keller, San Antonio College