

# United States Government

Vanguard University of Southern California

## Class

Semester: Spring 2019

Room: Heath 106

Time: MWF, 8-8:50; MWF 9-9:50

## Instructor

Kevin Walker, Ph.D.

Office Hours: MWF, 10-1 or by appointment

Email: kevin.walker@vanguard.edu

## Course Description

The question for all free people, whether in the U.S. or elsewhere, whether at the time of the Founding or today, is this: “whether societies are really capable or not of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force” (Alexander Hamilton, Federalist #1). In this course, we will learn key concepts and examine the great texts in American politics and government in order to understand the principles, institutions and practices designed to meet that challenge, both in the highest regions of government, as well as our own individual lives. First, students will consider the philosophic basis for the American regime stated at the Founding, and the origins of American constitutionalism. Next, we will study meaning of American citizenship, political culture, and public opinion, as well as parties and elections. We will then turn attention to the American political institutions, Congress and the Presidency, and how they interact in a system of shared power, as well as the major policy outcomes in civil rights and liberties from the Supreme Court. Finally, we will consider the great debates in public life, and learn to rationally weigh the options in light of the public good and human happiness. In general, students will gain a strong familiarity with the American political system, and trace the development of our institutions from the time of the Founding and our own day. Throughout the course, we will return to the importance of government by “reflection and choice,” and prepare ourselves to carry on that duty in our own time, and live up to the conditions of our liberty.

## Required Texts

Scardino, Franco. *Complete Idiot's Guide to U.S. Government and Politics*. Indianapolis: Alpha, 2016.

Hamilton, Alexander, et al. *The Federalist Papers*. Edited by Richard Beeman. New York: Penguin Group, 2012.

Lincoln, Abraham. *Great Speeches*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1991.

## Course Requirements and Grading

- **Participation (10%).** Come to class every day with the readings done and be prepared to contribute to the discussion. Open laptops or texting on phones will be considered an absence. Students are expected to give minor research presentations on political history and current events.
- **Quizzes (25%).** These are online Canvas quizzes on the readings for each day. They will be available for one hour the day before each class.
- **Essay (20%).** This is an essay on the primary sources studied in class.
- **Midterm Exam I (15%).** An exam on the materials from the first third of the course.
- **Midterm Exam II (15%).** An exam on the materials from the second third of the course.
- **Final Exam (15%).** An exam on the materials from major points from the whole course. If you need to take the exam at a different time, you may take it with one of the professor's earlier classes.

Per VU's attendance policy, students with more than 8 unexplained absences will receive an F. Text-messaging, work unrelated to class or sleeping will be considered an absence.

## Disabilities

The Office of Disability Services provides reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a temporary or permanent disability that requires classroom accommodations (this can include but not limited to; attention-related, learning, mental health, vision, hearing, physical or other health conditions), please contact The Office of Disability Services at 714-619-6550 or [disabilityservices@vanguard.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@vanguard.edu).

## Writing Center

The Vanguard Writing Center is committed to helping undergraduate and graduate students in all disciplines. Students may bring any writing assignment to the center, where they will receive informed, thorough, one-on-one feedback from a peer consultant. The Writing Center can help students at any stage of the writing process, including: organizing notes, developing outlines, revising thesis statements, improving organization, or assisting with final editing. To book an appointment for a writing consultation, please visit [vanguard.mywconline.com](http://vanguard.mywconline.com). To contact the writing center, email [writingcenter@vanguard.edu](mailto:writingcenter@vanguard.edu) or call (714) 966-6359.

## Academic Integrity and Dishonesty Policy

Academic dishonesty, either cheating or plagiarizing (presenting as one's own, the words or opinions of others), is regarded as a serious violation of both the academic and moral standards of VUSC. Full descriptions of the policies are in the University Catalog, pp. 59-61.

## Course Outline

Students are required to read the following readings for each day of class. Discussion of each reading may vary depending on the lecture.

### I. The American Regime

#### Week 1 – The Founding Proposition

##### January 14

Founding Documents

##### January 16

Founding Documents

##### January 18

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter 1: Principles of Government

#### Week 2 – The U.S. Constitution

##### January 21

Martin Luther King Day

##### January 23

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter 2: The Constitution

##### January 25

The U.S. Constitution

#### Week 3 – Federalist Papers: The Argument for Union

##### January 28

*Federalist Papers* – #1 and 9 (On Union)

##### January 30

*Federalist Papers* – #10 (On the Problem of Factions)

##### February 1

*Federalist Papers* – #14, 39, 45 and 46 (On Federalism)

**Week 4 – Federalist Papers: Political Institutions**

**February 4**

*Federalist Papers – #47, 48 and 51 (On Separation of Powers)*

**February 6**

*Federalist Papers – #63 (On the Senate)*

**February 8**

*Federalist Papers – #23, 70 and 78 (On the Presidency and Judiciary)*

**Week 5 – Federalism**

**February 11**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 3: Federalism*

**February 13**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 3: Federalism*

**February 15**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 3: Federalism*

**II. American Democracy**

**Week 6 – Political Culture and Public Opinion**

**February 18**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 4: American Political Culture*

**February 20**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 5: American Ideology and Public Opinion*

**February 22**

Exam on Weeks 1-5

**Exam I on Friday, February 22**

**Week 7 – Campaigns and Elections**

**February 25**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 6: Political Parties*

**February 27**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 7: Campaigns and Elections*

**March 1**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 8: Political Participation and Voting*

**III. American Political Institutions**

**Week 8 – Congress**

**March 4**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapters 9: Congress*

**March 6**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 10: The House of Representatives; Chapter 11: The Senate*

**March 8**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 12: How Laws are Created*

**Week 9 – The Presidency**

**March 11**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 13: The Presidency (Chief Executive)*

**March 13**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 13: The Presidency (War Power)*

**March 15**

*U.S. Government and Politics – Chapter 14: The Bureaucracy*

**Week 10 – Abraham Lincoln and the American Regime**

**March 25**

Abraham Lincoln, *Great Speeches* – Perpetuation of our Political Institutions (1838)

**March 27**

Abraham Lincoln, *Great Speeches* – House Divided Speech (1858)

**March 29**

Abraham Lincoln, *Great Speeches* – First Inaugural Address (1861)

**Week 11 – Lincoln’s Statesmanship**

**April 1**

Abraham Lincoln, *Great Speeches* –  
Message to Congress in Special  
Session (1861)

**April 3**

Abraham Lincoln, *Great Speeches* –  
Gettysburg Address (1863)

**April 5**

Abraham Lincoln, *Great Speeches* –  
Second Inaugural Address (1865)

**IV. The Judiciary**

**Week 12 – The Supreme Court**

**April 8**

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter  
15: The Federal Court System

**April 10**

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter  
15: The Federal Court System

**April 12**

Exam on Weeks 6-11

**Exam II on Friday, April 12**

**Week 13 – Civil Liberties**

**April 15**

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter  
16: Civil Liberties (Religion and  
Speech)

**April 17**

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter  
16: Civil Liberties (Due Process)

**April 19**

Good Friday

**Week 14 – Civil Rights**

**April 22**

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter  
17: Civil Rights (Race)

**April 24**

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter  
17: Civil Rights (Women)

**April 26**

*U.S. Government and Politics* – Chapter  
17: Civil Rights (Sexuality)

**V. Policy Debates**

**Week 15 – Policy Issues**

**April 29**

Debates

**May 1**

Debates

**May 3**

Debates

**Final Exam**  
**8am Class: Monday, May 6, 8-10am**  
**9am Class: Wednesday, May 8, 8-10am**