



COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: **REGIONAL STUDIES: UNITED STATES**

COURSE DATA

Degree	
Academic Year	2024-25
Credits	6
Course type	
Department	International Relations
Language of instruction	English

PROFESSOR DATA

Name	Dra. Carlota García Encina y Dr. Jason Xidias Sheaff
Email	jxidias@comillas.edu
Office hours	By appointment, in person or Zoom/Teams. Please contact me via email stating your full availability for a meeting.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

This introductory course on American Politics will explore democracy, the US Constitution, federalism, civil liberties and rights, the presidency, Congress, the judiciary, political parties, elections and political participation, interest groups, campaign financing, the news and social media, and foreign policy. Students will complete the course with an in-depth understanding of the theoretical and structural foundations of the country and the process and policy outcomes of the US government, both domestically and internationally. The key questions that underpin all of the above-mentioned themes are: How is power exercised and contested in the United States? And, how does the US project its power globally?

REQUIRED COURSE TEXTBOOK: GEER, JOHN ET AL. *GATEWAYS TO DEMOCRACY: AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT*, FIFTH EDITION. BOSTON: CENGAGE, 2022.

CONTENTS AND STRUCTURE

TOPIC 1: INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OVERVIEW.

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY? WHAT ARE ITS ORIGINS? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT? WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE US AND GLOBALLY?

READING: ROBERT DAHL, ON DEMOCRACY: PP. 7-25, 35-61
(AVAILABLE ON MOODLE)

TOPIC 2: THE US CONSTITUTION

READING: GEER ET AL, GATEWAYS TO DEMOCRACY: AN INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, FIFTH EDITION: CHAPTER 2 (AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE OR RENT IN PAPER OR EBOOK FORMATS)

TOPIC 3: FEDERALISM

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTER 3

TOPIC 4: CIVIL LIBERTIES AND RIGHTS

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTERS 4 AND 5

TOPIC 5: THE PRESIDENCY

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTER 13

TOPIC 6: CONGRESS

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTER 12

TOPIC 7: THE JUDICIARY

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTER 15

TOPIC 8: POLITICAL PARTIES

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTER 9

TOPIC 9: ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTERS 10 AND 11

TOPIC 10: THE NEWS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTER 7

TOPIC 11: INTEREST GROUPS AND CAMPAIGN FINANCING

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTER 8

TOPIC 12: US FOREIGN POLICY

READING: GEER ET AL: CHAPTER 16

METHODOLOGY

This course titled Regional Studies: The United States will be taught in person. The professor will deliver a series of lectures on the key themes stated in the short description above. This content will be enriched by student contributions (questions, commentaries, discussions, presentations) inside the classroom as well as readings, research and writing outside.

ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

Assessment type	Assessment criteria	Percentage
FINAL EXAM	In-depth knowledge and application of the course topics stated under Contents and Structure above.	50%
RESEARCH PROJECT	Details will be announced early in the semester. Guidance and grading rubrics will be posted on Moodle.	20%
ORAL PRESENTATION	Oral presentation of Research Project. Details will be announced early in the semester. Guidance and grading rubrics will be posted on Moodle.	15%
ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION	Attendance and active participation.	15%

- Committing any serious academic misconduct, such as **plagiarism** of previously published material, or **copying** in the exam or any other graded activity, **will imply not being able to pass the course in the ordinary assessment period.**
- At the beginning of the term the professor will announce the office hours for the course. Tutorials are an important part of the development of the course; students may attend these within those office times, however they must be arranged in advance with the professor.
- To be able to take the final exam, students must not have missed **more than one third of the classes without justification.** If this requirement is not met, students will lose the right to be assessed both in the ordinary and extraordinary periods (art. 93-1 of the General Regulations). Failure to attend the first hour of a two-hour lecture, means having missed the whole session in terms of attendance, regardless of whether or not the student is present the second hour.
- Students are expected to arrive to class on time and stay until the end of each session.
- **AI USE REGULATIONS:** Detection of illegal use of AI will carry a sanction (art.168.2.e, Reglamento General de la Universidad). In group assignments, the sanction will apply to all members of the team.

STUDENT WORKLOAD

CONTACT HOURS	OUTSIDE CLASSROOM	OVERALL
60	90	150

READING LIST / RELEVANT REFERENCES

Dahl, Robert. *On Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

Dahl, Robert. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015.

De Tocqueville, Alexis. *Democracy in America*. New York: Penguin, 2003.

Foner, Eric. *Give me Liberty: An American Story*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014.

Geer, John et al. *Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government*, Fifth Edition. Boston: Cengage, 2022.

Hochschild, Arlie. *Strangers in their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: The New Press, 2016.

Kernell, Samuel et al. *The Logic of American Politics*. New York: Sage, 2021.

Kernell, Samuel et al. *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 7th edition. CQ Press: Thousand Oaks, 2019.

Kleidosty, Jeremy and Jason Xidias. *A Critical Analysis of the Federalist Papers*. London: Routledge, 2017.

Kollman, Ken. *Readings in American Politics*, 5th Edition. New York: W.W. Norton, 2019.

Madison, James et al. *The Federalist Papers*. New York: Dover, 2014.

Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States*. New York: Harper Collins, 2015.
