

COURSE SYLLABUS

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

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.