



POSC 101: American National Government

Term: Fall 2026

Credits: 3.0

Meeting Times & Location: Multiple sections. Your section's days, time, room, and instructor are listed in AlkimiHub and on your Canvas course page.

Modality: In-Person

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Instructor Information

- **Course Coordinator:** Dr. Deborah Evans (Associate Professor of Political Science)
- **Section Instructors:** Listed for each section in AlkimiHub. Your section instructor's office hours and office are posted in your Canvas course page.
- **Email:** devans@university.alkimi.ai
- **Office:** Lovell Hall 262
- **Coordinator Office Hours:**
 - Monday & Wednesday: 10:00–11:30 a.m. (In person, Lovell Hall 262)
 - Tuesday: 2:00–3:00 p.m. (Virtual via Zoom; link posted in Canvas)
 - Also available by appointment.

Course Description

The Constitution, federalism, civil liberties and civil rights, Congress, the presidency, the courts, parties, elections, interest groups, and public opinion in the United States. POSC 101 provides an analytical, foundational examination of the institutions, political behavior, and constitutional structures that shape the American political system. Students investigate the constitutional framing, federalism, the expansion of civil liberties and civil rights, public opinion formation, electoral dynamics, and the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of the federal government. The course emphasizes empirical political analysis, civic literacy, and the critical evaluation of contemporary policy disputes and democratic stability.

Prerequisites

None.

Measurable Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion of POSC 101, students will be able to:

1. **Analyze Constitutional Architecture:** Explain the design and operation of the US Constitution, separation of powers, checks and balances, and the evolving dynamics of American federalism.
2. **Evaluate Civil Rights and Liberties:** Examine the legal evolution and constitutional interpretation of Bill of Rights liberties and Fourteenth Amendment equal protection guarantees.
3. **Interpret Political Behavior and Elections:** Assess the determinants of public opinion, voter turnout, polarization, campaign finance, and the strategic behavior of political parties and interest groups.

4. **Examine Federal Governing Institutions:** Analyze the formal and informal powers, internal procedures, and strategic interactions of Congress, the presidency, the federal bureaucracy, and the courts.
5. **Formulate Evidence-Based Policy Briefs:** Synthesize empirical political data and constitutional arguments to write concise, professional policy memos addressing contemporary national issues.

Required Course Materials & Approximate Costs

1. **Glen Krutz and Sylvie Waskiewicz. *American Government 3e*. OpenStax, 2021.** Free digital edition at openstax.org; optional print copy approx. \$40.
2. **Alkimi American Government Primary Source & Landmark Supreme Court Case Packet.** Free digital access provided via Canvas.
3. **Total estimated cost:** \$0 to \$40.

Generative AI Policy (AI Level 2: AI Permitted with Disclosure for Specified Tasks)

In accordance with Alkimi University Academic Policies (Student Handbook §5.8), POSC 101 operates under **AI Level 2**.

- **What is permitted:** You may use generative AI tools to explore background legislative histories, look up federal agency jurisdictions, brainstorm civic stakeholders for policy briefs, and proofread preliminary drafts for grammatical clarity.
- **What is prohibited:** You may not use generative AI to write substantive policy arguments, generate draft text for submitted papers, complete reading quizzes, or take examinations.
- **Disclosure:** Any policy brief or analytical paper completed with generative AI assistance must include an AI disclosure appendix summarizing the tools consulted, prompts submitted, and substantive revisions made by the author.

Grading Components and Weights

- **Policy Brief 1: Federalism & Constitutional Governance:** 15% (Due Friday, September 25 at 11:59 p.m.)
- **Midterm Examination:** 20% (In class during week 8 (week of October 12))
- **Policy Brief 2: Institutional Power & Civil Rights:** 15% (Due Friday, November 13 at 11:59 p.m.)
- **Weekly Civic Issues Analysis:** 15% (Weekly short analytical responses to assigned readings and current political controversies submitted in Canvas on Mondays at 11:59 p.m.)
- **In-Class Deliberation & Congressional Simulations:** 15% (Active participation in weekly legislative simulations, policy committee debates, and town-hall exercises)
- **Final Capstone Policy Brief & Strategic Memo:** 20% (Due Monday, December 14, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.)

Grading Scale (Alkimi University Standard)

- **A:** 93–100% | **A-:** 90–92%
- **B+:** 87–89% | **B:** 83–86% | **B-:** 80–82%
- **C+:** 77–79% | **C:** 73–76% | **C-:** 70–72%
- **D+:** 67–69% | **D:** 60–66% | **F:** Below 60%
- **Extra credit:** No individual extra credit assignments are offered in POSC 101. Students succeed through consistent engagement with weekly policy analyses and class deliberations.

Course Schedule (Fall 2026)

All sections follow this common weekly schedule. Section meeting days vary, so dates are shown by week; your section instructor posts exact class dates in Canvas.

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
Week 1	Aug 26–Aug 28	Constitutional Foundations and Democratic Principles: American political culture, democratic values, the colonial experience, the Articles of Confederation, and the constitutional founding. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 1–2</i>	<i>First day of classes: Wed Aug 26.</i>
Week 2	Aug 31–Sep 4	The Constitutional Framework and Separation of Powers: Drafting the Constitution, Virginia and New Jersey Plans, Connecticut Compromise, separation of powers, and the ratification debate (Federalist No. 10 and 51). <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 2; Federalist Papers (selections)</i>	<i>Wed Sep 2: Add/section change deadline.</i>
Week 3	Sep 8–Sep 11	American Federalism: Evolution and Conflict: Constitutional division of power; dual federalism, cooperative federalism, devolution, fiscal federalism (grants-in-aid), and Supreme Court federalism rulings. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 3</i>	<i>Mon Sep 7: Labor Day (no classes). Wed Sep 9: Census date (last day to drop without a W).</i>
Week 4	Sep 14–Sep 18	Civil Liberties: Protecting Individual Freedoms: Bill of Rights incorporation via the Fourteenth Amendment; free speech, freedom of religion (Establishment and Free Exercise), and privacy rights. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 4</i>	—
Week 5	Sep 21–Sep 25	Civil Rights: The Struggle for Equal Protection: The struggle for racial, gender, and LGBTQ+ equality; Reconstruction amendments; Civil Rights Act of 1964; Voting Rights Act of 1965; Policy Brief 1 due. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 5</i>	Policy Brief 1: Federalism & Constitutional Governance due Fri Sep 25 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 6	Sep 28–Oct 2	Public Opinion and Political Socialization: Formation of political attitudes, ideological spectrums, measuring public opinion, polling methodologies, margin of error, and partisan polarization. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 6</i>	—
Week 7	Oct 5–Oct 9	Voting, Elections, and Political Participation: Forms of political participation, voter registration laws, demographic determinants of turnout, electoral college mechanics, and voting reforms. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 7</i>	—
Week 8	Oct 14–Oct 16	The Media and American Politics (Fall Break Week): Evolution of mass media, agenda setting, framing, digital news consumption, disinformation, and media polarization; Midterm Examination in class (Fall Break week). <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 8 and Review</i>	<i>Oct 12–Oct 13: Fall break (no classes). Fri Oct 16: Midterm grades due. Midterm Examination (in class this week).</i>
Week 9	Oct 19–Oct 23	Political Parties: History and Modern Polarization: Why parties form; history of party systems in the US; party identification, realignments, party organizations, primaries, and national conventions. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 9</i>	—
Week 10	Oct 26–Oct 30	Interest Groups, Lobbying, and Money in Politics: Collective action problems, interest group strategies, lobbying techniques, campaign finance laws (Citizens United), PACs, and Super PACs. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 10</i>	—
Week 11	Nov 2–Nov 6	The United States Congress: Lawmaking and Oversight: Bicameralism, powers of Congress, committee systems, the legislative process, the filibuster, congressional polarization, and constituent representation. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 11</i>	<i>Fri Nov 6: Last day to withdraw (W) or elect Pass/No Pass.</i>
Week 12	Nov 9–Nov 13	The Presidency: Executive Power and Leadership: Formal constitutional powers, executive orders, executive agreements, the modern rhetorical presidency, war powers, and the Cabinet; Policy Brief 2 due. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 12</i>	Policy Brief 2: Institutional Power & Civil Rights due Fri Nov 13 at 11:59 p.m.
Week 13	Nov 16–Nov 20	The Federal Bureaucracy and Administrative Power: Bureaucratic structure, the civil service system, rulemaking under the Administrative Procedure Act, iron triangles, and legislative oversight. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 15</i>	—

Week	Dates	Topics & Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
Week 14	Nov 23–Nov 24	The Federal Courts and Judicial Power (Thanksgiving Week): Article III powers, judicial review (<i>Marbury v. Madison</i>), judicial selection, Supreme Court decision-making, and judicial restraint vs. activism (Thanksgiving week). <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 13</i>	Nov 25–Nov 27: <i>Thanksgiving break (no classes).</i>
Week 15	Nov 30–Dec 4	Domestic and Economic Policymaking: The public policy process, economic policy (fiscal and monetary), social safety net programs, healthcare, and federal budgetary politics. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 16</i>	—
Week 16	Dec 7–Dec 9	Foreign Policy and the Future of American Democracy: Foreign policymaking actors, national security dilemmas, democratic resilience, institutional stress, and comprehensive course review. <i>Reading: Krutz & Waskiewicz, Ch. 17 and Review</i>	Wed Dec 9: <i>Last day of classes.</i> Thu Dec 10: <i>Reading Day.</i>
Finals	Dec 14	Final Capstone Policy Brief & Strategic Memo due Monday, December 14, 2026 at 11:59 p.m.	No final examination.

Course Policies

Attendance Policy

Classroom attendance and active engagement in all lecture and discussion sections are vital for cultivating informed civic discourse and participating in legislative simulations. Students are permitted two unexcused absences; each subsequent unexcused absence results in a penalty of one-third of a letter grade. Missing more than five class sessions will result in a failing grade. Students who miss the first two class meetings without notifying the instructor may be dropped. Students may miss class for religious observance without penalty if they notify the instructor in writing within the first two weeks of the semester (by Wednesday, September 9, 2026). Absences for university-sponsored activities (athletics, performances, conferences) are excused with a letter from the sponsoring office at least one week in advance.

Late Work Policy

Policy briefs submitted late lose 10% for each calendar day overdue and will not be accepted after three days past the deadline. Weekly civic issue posts must be submitted prior to Monday midnight to receive credit.

Final Exam Policy

POSC 101 has no final examination. The final capstone policy brief & strategic memo takes its place. Nothing is due on Reading Day (Thursday, December 10, 2026).

Academic Integrity

Alkimi University is an academic community devoted to rigorous scholarship, open intellectual inquiry, and uncompromising ethical conduct. All students are subject to the regulations of the Alkimi University Academic Integrity Policy. Academic dishonesty—including plagiarism, cheating on examinations, unauthorized collaboration, fabrication of empirical data, and unauthorized submission of academic work generated by artificial intelligence—undermines the integrity of the university and carries severe disciplinary sanctions. Sanctions range from a failing grade on an assignment or exam to an administrative course failure recorded as an 'XF' on the official transcript, academic suspension, or expulsion. Suspected violations are formally investigated and resolved through the Office of Academic Integrity in accordance with Faculty Handbook §6. For detailed information, consult the Office of Academic Integrity, Lovell Hall 315, (555) 555-0163, integrity@university.alkimi.ai.

Accessibility Services

Alkimi University is committed to providing equitable educational access and reasonable accommodations for all students with documented disabilities, including physical, sensory, psychological, learning, and chronic health conditions. Students requesting academic accommodations must formally register with the Office of Accessibility Services, Harlan Hall 204, (555) 555-0155, access@university.alkimi.ai. Once approved, students will receive an official Faculty Accommodation Letter detailing approved accommodations. Students should present this letter to the instructor as early in the semester as possible, and at least one week prior to any exam or assignment requiring accommodation. Accommodations cannot be applied retroactively.

Student Wellness and Mental Health

Your physical health, psychological well-being, and mental health are essential to your academic success. If you experience heightened stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, personal trauma, or academic burnout, free, confidential counseling and medical care are available through the Hollis Health & Counseling Center, located in the Hollis Center. Routine appointments are available Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. and Saturday 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. during the semester by calling (555) 555-0190 or emailing health@university.alkimi.ai. Urgent, 24/7 crisis psychological counseling is accessible immediately at (555) 555-0199.

Campus Student Support Services

- **Academic Advising Center:** Lovell Hall 101 | (555) 555-0158 | advising@university.alkimi.ai
- **Writing Center:** Whitcombe Library 3rd Floor | Free consultations on papers, reports, and research projects at any stage.
- **Whitcombe Library:** Whitcombe Library, Main Floor | (555) 555-0170 | askalibrarian@university.alkimi.ai
- **Hollis Health & Counseling Center:** Hollis Center | (555) 555-0190 | 24/7 Counseling Line: (555) 555-0199 | health@university.alkimi.ai
- **The Writing Center:** Whitcombe Library 3rd Floor | Assistance with policy memo formatting, thesis formulation, and evidence integration.