COMILLAS
UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA
CIHS

COURSE SYLLABUS

Course: Regional Studies: United States

COURSE DATA	
Degree	Diploma in Humanities and Global Challenges
Academic Year	2026-27
Credits	6
Course type	Elective
Departament	International Relations
Language of instruction	English
Name and email of instructor	Dr. Jason Xidias, jxidias@comillas.edu

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*, SIXTH EDITION ENHANCED. BOSTON: CENGAGE, 2026.

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 ENHANCED: 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, POLITICAL PARTICIPATION, AND CAMPAIGN FINANCING 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 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.	**60%**
RESEARCH PROJECT	Details will be announced early in the semester. Guidance and a grading rubric will be posted on Moodle.	**25%**
ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION	Attendance and active participation based on the readings.	**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.**
- The **use of AI** to create complete works or relevant parts, without citing the source or the tool or without being expressly allowed in the description of the work, will be considered plagiarism and regulated according to the General Regulations of the University.
- At the beginning of the term the professor will announce the office hours for the course. Tutorials are an essential part of the development of the course, and students may attend tutorials during the course within those office times, but it is recommended that they are arranged in advance with the professor.
- Any non-face-to-face learning activity that requires the submission of an assignment/document, etc. will be submitted by the student through Moodle, always in PDF format.
- 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, the student may lose the right to be assessed both in the ordinary and extraordinary assessment period (art. 93-1 of the General Regulations). Failure to attend to 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 the second hour.

STUDENT WORKLOAD (in hours)

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.