

Occidental College

Fall 2022 Course Evaluations

Course: POLS101_2: Amer Politics/Public Policy

Instructor: Isaac Hale *

1 - 1. How would you describe your level of engagement in this course? How did you engage in class? For example: Did you come to class prepared? Did you seek help from the instructor, peers, or other supports when needed?

Response Rate	21/24 (87.5%)
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- I come to class prepared, but rarely participate in class discussions (preferring to listen).
- I did all the work and went to office hours a few times. I did not participate much in class but was engaged with the lectures.
- I completed all the assignments for this class and was engaged in all the lectures. I rarely participated in class discussions or attended office hours, however.
- I did all the readings but did not go to office hours because I did not really need them. Prof Hale always had office hours available, however.
- I was so engaged throughout this course, he made sure every student was actively participating and understanding the course content. He managed to somehow grasp every person's attention through his upbeat personality and knowledge on the subject,
- This class had a high level of engagement, there was always something to do & there were many opportunities to participate in class.
- The engagement in the Politics 101 course with Professor Hale was fantastic. He always had office hours after class, which was very helpful, and was a generally very engaging teacher. I would 100% recommend that anyone and everyone takes this course.
- I would say that I was very engaged during class by sharing out, taking notes, and outside of class and was doing the readings and completing all the assignments. If I needed help I would go to peers first and email the professor if I still needed help.
- I think this class is definitely the class that I was most engaged in out of all the classes I've been in in my life. That's a pretty lofty statement, but I was genuinely interested in what we were learning in class, even as a non-politics related major, and I just thought the content and the way the class was structured was extremely open to engagement. I think the homework definitely helped me stay engaged and allowed me to have the level of knowledge necessary to actually participate in class.
- The level of engagement I had in this course was the most I've had in any of my classes this semester. I felt really good about taking notes because all of the presentations were really engaging. I also felt very comfortable asking for help from the professor.
- Engaged, I came to class prepared and went to office hours.
- I did not go to office hours because I find them a bit intimidating, but I also didn't really think I needed help most of the time. I didn't know anyone in the class because most people are freshmen and I am not, so at times if I needed help it would've been helpful to have someone I could ask, but the professor does have a class discord and office hours so I could've reached out if I really wanted.
- I came to class prepared every day and I rose my hand probably more than anyone in the class. I also went to office hours multiple times and discussed class with my peers.
- I always came to class prepared and met with Prof. Hale as needed.
- I had a high level of engagement in this class. I definitely felt comfortable seeking help from the professor and from my peers. There was a really awesome community in this class, and Professor Hale definitely set the tone.
- I felt quite engaged throughout this course, as the classes consisted of intriguing lectures that discussed course concepts and reading concepts
- My level of engagement was high in this course. This was always my favorite course walking in each day. The lectures were concise and easy to understand. I never struggled with deadlines either so I was always prepared.
- I was definitely engaged in the class, I came to class prepared by doing most of the readings and trying to participate in class as much as possible whether by answering questions or asking them. I occasionally worked with peers to understand the material better.
- This course engaged me. I often prepared by doing the readings and the material we discussed during class was often very relevant. Professor Hale always encouraged questions and ensured that students understood the material.
- I was moderately engaged in the course. I participated in class discussions and attended office hours when I needed additional support.
- I engaged in this course by attending class, doing homework, and participating in class. I also attended some events outside of class, I felt pretty engaged all in all.

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2 - 2. How did this course influence, change, or help shape your understanding of the subject matter?

Response Rate 21/24 (87.5%)

- I have never studied American Public Policy, so it was an informative and fascinating course.
- It definitely gave me a lot more knowledge on the topic, I thought it was a good overview
- I learned more about the field of political science and how the field's theories apply to the American system of politics.
- I learned a lot in this class. I was worried because I took AP Gov senior year of high school so I thought a lot of material might be repeated. However, Prof. Hale managed to keep the material new and exciting!
- I now have a great conceptual understanding of American Politics, and understand a lot more about how our system of government works and its flaws.
- This was a very good introduction to the American Political system & presented broad & introductory knowledge.
- Though I already knew a lot about American politics, he helped strengthen the knowledge, and was a great lecturer.
- I learned so much in this course even though I was familiar with many parts of it. I saw lots of examples and I feel like I could teach most of the concepts to someone else.
- I think it built a really solid foundation for my understanding of the American government system, as well as politics in general and what elements go into it. I didn't know much coming into this class, so everything I learned was new and it was a really good introduction into the subject matter.
- I learned so much about how American Politics work and the problems that it poses for society. I felt better educated on the structure and how elections work, as well as conflicts that occur between the branches of government.
- Yes, I did not know much about political theory and I learned a lot.
- This course taught relevant information about the workings of American government and its foundations. I thought it seemed much more relevant compared to what my friends in other POLS101 courses were learning, although I do wonder why we're all learning such different things.
- This course helped shape my understanding greatly. I came into the class already knowing a lot about politics, but this course taught me the material in a whole new way.
- This was the perfect intro class to politics because we covered a lot of topics and that helped me decide what parts of politics interest me and what doesn't. It was also helpful that we had this class during midterms.
- This course helped me understand not just what is going on in the American political system, but it clearly laid out the foundational mechanisms of Constitutional design that caused the American political system to become what we perceive it as today. I feel incredibly lucky to have been in this class, and am now considering Political Science as a major.
- Throughout this course, I learned a lot more about the structure of various institutions and aspects of the federal government, also connecting that information with the Madisonian design
- Coming into Oxy I already knew I wanted to be a politics major so I had significant knowledge on the topic going into this course. If anything, this course reinforced ideas that I had with data to back it up. For example, I knew that the senate favored republicans and that the midterms favored the party in opposition to the sitting president. Now I know the extend to these and why.
- I have a much better understanding of the fundamentals of our government, how/why they work the way they do, and how they come up short. It made me simultaneously more critical and skeptical of the current state of our government system(s) but also more hopeful and generally more informed as well.
- I now have a basic understanding of the American political system. I understand the common critiques, shortcomings, and strong suits of the Madisonian design.
- This course provided me with a foundation in American politics. This course leaned left, but multiple viewpoints were acknowledged.
- I definitely felt like this course changed my understanding of politics. This course was by far my favorite this semester! I used to hate politics before this class, but I have come to see the value in the subject and gained so much knowledge on the topic.

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3 - 3. What skills or capacities did you expect to gain from this course? How and to what extent did the course help you to develop those skills or capacities?

Response Rate	21/24 (87.5%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and writing. Both were developed throughout this course. • I expected to gain a basis in politics and better understand polisci elements like graphs, which this course did help me to do. • I expected to learn more about the American political system and I did. • I think I just learned a lot of baseline knowledge about politics that I will need to be successful in this field if I choose to pursue it as a major. • I expected to gain more knowledge of American politics and develop my understanding and conceptualization of certain government systems and ideologies. I have definitely developed these skills throughout the course of this semester. • This course really showed what homework & papers looked like in a college course compared to high school. Weekly papers & daily homework were easily accessible on the syllabus but not reminded of at the end of each class. • I expected to gain a wide, long-ranging knowledge of American politics, and I certainly got that. I developed the skills to a great extent with weekly writing, and am currently gaining it from researching my final paper. • I expected to learn the basics of political science to see if I wanted to major in the area which I definitely did, and I also learned how to use historical data to predict midterm elections. • I think I learned to just understand the news and politics in general because of the nature of the course, obviously. I also learned how to participate without hesitating more because there was so much opportunity to participate every single lecture, and there was a lot of enthusiasm from the professor. • I expected to learn pretty much everything I did. I learned about all the branches of government and how elections work. I also learned how to create pivotal politics models which I did not know existed before taking this class and I also learned many facts about each branch that I didn't know before. • I learned a lot more about the US political system, and how look at government institutions in an nuanced, thoughtful way • I honestly only took this course because of its requirement for UEP but I gained a better understanding of how our current government and political parties work. • This course helped me learn about politics and write about what I learned. I really liked the weekly response papers. • This class allowed me to showcase my learning and understanding through writing as opposed to tests. This meant that I could answer questions in the best and most concise way possible and I got feedback that let me know I was on the right track. • I came into this course wanting to know how American public policy became what it is. I ended up learning about some abnormalities in the design of the American government that have made all of the obscurities in modern American politics make sense to me. • I expected to learn about how politics function in the U.S., and I am finishing this semester with a far greater understanding of U.S. politics then when I came into the course. • I expected to increase my general knowledge of American politics. This course successfully developed these skills. • I expected to be able to critically look at and assess government systems and U.S. politics based on the way they were designed and the way they operate today. I feel confident in my ability to do this after taking this class. • I expected to learn about the constitution and how it constructs the United States political system. This course developed my skill to analyze aspects of the legislature, presidency, elections, and Supreme Court. • I expected to be able to engage in politics with an informed viewpoint. This class provided me with the skills to actively participate in the midterm elections. Additionally, I have been able to keep up with contemporary politics and follow current political news. • I gained a lot of knowledge about how the political system in America is flawed, and I learned to identify the real motives behind political ads. 	

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4 - 4. What aspects/features of the instruction were particularly effective or ineffective? What aspects/features of the course facilitated or impeded your learning? For example: How well did the professor structure class periods (e.g., discussion facilitation, group work, in-class exercises, lectures, handouts, etc), reading questions, assignments, exams, community-based work, field work, laboratory work, studio work, etc.?

Response Rate	21/24 (87.5%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor was proactive in lectures in addition to being able to inject humour to ease learning. • the lectures were engaging and the work was manageable and forced me to do the readings and pay attention in class. • I thought Professor Hale gave us a very manageable workload which I appreciated. I liked when we got to watch videos or discuss current issues in class because I found this the most engaging and would have liked to see even more of this. • I really liked how this course was set up. The readings were a perfect length, doable yet challenging. The response papers were a perfect way to check in and make sure we were understanding the material without the stress of a big test or paper. • The slide shows/lectures were very engaging and I felt like I could take notes as well as be fully present with what he was saying. Every class period was engaging and I felt very comfortable asking questions and so did the rest of the class. I felt like I was able to take risks with my answers and not be penalized for being wrong. • Voluntary participation and slideshows that presented the information in clear points were very effective. The lectures matched well with the weekly papers & the feedback on papers made it clear what was good &/or needed to be improved. • The lectures were extremely effective, and helped me a lot. • I thought the lectures were incredibly engaging and had lots of information, but not too much to the point that you couldn't tell what was important or that it was moving too fast. I really liked the small pieces of humor added in and the short videos we watched were always helpful, and were especially helpful to look back on what writing responses. • Honestly, I feel like the class was extremely well thought out and structured because there was just enough readings for every class, and the homework each week was extremely manageable. I think the fact that I knew that there would be a response paper every week made me more engaged in class so I would be well-prepared for the questions, and that subconsciously just made me pretty knowledgeable in what we were learning. • I think the slides and the weekly questions we had to answer were incredibly effective because it forced me to think critically about how whatever we were learning about worked and its implications on American society and politics. I also think the no tests and instead, emphasis on critical thinking was really helpful because instead of wasting time memorizing specific facts I thought about how everything affects different aspects of policy-making and elections. • I loved the way the class was structured. I thought the response papers were a great way to make sure we understood all of the material and did the readings. • Some of the questions on weekly response papers were sometimes a bit challenging to answer. Also, I appreciated that the slides were posted on Moodle, but when everything we're talking about is on the slides and I know I have access to them I'm less likely to take notes. I don't think that the slides should not be on Moodle, so maybe more class discussions that extend beyond the notes on the slides. The professor is very friendly though and not only encouraged people to talk in class, but reacted positively to everyone's answers rather than being disparaging if someone shared an answer that wasn't what he was looking for. • The way lectures were interactive was particularly effective for me. Office hours also helped me gain more understanding of the topics. • I think every lecture was interesting and the group work we did do was helpful. • This is predominantly a lecture based class with a weekly response paper. The structure may sound boring and repetitive, but Prof. Hale is an INCREDIBLE lecturer, and I was far more engaged in this class than I am in any other I've ever been in. I wouldn't change a thing. • All of the class periods felt very organized and intentional. I wish the class periods were a bit more discussion based, but I understand why a 101 is will often be more lecture based. • The slideshows every day were easy to follow, showed a range of statistics and I never felt like I didn't understand a topic. • I felt like our class periods were always very organized and well structured. I never felt like we were rushed or short for time. The discussions and lectures were always very productive and effective. • The structure of the homework assignments allowed me to analyze, organize, and attempt to communicate my learning at the culmination of each week. The lectures kept me interested and I enjoyed the group collaboration classes. • The professor was extremely engaging and the assignments allowed students to synthesize their learning from the course. • I think the videos and graphs in class were super helpful, and the overall kindness and humor of the professor made the class a lot more enjoyable. I noticed not a lot of people like to read off the slides, I did many times, but it seemed like others didn't really want to. I also appreciate the fact that the professor does not call people out in class, that is really considerate and a great approach 	

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5 - 5. What aspects of the course or instruction helped or hindered the creation of an inclusive learning environment that is responsive to, and promotes the success of, a diverse group of students?

Response Rate 19/24 (79.17%)

- N/A
- I think Professor Hale was open to listening to all the students in class.
- The course instruction by Prof Hale was awesome. I loved his teaching. He maintained a light atmosphere even when talking about sometimes heavy or depressing topics. I never really felt annoyed walking into this class.
- The weekly papers allowed me to think and further conceptualize all of what I learned that week. Having daily readings allowed me to further understand what was going on in class and reflect on this later in the week.
- The encouraged participation & gentle redirection if the answer was incorrect made it a safe & welcoming space to answer questions about the lecture.
- All aspects helped the learning environment, and nothing hindered it.
- I think office hours were really helpful to people who wanted to know more or who were struggling with the material.
- I think the opportunities for engagement was the aspect that helped create the response learning environment, because if you did the readings then you would have the ability to answer most if not all of the questions asked in class. I don't really think there was anything that hindered this inclusive learning environment.
- I think the incredibly kind and engaging professor was the best thing in the course and also the ease of attending extra help and asking questions. I think the slides being posted on moodle were also incredibly important for my success.
- Professor Hale is great. He helped create a inclusive environment because he is so kind, thoughtful, and fun.
- Like I said, the professor's facilitation of discussion and answers to questions was encouraging and friendly. I also think the professor did a good job of keeping class light hearted even when the topics we discussed may have been heavy.
- I really enjoyed how interactive this class was. It was fun and lively and I always enjoyed coming to class.
- We covered a range of topics and I always appreciated the fact that when possible Prof. Hale always brought up how our country continues to fail poc.
- I think that the structure of the class was accessible and well received by everyone, and if not, almost everyone, in the class.
- There were many questions meant for students to answer, which made the classes feel very inclusive. I also like the structure of the written homework assignments, as they allowed students to demonstrate their understanding of the class concepts.
- Because I always understood the information I never needed to go for office hours but I always felt that I had the ability to do so if I needed them.
- The learning environment was really solid. I enjoyed the group collaborations.
- The professor taught with reference to his own experience, and this promoted an inclusive environment.
- All students of all backgrounds were welcome in this space.

6 - 6. What other suggestions (if any) do you have for the next time the course is taught?

Response Rate 12/24 (50%)

- N/A
- none. amazing.
- Don't refer to readings as much. Instead, just teach some lectures without constantly referring to the reading
- I honestly don't have many suggestions, I think this was my favorite class I took this semester and I plan to take a class with this professor next year.
- I don't really have anything; I really liked the structure of this course the most out of all my classes and I hope to take more classes similar to this in the future!
- Honestly nothing I think this class was next to perfect, if not literally perfect in it's highest capacity.
- Maybe more discussions and more about reform and hopefulness for our political system mixed in throughout the semester rather than just the final weeks, as sometimes I found myself feeling very discouraged about the state of our government.
- n/a
- x
- Same structure for homework, and weekly writing assignments
- none, favorite teacher, course was taught great.
- More group collaborations.

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7 - 7. What else (if anything) would you like to share about the course or the instruction?

Response Rate 13/24 (54.17%)

- N/A
- Prof. Hale is awesome!
- If I could take every class taught by him I would, great teacher.
- Professor Hale is a great instructor, and should teach at Oxy for a long time into the future.
- This was probably my favorite course and Professor Hale was my most helpful professor this semester. I really enjoyed the way the class was structured and the how enthusiastic Professor Hale was every class because it made me pay attention more and also just raised the overall enjoyment of the class. I noticed that my peers seemed to be more involved in this class than in any of my other classes.
- N/A
- This was by far my favorite class and I'm excited to take more of Prof. Hale's classes.
- This was my favorite class this semester! I'd highly recommend the course and teacher.
- I can't say enough how much I appreciate Professor Hale's positive attitude, consistency, ease, and humor in the class. I recommend it every chance I get, and I can't wait to take his classes in the future. Don't let this guy leave Occidental, because he is a gem.
- .
- nothing
- I just wanted to say thank you to Prof. Hale for being such a great introduction to politics courses and Oxy in general! I've loved this class a lot and I'm going to miss it!!
- Professor Hale is smart, kind, and really encouraged us to learn and understand the course material.