

Occidental College

2023 Fall General Course Evaluations

Course: POLS101_1: 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 18/24 (75%)

- I completed all class readings and typically reviewed slides before coming to class. I made sure to answer and ask questions at least once each class period. I visited the professor's office hours several times to discuss course material.
- I felt like I was very engaged in this class. I came to class prepared every day to the best of my ability. I participated every day in class. I did not feel like I ever needed support.
- I did arrive to class prepared with the readings in mind. Coming to class with a notebook for hand written note really drew me to the board and the lecture because it was an active form of learning.
- Highly engaged
- I was very engaged. I read all of the assigned text and tried to comment on it during class when it felt relevant.
- Personally I could have gone to office hours more often and took advantage of other help
- Very engaged. Professor hale did a great job of fostering contributions and conversation in class.
- I was quite engaged in both in class and out of class time. There was plenty of discussion and answering questions engagement during the class time that was coupled with pre-class readings.
- I was well engaged in this course. The lectures were organized well and everyone was given an opportunity to participate on a daily basis.
- I would say I was relatively engaged in this course, as I came to nearly every class and always was on time, did the majority of the readings before class and if not after class, and submitted every response paper. I made sure to email or go into office hours when I had any questions about class material.
- I came to class prepared for the most part, was engaged in class, and submitted my assignments on time.
- Very high level of engagement, Professor Hale was very helpful and really was a great teacher. The lectures were very well organized as well.
- I think my engagement was a bit lower than other classes in this class however I don't feel like very much was needed. I still very much felt like the class was taught very well and was a very fun class.
- I loved this class! So interesting and well organized and I felt like I could be really engaged. We were all encouraged to speak and Prof. Hale made it really easy to feel comfortable speaking or even getting it wrong. I felt like I could ask questions or seek help when needed and I also felt like I was always prepared for class at the structure was really organized.
- My engagement in this class was mostly through answering questions during the lectures and the response papers. I did all of the readings and took notes so I could fully answer the response papers which paid off. I also took notes during the lectures.
- High engagement during class. Took detailed notes on lecture because assignments were heavily and directly related to lecture content.
- I feel like I came to class prepared.
- I was fairly engaged in this class.

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

Response Rate 18/24 (75%)

- This course gave merit to many basic ideas surrounding politics that I already had a shallow understanding of, while also engaging me in new ideas, evidence, and topics. I greatly appreciated the use of statistics and evidence in the course as well as the connection from this data to the overall topics, as this improved my overall understanding of the material while also keeping me interested.
- This course really helped me understand the subject matter better. I feel like I have a much better understanding of the country's political system.
- I think that this course laid a good foundation for a Politics major. I was able to understand the basics of voting, elections, presidency, and congress in the United States.
- Helped improve my understanding of the subject
- I now have a better understanding of what politics entails and feel assured that this is what I want to continue studying.
- Helped me develop a more thorough knowledge of politics in the US today
- This course was a really great foundation in the structures and ideas of American Politics.
- It expanded and strengthened my understanding of the system in which our country operates. Many specific aspects of it were deepened to depths I never knew before.
- This course deepened my understanding of the American political system and taught me stuff about American history I did not previously know.
- This course gave me a comprehensive overview of many different elements shaping the American political system and allowed me to learn and write about things that I only knew little about in further depth.
- This course helped me feel like I have a stronger base of understanding of American politics and the policymaking process. I appreciated the framing of the class through what the system was initially meant to look like, the problems that have arisen, and ways that they can be addressed.
- It really impacted just how I viewed politics and made me question and seek answers for why our politics are the way they are. And this course certainly answered those.
- It really sharpened up as well as gave me more knowledge about the topics in US history since I'm not too in touch with today's politics and political systems.
- I think I learned so much about American politics and the problems within our system as well as the things we can change to make a difference. I have a super clear understanding of all the American systems now and I feel really prepared to go on to higher level politics courses.
- I believe the course gave me better insight into the state of American politics, especially relating to elections and how much they influence politicians on the hill. It was interesting to learn how much Madisons vision of the nation has almost turned against him as the parties face major gridlock.
- I had little to no background knowledge so this course helped me establish a basic understanding of our government, mostly at the federal level.
- It definitely increased my understanding of the subject matter.
- I liked the focus that was put on the groups that suffer from the corruption of the government because it helped me understand what needs to be changed.

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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	18/24 (75%)
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- I expected to learn the rudimentary topics of politics in the US. This course did this, giving me concrete knowledge surrounding the topic of American politics, while also engaging me in new schools of thought and ways to approach analysis of our government. I learned new skills not only of analysis but also of data collection, connecting ideas that aren't so obviously related, and many more. I look forward to learning more about politics with the new scope given to me from this course.
- I expected to gain better reading skills and the capacity to understand more about politics in this country. I do think that this course really helped me develop these skills and capacities.
- I expected to gain a broader perspective of politics in the United States as opposed to the very detailed and narrow subjects that I had previously studied. This course helped me focus on the bigger picture and historical context for the present day government.
- Reading, writing, critical thinking skills
- I expected to get an overview of American politics and I feel like I got that. I was able to see the different aspects of politics and find what I was interested in.
- learn more basic information about politics, this class went beyond my expectations in regards to learning about broader trends in politics
- I expected to be introduced to fundamental and contemporary readings and ideas related to the subject which the course absolutely did.
- I expected for my critical thinking skills and knowledge of the national systems to be heightened to which the course did exactly that.
- This course has helped me analyze sources in a much better way than I previously could.
- I was able to gain the skill of being able to better summarize a longer reading into a short paragraph as a response.
- I expected to gain a better understanding of the American political and policymaking system, and I think that I did.
- I just expected to gain a better understanding of American politics and the background of everything. But this course went above and beyond.
- I learned a lot in this class and one thing it really taught me was how to get involved in politics to help and get what we want from candidates. For example, voting in the smaller elections is very much as important as the presidential election.
- I feel like I expected to learn what I did and Prof. Hale was very successful in helping us all learn. I think I learned a lot about writing about political systems and understanding them very well. I liked that we did weekly response papers as I feel they helped me lock in and summarise the knowledge I learned that week. I also think that the readings we did were very relevant and felt attainable in many ways which I really loved.
- I expected to gain practical knowledge and the ability to understand political models and how to effectively critique our systems. I believe through response papers and my final essay I have a better understanding of voters and politicians behavior, and how it is shown through models.
- I expected to learn about how the US government operates and about participation trends amongst voters. Both topics were thoroughly covered.
- I expected to learn more about politics and also figure out if politics was right for me in terms of making it my major. I for sure learned more and I definitely want to major in politics.
- As a politics course it inherently has the potential for students to gain a few skills. But, in this class that's the only thing it remained, potential.

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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	18/24 (75%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professor Hale was extremely engaging, asking many questions during class, sometimes even obvious ones, to keep the students paying attention and interested in the material. He did so in an extremely respectful and kind way, never cold calling or forcing students to answer. Additionally, the readings were posted at the very beginning of the semester and slides were posted at the beginning of the week, allowing for adequate preparation for our in class discussion. Professor Hale's classes were mostly discussion-style lectures with some group work opportunities. As far as course work, we had a weekly response paper with questions regarding the material covered during the week. We had no traditional exams and are currently completing our final papers. • I think that the professor was very good about keeping the class engaged during the lecture. I also think that he explained topics very clearly and was good about answering questions. I do wish there had been more group work because it was almost entirely a lecture class. • Lecturing with pictures and jokes was rather enjoyable and kept the class engaged. I do wish that there was more collaborative work with in class discussions as well. • Lectures were very effective • I liked the format of presentation but it being very interactive. It felt easier to participate in while still understanding lots of material. • effective — the response papers. i feel like lectures/class times should be more interactive, i learned more when i was working with other students in class and then coming back together as a class to discuss • I really enjoyed the reading responses as a weekly review of ideas. • The lectures were very effective as they were engaging and thought provoking. The end of the week response papers were very effective at solidifying the information I had just learned. • The structure of the class was good in my opinion, lectures were always interactive and the assignments were engaging. • I enjoyed how although the class was lecture style, the professor made sure to encourage students to answer and ask questions during the class period. I especially enjoyed having a short response paper every week rather than a large paper on everything we had learned at the very end. By doing so, I was able to reflect on what I had learned each week and retain knowledge better with this method. • I found the lectures to be thorough, straightforward, and well-organized. I also appreciated how the response papers were straightforward and solidified understandings of class materials. I also liked the activity on understanding the pivotal politics model. I appreciated the videos spread throughout lectures for a change of pace. • Im normally not a big fan of lectures, but the lectures in this course were very informative and really insightful and well done. • I think the funny memes and jokes engraved in the course are what keeps it going and not redundant and boring. He always finds a way to make the lectures interesting and I never leave the class without having laughed at least once. • I think that the structure of our weeks were really perfect for me as I got a great proportion of reading to lecturing and summarizing my learning. I felt as if I had the ability to make my own opinions and learn on my own, while also being supported and getting taught the crucial things I needed to know. I think our discussions questions each week were extremely helpful in making sure I understood the content of the previous week and I also liked getting feedback on those. • I really liked that the syllabus and class schedule was consistent across the semester. The posting of the slides and the readings on moodle ahead of time were very effective to stay on top of my work. I also enjoyed the times we talked about current events which made what we were learning more interesting. • I liked the way that assignments were based directly off of material covered during lecture. This made me more inclined to listen very closely during lecture. Professor's personality and humor also contributed to high engagement level. • I thought the presentations were beautifully done. They were informative but not boring. You through in a perfect amount of humor and levity. Also you could tell you put a ton of effort into your presentations, especially with tying the presentations to current events. • I think the weekly papers were a nice way to organize the homework because it nicely summarized all the lecture information throughout the week. I think that the content could be a little more complicated because most of the information seemed fairly intuitive. 	

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	16/24 (66.67%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I appreciate professor Hale's lax style for an introduction course, emphasizing more our understanding of vital topics in several contexts rather than independent study and tests. He created a welcoming, easy learning environment while still making sure we understood content and learned the material. He also made sure to include a variety of perspectives, something particularly important in a subject as polarizing as politics. • The instruction helped the creation of an inclusive learning environment because the professor was very understanding of questions and make sure that every student who sought out help received it. He clearly wanted every student to succeed, and worked hard to promote our success. • I think the use of slideshows every class, and the posting of them was very helpful when completing the weekly reflections. This was accessible for students, especially if we had to be absent, the notes are always there. • Participation helped the environment. • Professor Hale was very open and encouraging of all students to share and participate. • The openness for discussion and variety of thought served the needs of the students very well. • This course taught me about the inclusivity (or lack thereof) in American politics throughout history. • This course allowed for an inclusive learning environment as it didn't fully rely on participation to be what one's grade is determined on, so different types of students were able to all do well in the same classroom environment. • The class was very well-organized and the professor was very approachable, which I think are very helpful in making the class accessible. • I thought Prof. Hale's knowledge really shined through and we could see just how passionate he was about what he was teaching. • I think the funny jokes and waiting for people to want to respond really helped out the class. it allowed for people to feel comfortable enough in order to participate. • I think Prof. Hale was super great about pausing and making sure our questions were answered as well as just asking us questions throughout the class that we could take time to answer. I definitely felt supported and like I could participate a lot. I also think the response papers allowed for us to voice extra opinions and check in on our understanding. • I believe that learning about diverse groups of the population within US politics and how it is not always an equitable process was important. • If a student were to need to miss class they would be severely disadvantaged because material covered in lecture is referenced in assignments. • I think you did a great job of creating a very friendly, inclusive, and welcoming environment. You always are so positive and passionate. • Professor Hale promotes participation and asks a lot of questions during class to engage students, which created an inclusive learning environment. 	

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

Response Rate 12/24 (50%)

- I have no critiques for the teaching of the material.
- None
- I would suggest more detailed slideshows just for those that are absent and don't get the full experience of the lecture. I would also suggest more guidelines for the weekly response papers. when discussing topics in class I do think it would be beneficial for there to be more group collaboration.
- None
- making class time more interactive!
- More group work in class like the last week could have made it a bit more engaging. Having lectures everyday was great but mixing that up sometimes might not be a bad idea.
- n/a
- No other suggestions really great course with clear lectures and good workload.
- Nothing keep it up.
- I don't really have any large suggestions to be honest, I felt like the class was structured very well and I learned a lot.
- More memes !
- Office hours were as unhelpful as the comments left on the weekly reflections. We aren't political scientist so we do not understanding what's wrong with our response when you just say it's wrong.

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

Response Rate 15/24 (62.5%)

- Professor Hale is great! He is good at his job and kind while doing it. I hope to take more classes with him in the future.
- Nothing
- I enjoyed the foundation and humor of politics that Professor Hale provided, especially his enthusiasm with voting patterns.
- None
- I really enjoyed this class!
- thanks Professor, I learned a lot!
- None
- I really enjoyed the fun incorporated into the work that this class required and how easy it was to follow along with all of the material while still learning so much!
- Thanks for a great semester! I appreciated all of the politics memes.
- No other things to share, great course.
- I had a great time in this class and although I don't really like politics he made the class very entertaining and I feel I learned a lot in this course.
- I just want to thank Prof. Hale, I had such a great semester and I feel as if I learned so much from this course. It truly made me more interested and invested in American politics and policy, and I can't wait to take more courses with you in the future. Thank you for a fun and engaging semester!
- This was one of my favorite courses of the semester.
- I think you are a great professor and any Oxy student would be lucky to take a class with you!
- Professor Hale is a very kind and understanding professor!