

Occidental College

2024 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 18/27 (66.67%)

- I did come to class prepared having read the material. The lectures are based off the readings, and I participated at least 3 times a class.
- My level of engagement for this class was relatively high. I did most the readings, but I found that I didn't need to complete them to perform well in the class. I found most the material easy so I never needed support.
- Due to the lecture style of the course, I found it hard to stay engaged in classes.
- attended class every day doing the reading most days. I didn't seek excess help as I didn't need to do so to succeed in the class.
- I felt very engaged in the class and the material presented. I tried to always do the readings, and took notes during every class. I wish I took more advantage of office hours, but overall felt like I had a successful course.
- I would say I came to class pretty engaged and got the valuable help I needed from my instructor, peers, and sources assigned.
- I was highly engaged in this course. Although the lecture was largely a lecture based format, the professor still provided many opportunities for questions, even providing a section at the end of every lecture block for questions. As a student who asks a lot of questions, professor Hale made sure to answer my questions will still answering other peoples questions, which I appreciated.
- I was engaged with the readings of this class and found they built upon each other well, with main ideas such as party polarization and gaps between demographic groups being maintained throughout as core subject matter.
- Generally pretty engaged, most of the readings that we were assigned for the class were generally pretty short and engaging, and the professor did a good job of varying the styles of writing, so that we weren't always reading long journal articles or academic papers, which definitely helped motivate me to actually do them. Additionally, the professor did a very good job of making lectures conversational, in that he constantly entertained questions and did not shy away from an impromptu debate about any relevant topic. He also did a good job of incorporating current events into the class, which made topics all the more entertaining. Lectures were also just funny, and the professor did a good job of incorporating jokes and lightening the mood of what could be a fairly dark and depressing topic at times.
- I would say my level of engagement in this course was pretty high. I did most of the readings, went to office hours a few times. I thought it was pretty easy to stay on top of the work.
- I felt super engaged in this class, and I felt that I was constantly intrigued and interested in the class, I always made sure to bring supplies for note-taking, and always tried to ask at least one question or make a contributing comment per class.
- I feel that I came prepared each day, and the reading where engaging, if not a tiny bit over assigned leading me to occasionally not coming prepared. I found myself more engaged because you made it clear it was better to talk even if you weren't sure of the answer, and never made me feel bad for missing the mark either slightly or completely.
- The professor did a good job at encouraging students to speak, even if it was just reading quotes from the board. Thanks to the professor's lectures and our discussions, the class is quite engaging despite the material being pretty boring. However, it felt like he didn't give us much incentive to actually do the readings. Towards the end of the class, I (and it felt like other students as well) stopped doing all of the readings but it didn't feel like I behind at all.
- I made an effort to participate in class when I could and answer questions. I sought help from peers when I was confused about assignments or concepts, or when I missed class and needed notes.
- I felt very engaged in this class, although I was not the most active participant. I was well prepared coming to class, excited to learn, and interested in the class topics. I wish I reached out to Professor Hale to just have conversations in office hours, but I did reach out to him via email when I had questions on the homework assignment. I also spoke with peers about the class.
- I came to class every day ready to take non electronic notes, and participated by asking questions if I had any, and discussing concepts with my peers.
- i think i engaged quite a bit, asking questions when confused etc.
- I often engaged in class as Professor Hale created a welcoming learning environment where engagement was fun rather than a chore. Professor Hale often provided questions for the class to answer to engage the minds of students, constantly created an environment where intellectual thought was essential.

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

Response Rate	18/27 (66.67%)
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- Professor Hale allowed students to think critically through the questions he asked us throughout the lecture.
- This course was really interesting to me. A lot of the material was already familiar but I learned some unique perspectives.
- I am left with a much better understanding of how politics function in American society
- This course helped to shape my understanding of the original intentions of the US government and its legislative process, which then helped to influence my understanding of today's politics and gridlock.
- This course really helped shape my understanding of American Politics. It had a understandable framework and allowed for easy consumption of material. It provided a perfect amount of background knowledge, especially for an intro course that will create a great foundation for any politics class or major in the future.
- I have much more knowledge now about the current system of government in America and how it got to this point that it currently is at. I feel much more involved and apart of my life as a citizen of America than before this course
- I had an understanding of American Politics before, but this definitely changed my whole view. I understand how gridlock occurs in America, and i feel a little frustrated for figuring out why things don't happen in politics. I also realized how America was so unstable across the course of its history. I feel much better as an American citizen after this class.
- This course greatly influenced my understanding of political institutions and my individual political role.
- I think the course does a really good job of providing a ton of fairly basic information about as many different aspects of the US government as possible, which definitely increased my understanding of a bunch of subject areas that I didn't know a ton about before, just because I previously had thought of them as kind of boring parts of government, or things that didn't affect me personally as much. However, because the course covers such a massive amount of content, we didn't go super in-depth into very many topics, so facets of government that I felt that I knew a lot about going into the class did not get covered to a level where I felt like I learned a ton of new material.
- I thought this class was perfect for a beginners who are interested in politics. I think Professor Hale does a perfect job in explaining concepts in terms we can understand. I definitely want to continue taking his courses after this one.
- I felt like I gained a much deeper understanding of the ins and outs of the American legislative system, including many real world, current-events examples and how they play into each unit and idea as we progressed through the course.
- I mean i thought i understood politics beforehand, but i was so wrong. This course has ignited an interest that was always there but never well informed or acted upon. I cant believe i never recieved better civic education before this course, something we talked about in class that has a large impact on our democaracy. Despite this being a small slice of the population, youve created members of society that will now be much more likely to turn out at polls and understand the many element at play during an election. So thank you! This intro has put me on the course of POLYSI and i plan to take many more classes.
- Taking this class was a really great refresher on American politics as a whole, and I learned a great deal about the intricacies and more recent history the topic. I felt much more prepared to engage in conversations on this topic thanks to the course, especially during election season.
- I gained a good basic understanding of the U.S. government and learned how to critically view the systems we have in place.
- This class has shaped my understanding of a topic unlike any other class I have taken at Oxy. Prior to taking this class, I had no real understanding of politics beyond what I gathered from media over time. I feel a lot more knowledgeable about past and present political affairs, our political institutions and their foundation, and how these factors all come together to complete our partially broken system today. I am already more eager to participate in national and local elections and look forward to carrying the knowledge I gained in this class with me throughout the rest of my life.
- It helped change and shape my understanding because before the course, I had a very limited range of knowledge about the US political system, and this course helped me learn many new concepts
- I LOVED this course - it made me begin to consider politics as a major and I'm honestly really excited about it.
- This course was an amazing introduction to the world of politics. The only understanding that I had of politics was my government class from high school and that never felt like a thorough enough understanding of American politics. While the course mainly covered the basics, it went over examples of how our government works rather than just a basic explanation. I learned a lot more through this method of teaching the political system and I thoroughly enjoyed.

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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	18/27 (66.67%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical thinking and writing. The response papers were a good tool to allow us to write, while thinking deeply about the material. • I don't think I gained many skills for this course, it was mostly just note taking and lectures. I got a little better at understanding graphs. • I hoped to broaden and solidify my understanding of politics in America and my role within them, and I feel as though I gained this from the course. • I learned specific terminology and historical precedent that helped to crystalize my understanding of politics into specific words. • The response papers were helpful in my writing in terms of clarity. Having a sentence limit aided in the directness of my answers and forced me to omit any fluff or unnecessary ideas. I expected to gain background in politics and did so, but I am glad this class helped with my writing too. • I expected to learn how to think politically and gain better practice writing and both of those were developed during the span of this course • I didn't expect to gain any skills from this course. What skill the course did teach me though is how to better process information and how to note take. We often moved the material at a reasonable pace so I had to figure out what to jot down and how to interpret the information in a way I understand. • I expected to gain a basic understanding of government branches, which I did. Still, the course expanded upon that by teaching me about the intricacies of campaigning and political messaging. It inspired me to engage in less common forms of political action, such as donating to campaigns. • I expected to learn a bit more about our government and how to better participate in American Democracy, and I feel like I did learn information about a few ways that I can better participate and take advantage of my position as an American citizen (most importantly that you can register to vote in the state that you attend college). However, the course was relatively light in terms of writing, which, in some ways, helped me, as I felt that I could better absorb the material rather than focusing on what would make a good essay, but also didn't really help improve my overall writing skills, which I was kind of hoping for. • I think this class does a great job in helping you learn to build your ideas off of other ideas that you have learned in the past. • I expected to gain at least a basic understanding of politics at a national and sometimes state level, and in reality, we dug much deeper than I believed we were going to, and I learned a lot about the intricacies of not just Congress and the house, but also statistical methods of electoral prediction mapping, state and national laws and their exceptions, and much more. • I really had no idea what polisci really was, it always sounded like one of those made up college terms, a bit ignorant of me for sure. This course has allowed me to develop skills that let me understand underlying factors of our political system and just the sheer basics of how it works. Giving me knowledge on surface and sub surface levels that are so important as a young voter and student. • I came into the class not knowing what to expect. I assumed it would be somewhat similar to my AP government class, but I was pleasantly surprised. I gained helpful skills in analyzing and questioning why certain structures are set up in certain ways, and how it impacts certain regions or peoples. • I expected to gain the capacity to be able to explain how the main systems and processes of U.S. government work, such as lawmaking and elections, and this course has enabled me to do that. It also went further than I expected in encouraging me to question the equitability and efficiency of such systems. • As I mentioned above, I think the most valuable thing I gained from this class is an thorough understanding of the American political system. This is what I hoped to gain from the class, but it really went beyond my expectations. • I expected to gain knowledge about the history of US politics, and US politics today, and be able to apply my knowledge to real life situations, which I was able to do. • I wanted to gain a basic understanding of political intricacies, and I did just that. I'm happy to report that it was helpful at the thanksgiving table haha. • Honestly, I did not have any expectations or goals when starting the class as I did not know what to expect. I knew that I wanted to understand how our political system worked so that I could better participate in voting. I have learned so many things during this semester that I believe that now I can hold my own during political discussions with my peers or family. 	

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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	18/27 (66.67%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lectures were both exciting and interesting, with the videos and graphs being effective in supporting the content. • I thought the class was structured well, the structure was fairly straightforward. All of the weekly assignments lined up well with the readings and lectures. • The lecture heavy classes did hinder my ability to focus in all classes • The professor gave out readings that extended what we learned in class, though sometimes they were unnecessarily long for unrevolutionary subject matter. The professor's assignments were always helpful in demonstrating understanding of the subject matter • I think the lectures were always engaging. Professor Hale teaches in a way that is energetic and passionate so you know he cares for the subject matter. Taking notes in class were the most effective way for me to retain material and was encouraged by Professor Hale. As I said previously too, the response papers were a great way to understand material through thought-provoking questions. • I feel like the discussion aspect of the class really helped me and the structure of the class with its lectures and various strategies. one aspect that might have been challenging was some of the assigned readings were a bit tough to comprehend at the time of doing them, but usually the following class would help understand more of the reading. one aspect I wish there was more of was group projects and collaboration • I didn't think there was anything in Hales instruction that was particularly ineffective. What I thought was especially effective was the consistent use of real world references when discussing certain concepts, like lobbying. Its important to ground the material, and Professor Hale did a good job of this. • Every week we had a written assignment engaging with questions that pertained to that week's course material, which I found to be a helpful checkpoint that made sure I was on the right track and was grasping weekly key concepts. • I enjoyed most of the readings, I thought that they were generally pretty varied in style, and generally not overly academic, which I think motivated me to actually read them. I also thought that the lectures were generally engaging, as the professor encouraged debate and constantly stopped for questions. • I thought class periods were structured well though we could get a little bit off track occasionally. I thought the group work was fairly limited, but because this is a lecture class I think that is ok. I appreciate that we didn't have any quizzes because it would be giving quizzes just to give them. The reading was mostly helpful but sometimes a little hard to follow. • Although I was never particularly keen on teaching through lectures, Professor Hale spent a lot of time creating engaging, interesting, and easy-to-follow lecture slides that were current and up-to-date with the ever-changing political landscape in our country. I also thought that the weekly response papers based on the week's lectures and unit were a good way to help me understand the topic at hand and answer questions based on the topic. • Your response paper setup was super effective, it insured i was completely on the same page with each week of work and didnt let me fall behind. Your strict deadline was very reasonable, but the strictness of it kept me on track. Something i greatly appreciated. • The professor tied everything back to current real-world examples, which was most effective for me. The structure flowed well, with every topic leading into the next, crescendoing with an examination of everything we learned and how current political structure is proposed at being reformed, and finally looking at and voting on which reforms the class body supported. • I thought the lectures were very clear, interesting, and engaging. The response papers challenged me to think about what we learned that week and to put concepts in my own words, yet it was not an overwhelming amount of work to do every week. • I found Professor Hale's lectures very engaging. I think he is excellent at spacing out text with graphs and modern day examples and engages the students in the class well with questions interspersed throughout the lecture. I also liked the weekly response papers which ensured my understanding of the readings and topics. I think there could have been a few more in class exercises/group work, but I don't think the lack of such impeded my learning. I enjoyed the day that we worked on the spatial model worksheet with classmates though. • The weekly reading responses helped my learning because it was a good way for me to be able to revisit important concepts from the week and deepen my learning • i am a huge fan of the weekly response papers. I think they were very manageable and I did learn a lot from them, they helped me with figuring out what I was still confused about, etc. • I really enjoyed the way that the class was structured. Having the reading responses at the end of each week incentivized students to fully engage and participate in the class. The reading responses were the perfect challenge at the end of each week, and I quite looked forward to doing them as I wanted to see how well I engaged. I genuinely enjoy lecture-based classes, so the structure worked well for me to fully engage in classes. 	

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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 17/27 (62.96%)

- The questions asked during the lecture by Professor Hale gave us the opportunity to respond critically.
- I thought that the lectures were very entertaining and engaging. This incentivized me to learn more and pay more attention.
- professor always took questions and answers with grace and professionalism, leading students to want to engage in class material. Remained politically neutral and fostered the creation of new ideas regarding political topics rather than enforcing preexisting opinions, which is especially important in an introductory politics class i feel.
- Professor Hale always tried to call on students an equal amount. As a student who did not always raise my hand or participate, whenever I did, Professor Hale would always make an effort to call on me. I think we could have done more group work to be more comfortable with the other classmates and get to know people around us.
- I feel like the most influential aspect of the class was the size of the class because it provided more opinions on topics we learned about and discussed
- Nothing really hindered a inclusive learning environment. I do appreciate that professor Hale made us all make name tags at the beginning of the semester to make sure no one ever had their name forgotten or mispronounced. It shows that professor Hale really cares about his students.
- The professor was very encouraging throughout the semester and repeated to us how we all had valuable things to contribute and that the space was open for us, especially if we did not often speak, which I find much more inviting than a cold-calling situation.
- Just as a product of the Oxy community overall, the perspectives in the class were generally fairly left-leaning, which makes political debates somewhat dry, as everyone has generally the same opinion. It also means that people who had potentially conflicting opinions did not necessarily want to share them for fear of being immediately shut down. This is not the professor's fault by any means, this happens in every Oxy class that I have taken, but it might be a little exacerbated in a politics class where talking about policies and opposing parties made up much of the coursework.
- Hale let us offer our own opinions often.
- The one thing I wished we had a little more of was group work rather than the whole class dedicated to lecture, that way it would allow us to put our understanding off the subject to use in class in real project/activity scenarios, and we could learn from each other as peers.
- Using memes, not pressuring people to speak but also encouraging, removing stigma from getting the wrong answer.
- Unfortunately it felt like many of the students who participated in class discussions were the same couple of people each time, maybe hindering people who aren't as comfortable at speaking from participating.
- This class was a comfortable environment to participate in and having the name tags made me feel more seen instead of just being an anonymous student.
- I think this class was well structured to hear all voices. Professor Hale made an effort to call on participants who did not participate often to create a well-balanced classroom with various voices and opinions. I also appreciate how he always made himself available for questions via email and office hours and I felt very supported by him throughout the course. I think others would have felt this way as well.
- Open office hours and class time being open to questions and participation helped the creation of an inclusive learning environment
- I liked how Prof. Hale encouraged new voices. That was very helpful in encouraging and diversifying the voices in class.
- The classroom environment that Professor Hale created was very inclusive. Everyone was encouraged to participate. If someone did not answer correctly, it was not an environment where someone was going to be judged. It is important in politics to hear many different opinions so that we can come to a conclusion that benefits the majority and I feel that Professor Hale incorporated that into his classroom.

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

Response Rate 12/27 (44.44%)

- I wish we spent more time discussing readings instead of lectures.
- a bit more reinforcement as the year goes on for previous material, stuff at the beginning sorta gets lost near the end of the course though not to a strong degree.
- None!
- Have more group presentations and work that allows the future students to engage in a more direct way with fellow peers and classmates. It just always adds some more fun to the class
- nope
- Not much that I can think of, other than maybe distributing submitted memes as the subject matter comes up, so that they are more pertinent to the topics being discussed. Also, trying to hold election related events in every year, not just presidential election years, is something that I would find helpful were I to take this class again (could be something already done, and I'm just not aware of it).
- Give more incentives to do the reading.
- Nope!
- none!! well maybe you should make like one reading a week require some small annotations or notes.
- I don't have any.
- n/a
- Nope! I think this class was excellent!

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

Response Rate 12/27 (44.44%)

- I enjoyed Professor Hale's lecturing techniques and his engaging classroom.
- professor hale is a fantastic instructor that creates an environment of civically engaged students where there otherwise might not be. He uses his class not as a monolith, but as a branch to engage with Occidental, the Los Angeles Community, States, and the United States in a way that is truly helpful to both student and community. He does it all while continuing to be a hilarious and insightful professor in and outside of the classroom.
- This class was a great introduction to Oxy as a first year. It was definitely my favorite class and I really hope to take more classes with Professor Hale in the years to come!
- This class was amazing and I really loved how simply structured this class was where it wasn't too intimidating or difficult but a nice breath of fresh air to learn about something very happening and ongoing in our everyday lives. Also it was cool to take this course at the same time that the 2024 elections were going on because that was a great coincidence that helped me understand how elections in America work, which is obviously something super important going forward in my life as there will be many more elections, and now I know what goes on behind those elections as well as the implications of the outcome
- nope!
- Professor Hale is a great professor, and I would take another class of his in a heartbeat, if it were on a subject that I was interested in. Will recommend this course to anyone interested in being a politics major, or who needs to satisfy the US Diversity core (like me).
- Thank you!
- Nope!
- thank you for getting my started on the polysi track!!
- Thank you for a wonderful class and semester Professor Hale!!
- I liked making the meme!
- Professor Hale has been one of the best professors that I have had this semester. He is very passionate and knowledgeable about the subject. Due to this, it was extremely easy to focus and engage. Prof. Hale is also quite funny and his remarks kept the class on their toes. I genuinely hope that I can take another class from him in the future!