



POIX392

American Politics

SP4 OUA 2016

Dept of Modern History, Politics & International Relations

Contents

<u>General Information</u>	2
<u>Learning Outcomes</u>	2
<u>Assessment Tasks</u>	3
<u>Delivery and Resources</u>	5
<u>Unit Schedule</u>	10
<u>Policies and Procedures</u>	11
<u>Graduate Capabilities</u>	14

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General Information

Unit convenor and teaching staff

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Prerequisites

Corequisites

Co-badged status

Unit description

This unit examines the theory, structure and operation of the American political system. It also considers selected contemporary problems in American politics. There is an emphasis on current political issues and events in the United States, though the early part of the unit will also examine some key episodes in US political history. All enrolment queries should be directed to Open Universities Australia (OUA): see www.open.edu.au

Important Academic Dates

Information about important academic dates including deadlines for withdrawing from units are available at <https://www.open.edu.au/student-admin-and-support/key-dates/>

Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this unit, you will be able to:

1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form
3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency
4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions

Assessment Tasks

Name	Weighting	Due
Participation	10%	Ongoing
First Essay	20%	30 December (11:55pm)
Major Essay	30%	30 January (11:55pm)
Exam	40%	26 February (11:55pm)

Participation

Due: **Ongoing**

Weighting: **10%**

This task requires students to regularly contribute to the discussion board on the unit website. Contributions will typically be between 100 and 250 words long. At the conclusion of the unit, students will be assessed on the quality and regularity of their contributions, with the emphasis being on engagement, clarity and political insight.

Students must contribute to at least THREE week's discussions to pass the course.

Students must contribute to at least EIGHT week's discussions to pass the assessment task.

All contributions must be made by 5pm Friday of Week 13.

The course cannot be passed unless this requirement is met, even if high marks have been achieved in other components.

Further details of how to go about this assessment are provided under Assessment 1 in Section 14 of the course.

This assessment is *not* optional. Students who expect to have difficulties meeting this assessment's requirements because of disability or location should contact the tutor at the beginning of the course to discuss alternative arrangements.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
- 2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form
- 3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the

Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency

- 4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions

First Essay

Due: **30 December (11:55pm)**

Weighting: **20%**

The minor essay is 1000 words. The questions will be released in Section 14 in the first week of semester. Students will be asked to discuss one of the main institutions of US government that we encounter in the first 5 weeks of the unit.

The questions are:

- (1) In what ways does this US Constitution reflect its historical origins?
- (2) Discuss the tension in the US Constitution between liberty and effective government.
- (3) Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of federalism, as expressed in the US Constitution.
- (4) Discuss the relationship between the Legislature and the Executive as reflected in the Constitution, and comment on the ways in which this relationship has changed since 1787.

Remember: you must fully reference your essay, and provide a complete Bibliography.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
- 3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency

Major Essay

Due: **30 January (11:55pm)**

Weighting: **30%**

Write 2000 words on one of the following topics:

- (1) Some commentators have suggested that the 2008 and 2012 election results signal a major realignment of U.S. politics. Discuss this claim in relation to both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, and the Congressional election of 2010
- (2) Discuss the role and influence of money in U.S. electoral politics.
- (3) Outline the key elements of President Obama's health care reform package, and discuss the ways in which it illuminates the relationship between Congress and Executive Government?
- (4) It is often said that lobby groups play a key role in determining political outcomes. Discuss this observation in respect of *one* lobby group with which you have an interest.
- (5) Discuss the influence of the Christian Right on the modern Republican Party, from President

Reagan to President George W. Bush.

(6) In what ways does 'Race' continue to impact U.S. politics?

Remember: your essay must be fully references and have a complete Bibliography.

Submission: please submit your Examination through the Turnitin link provided. Bear in mind that Turnitin is a plagiarism detection program. Make sure your referencing is complete before submitting.

On successful completion you will be able to:

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
- 2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form
- 3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency

Exam

Due: **26 February (11:55pm)**

Weighting: **40%**

Students will have from Wednesday 23rd February until Sunday 26 February to complete this examination. You will write four short essays. Two of the essays will be based on material from the first half of the course and the other two will be based on material from the section half of the course. More details about the exam will be provided by your tutor via announcements.

On successful completion you will be able to:

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- 2. You will be able to distinguish between competing interpretations of key US political issues, and succinctly express the strengths and weaknesses of these interpretations in written and oral form

Delivery and Resources

This unit examines the theory, structure and operation of the American political system. It also considers aspects of US foreign policy and selected contemporary problems in American Politics. There is an emphasis on current political issues and events in the United States.

Required Readings by Week

Each week has a list of readings. Readings which are not from the set text book are available through the Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings facility. A link to this facility is provided in the course or access can be directly through the Macquarie Library home-page. Some readings are also available via the internet.

Tips for using Unit Readings:

Course readings are now provided via the Library's Multisearch platform. A link is provided in the course which will take you directly to the *Unit Readings* for this course. They will come up in author order (author name is after title)/ If you go directly via the Library's Multisearch facility, you will need to enter the course code. Unfortunately the readings will not come up in any useful order. Here are some tips:

- If you only want one reading, enter the title of the article into the search box. You can do this directly from the Library homepage, without going into Unit Readings, but it is safer to go into Unit Readings first.
- If you want more than one reading, change the 'sorted by' criterion from Relevance to **Author**. This will bring up all the readings in alphabetic order by author.
- To set more than 10 records per page in the result list, you need to go to 'Sign in' (right top corner) on the Library home page. After signing in using your student number and password, click 'MyLibrary' (right top corner), then 'Personal Settings' (last option on the left), then go to the drop down menu for 'Number of results per page' (on the right), select the number you want (maximum of 50), and then 'Save'.

Sometimes readings drop out of the lists because of copyright problems or because the Library has put the wrong expiry date on the listing (all readings are required to have an expiry date. On campus readings expire at the end of each semester. OUA readings expire 31st December but are rolled over straight away. This should be seamless, but sometimes things go wrong). Please let your tutor know if you cannot find a reading that should be in Unit Readings.

Tip for referencing: if you follow the style presented in this list, you will meet course requirement, but see Referencing Guide in Section 14 for information about specific items.

Week 1: US Political Culture, beliefs and values

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'Government and the People in a Polarized Society', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 1-5 (Chapter 1).

McKay, David 2013, 'Beliefs, Values and American Society', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 6-40 (Chapter 2).

Week 2: The American Constitution

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'Constitutional Government', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 41-62 (Chapter 3)

McKay, David 2013, 'Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 63-85 (Chapter 4).

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Lowi, Theodore J., Ginsberg, Benjamin and Shepsle, Kenneth A. 2006, 'The Constitutional Framework: Federalism and the Separation of Powers,' *American Government: Freedom and Power*, (brief 2006 edition), NY and London, W.W. Norton & Company Inc., pp. 43-66.

Week 3: Political Parties

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'American Political Parties and the Politics of Polarization', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 86-110 (Chapter 5).

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Archer, Robin 2007, 'Conclusion,' *Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, pp. 233-243

Black, Earle and Black, Merle 2007, 'Competitive America,' *Divided America*, New York, Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, pp. 1-30

Carville, James 2009 'Why the Republicans Are Going to Get Spanked Over and Over,' *40 More Years: How the Democrats Will Rule the Next Generation*, NY, Simon & Schuster, pp. 7-21.

Week 4: Political Participation and Elections

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'Elections and Political Participation', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 111-145 (Chapter 6).

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Johnson, Dennis w. 2001, 'Introduction: Canvassing the Political Landscape,' and 'Celebrity Consultants and Professionally Driven Campaigns,' *No Place for Amateurs: How Political Consultants Are Reshaping American Democracy*, NY and London, Routledge, pp. xiii-xvi; 1-13.

Ceaser, James W., Busch, Andrew E. And Pitney, John J. Jr 2009, 'The Scope and Meaning of the Democratic Victory,' *Epic Journey: The 2008 Elections and American Politics*, Lanham, Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., pp. 1-34.

Week 5: Congress

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'Congress I: The People's Branch?', *American Politics and Society* (8th

edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 160-182 (Chapter 8).

McKay, David 2013, 'Congress II: Functions and Powers – The Broken Branch?', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 183-211 (Chapter 9).

Required Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Johnson, Robert D. 2006, 'The New Internationalists' Congress,' *Congress and the Cold War*, NY, Cambridge University Press, pp. 190-241.

Week 6: The Presidency

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'The Presidency I: Powers and Selection', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 212-231 (Chapter 10).

McKay, David 2013, 'The Presidency II: The President as Chief Executive', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 232-5 (Chapter 11).

Week 7: The Supreme Court

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'The Supreme Court and Judicial Politics', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 315-344 (Chapter 15).

Week 8: Interest Groups

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'Organized Interests: The Real Power?', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 291-314 (Chapter 14).

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Mearsheimer, John J. and Walt, Stephen M. 2007, 'What is the "Israel Lobby"?' *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy*, NY, Farrer, Straus and Giroux, pp. 111-150.

Week 9: Religion and Politics

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'Regulating Morality: Civil Rights, Liberties and the Conscience Issues', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 345-363 (Chapter 16).

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Kaplan, Esther 2005, 'Most Favored Constituency,' *With God on Their Side: George W. Bush and the Christian Right*, NY, London, The New Press, pp. 68-90.

Phillips, Kevin 2006, 'Radicalized Religion: As American As Apple Pie,' *American Theocracy: The Peril and Politics of Radical Religion, Oil and Borrowed Money in the 21st Century*, NY, Viking, Penguin, pp. 99-131.

Hedges, Chris 2007, 'God: The Commercial,' *American Fascists: The Christian Right and The War on America*, London, Jonathan Cape, pp. 164-181.

Week 10: Race and Politics

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Robertson, D. Osei 2011, 'Two Steps Forward, One Step Back: The Persistent Complexities of Race and Politics in the US', *The Review of Politics* 73: 305-322.

Brown, Hana E. 2013, 'Race, Legality, and the Social Policy Consequences of Anti-Immigration Mobilization', *American Sociological Review* 78(2): 290-314.

Aviles, Richard 2009, *Racial Threat Revisited: Race, Home Ownership, and White Working Class Politics in the US, 1964-1976*, Department of Sociology, University of Wisconsin-Madison, pp. 1-48. http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/behavior/Papers/Aviles_2009.pdf

Beamer, Glenn 2013, 'Living Wage Politics in the US States: Understanding Race, Labor, and Party Politics,' paper prepared for the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 29 to September 2, 2013, Chicago, Illinois. http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2323658

Week 11: Social Policy and Welfare

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'Social Policy in America: Self-Reliance and State Dependence', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 364-376 (Chapter 17).

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Brown, Hana E. 2013, 'Racialized Conflict and Policy Spillover Effects: The Role of Race in the Contemporary U.S. Welfare State,' *American Journal of Sociology*. 119(2): 394-443

Boettke, Peter J. 2012, 'Review Symposium | Neoliberalism, Race, and the American Welfare State,' *Perspectives on Politics* 10(4): 987-989.

Rehm, Phillip, Hacker, Jacob S. And Schlesinger, Mark 2012, 'Insecure Alliances: Risk, Inequality, and Support for the Welfare State,' *American Political Science Review* 106(2): 386-406.

Meyer, Madonna Harrington 2013, 'Changing Social Security in the US: Rising Insecurity?' *Social Policy and Society* 12(1): 135 - 146

Week 12: The Economy and Politics

Required Reading from set text:

McKay, David 2013, 'Managing Economic Change', *American Politics and Society* (8th edn.) Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 377-396 (Chapter 18).

Select Reading available via Macquarie Library Multisearch/Unit Readings:

Sprague, Jeb 2009, 'Transnational Capitalist Class in the Global Financial Crisis: A Discussion

with Leslie Sklair, 'Globalizations 6(4): 499-507

Helleiner, Eric 2011, 'Understanding the 2007–2008 Global Financial Crisis: Lessons for Scholars of International Political Economy,' *Annual Review of Political Science*, pp. 67-87

Ivanova, Maria N. 2011, 'Housing and hegemony: The US experience,' *Capital and Class* 35(3): 391-414

Unit Schedule

Week 1	Lecture: Introduction: US political culture, beliefs and values Discussion: American exceptionalism, liberalism, capitalism, religion
Week 2	Lecture: The American Constitution Discussion: Republicanism, Federalism, Branches of Government, Separation of Church and State
Week 3	Lecture: Political Parties Discussion: Democratic and Republican Party: Why no Labor Party?
Week 4	Lecture: Political Participation and Elections Discussion: Democracy, electoral system for Congress and the Presidency
Week 5	Lecture: Congress Discussion: Congress as legislator and Policy maker; divided government?
Week 6	Lecture: The Presidency Discussion: Constitutional versus actual powers; relations with congress; the 'imperial presidency'?
Week 7	Lecture: The Supreme Court Discussion: Judicial Politics Judicial activism; Roe Vs Wade
Week 8	Lecture: Interest Groups Discussion: Domestic and foreign policy lobbies; political action committees; campaign financing; Gun Lobby
Week 9	Lecture: Religion and Politics Discussion: A Protestant nation? The religious right; regulating public morality

Week 10	Lecture: Race and Politics Discussion: Legacy of slavery, civil rights struggle; immigration and the rise of Latino political power
Week 11	Lecture: Social Policy and Welfare Discussion: The ideology of self-reliance and small government; health care reform
Week 12	Lecture: The Economy and Politics Discussion: Global financial crisis; regulating Wall Street; the power of capital
Week 13	Examination

Policies and Procedures

Late Submission - applies unless otherwise stated elsewhere in the unit guide

Unless a Special Consideration request has been submitted and approved, (a) a penalty for lateness will apply – two (2) marks out of 100 will be deducted per day for assignments submitted after the due date – and (b) no assignment will be accepted more than seven (7) days (incl. weekends) after the original submission deadline. No late submissions will be accepted for timed assessments – e.g. quizzes, online tests.

Extension Request

Special Consideration Policy and Procedure
(<https://staff.mq.edu.au/work/strategy-planning-and-governance/university-policies-and-procedures/policies/special-consideration>)

The University recognises that students may experience events or conditions that adversely affect their academic performance. If you experience serious and unavoidable difficulties at exam time or when assessment tasks are due, you can consider applying for Special Consideration.

You need to show that the circumstances:

1. were serious, unexpected and unavoidable
2. were beyond your control
3. caused substantial disruption to your academic work
4. substantially interfered with your otherwise satisfactory fulfilment of the unit

requirements

5. lasted at least three consecutive days or a total of 5 days within the teaching period and prevented completion of an assessment task scheduled for a specific date.

If you feel that your studies have been impacted submit an application as follows:

1. Visit [Ask MQ](#) and use your OneID to log in
2. Fill in your relevant details
3. Attach supporting documents by clicking 'Add a reply', click 'Browse' and navigating to the files you want to attach, then click 'Submit Form' to send your notification and supporting documents
4. Please keep copies of your original documents, as they may be requested in the future as part of the assessment process

Outcome

Once your submission is assessed, an appropriate outcome will be organised.

OUA Specific Policies and Procedures

Withdrawal from a unit after the census date

You can withdraw from your subjects prior to [the census date](#) (last day to withdraw). If you successfully withdraw before the census date, you won't need to apply for Special Circumstances. If you find yourself unable to withdraw from your subjects before the census date - you might be able to [apply for Special Circumstances](#). If you're eligible, we can refund your fees and overturn your fail grade.

If you're studying Single Subjects using FEE-HELP or paying up front, you can [apply online](#).

If you're studying a degree using HECS-HELP, you'll need to [apply directly to Macquarie University](#).

Macquarie University policies and procedures are accessible from [Policy Central](#). Students should be aware of the following policies in particular with regard to Learning and Teaching:

Academic Honesty Policy http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/academic_honesty/policy.html

New Assessment Policy in effect from Session 2 2016 http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy_2016.html. For more information visit http://students.mq.edu.au/events/2016/07/19/new_assessment_policy_in_place_from_session_2/

Assessment Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/assessment/policy.html>

Grading Policy prior to Session 2 2016 <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/grading/policy.html>

Grade Appeal Policy <http://mq.edu.au/policy/docs/gradeappeal/policy.html>

Complaint Management Procedure for Students and Members of the Public http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/complaint_management/procedure.html

Disruption to Studies Policy http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/disruption_studies/policy.html *The Disruption to Studies Policy is effective from March 3 2014 and replaces the Special Consideration Policy.*

In addition, a number of other policies can be found in the [Learning and Teaching Category](#) of Policy Central.

Student Code of Conduct

Macquarie University students have a responsibility to be familiar with the Student Code of Conduct: https://students.mq.edu.au/support/student_conduct/

Results

Results shown in *iLearn*, or released directly by your Unit Convenor, are not confirmed as they are subject to final approval by the University. Once approved, final results will be sent to your student email address and will be made available in [eStudent](#). For more information visit ask.mq.edu.au.

Student Support

Macquarie University provides a range of support services for students. For details, visit <http://students.mq.edu.au/support/>

Learning Skills

Learning Skills (mq.edu.au/learningskills) provides academic writing resources and study strategies to improve your marks and take control of your study.

- [Workshops](#)
- [StudyWise](#)
- [Academic Integrity Module for Students](#)
- [Ask a Learning Adviser](#)

Student Services and Support

Students with a disability are encouraged to contact the [Disability Service](#) who can provide appropriate help with any issues that arise during their studies.

Student Enquiries

For all student enquiries, visit Student Connect at ask.mq.edu.au

IT Help

For help with University computer systems and technology, visit http://www.mq.edu.au/about_us/offices_and_units/information_technology/help/.

When using the University's IT, you must adhere to the [Acceptable Use of IT Resources Policy](#). The policy applies to all who connect to the MQ network including students.

Graduate Capabilities

Creative and Innovative

Our graduates will also be capable of creative thinking and of creating knowledge. They will be imaginative and open to experience and capable of innovation at work and in the community. We want them to be engaged in applying their critical, creative thinking.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
- 4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay

Commitment to Continuous Learning

Our graduates will have enquiring minds and a literate curiosity which will lead them to pursue knowledge for its own sake. They will continue to pursue learning in their careers and as they participate in the world. They will be capable of reflecting on their experiences and relationships with others and the environment, learning from them, and growing - personally, professionally and socially.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Assessment task

- Participation

Discipline Specific Knowledge and Skills

Our graduates will take with them the intellectual development, depth and breadth of knowledge, scholarly understanding, and specific subject content in their chosen fields to make them competent and confident in their subject or profession. They will be able to demonstrate, where relevant, professional technical competence and meet professional standards. They will be able to articulate the structure of knowledge of their discipline, be able to adapt discipline-specific knowledge to novel situations, and be able to contribute from their discipline to inter-disciplinary solutions to problems.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

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Assessment tasks

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay
- Exam

Critical, Analytical and Integrative Thinking

We want our graduates to be capable of reasoning, questioning and analysing, and to integrate and synthesise learning and knowledge from a range of sources and environments; to be able to critique constraints, assumptions and limitations; to be able to think independently and systemically in relation to scholarly activity, in the workplace, and in the world. We want them to have a level of scientific and information technology literacy.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

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Assessment tasks

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay

- Exam

Problem Solving and Research Capability

Our graduates should be capable of researching; of analysing, and interpreting and assessing data and information in various forms; of drawing connections across fields of knowledge; and they should be able to relate their knowledge to complex situations at work or in the world, in order to diagnose and solve problems. We want them to have the confidence to take the initiative in doing so, within an awareness of their own limitations.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
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Assessment tasks

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- First Essay
- Major Essay
- Exam

Effective Communication

We want to develop in our students the ability to communicate and convey their views in forms effective with different audiences. We want our graduates to take with them the capability to read, listen, question, gather and evaluate information resources in a variety of formats, assess, write clearly, speak effectively, and to use visual communication and communication technologies as appropriate.

This graduate capability is supported by:

Learning outcomes

- 1. By the end of this unit you will be able to find, analyse and interpret primary and secondary US political sources and present the information in a written form.
- 3. You will be able to explain the main features of US political institutions such as the Constitution, Federalism, Congress and the Presidency

- 4. You will be able to articulate your knowledge of US politics in forum discussions

Assessment tasks

- Participation
- First Essay
- Major Essay
- Exam