

HIST 2100

Institutional History of the United States

Instructor and Office Hours:

Professor Marc Becker
MC 227
marc@truman.edu
(660) 785-6036
Office hours: TR noon-1:20 (and by appointment) https://zoom.us/my/marcbecker

Course description:

US political institutions. Examines the United States and Missouri constitutions institutionally and historically. Taking this course is one way that Truman students can fulfill the legislative mandate of Missouri Statute 170.011, which states that all Missouri college students in the state-funded system must study these two constitutions. This course does not count as a major elective for History majors. This course is a one-credit hour course and therefore students are expected to devote approximately 150 minutes per week during the semester to learning the material and taking the quizzes and tests. That is an average representing the amount of time a typical student can expect to commit; your time commitment may vary.

The course is taught online and is asynchronous and self-paced with the following exception. Because of federal policy Truman State University is required to verify student engagement during the first week of term; in order to accomplish this each student must complete quiz 1 by Saturday, August 26, 2023 at 11:59pm. **If you do not do so you will be automatically disenrolled from the class.**

Course opens: Monday, August 21, 2023, 12am

Course closes: Friday, December 15, 2023, 11:59pm

Within certain parameters (i.e., you must finish each quiz and the final exam within the time allotted) you can work on this course at your own speed. You can study the reading materials when it is convenient for you, taking any lesson except the first in any order you please—whatever best suits your interest and learning style. **The main time restriction is the end of the course: on that date all work must be complete and submitted.** Failure to complete any of the quizzes or the final exam will result in a failing grade.

It is easy to succeed in this course if you are sufficiently self-motivated even if you have no previous background in US history. Please be aware, however, that you will need to adjust if you are an auditory/participatory learner (needing the traditional classroom experience), or if you are not good at structuring your time without fixed deadlines. Keep in mind that all the test questions are multiple choice. We attempt to avoid anything that might seem to be a trick question, and there is only one best answer to each question. Some answers will seem obvious to you; others will require that you have done some careful reading, thinking, and understanding.

Technical problems (discussed below) often take a day or two to resolve, so you are well advised NOT to wait until the last days of the term to complete the course. You also have to understand that, during the last week or so, you are likely to receive minimal help with any problems that you may have because that is an extremely busy time of the semester and instructors have many other calls on their time.

Course Objectives:

- Understand the foundations and organization of the government of the United States.
- Understand the structure and development of the US Constitution.
- Understand Missouri's constitution and the branches and functions of its government.
- Understand the development of the electoral process in the United States and Missouri.

Communications:

I will be happy to discuss with you any aspect of the course, answer questions about the content of the course, help resolve any technical problems you have with the on-line system, or arrange for a virtual visit (by email). Unless you are pressing me in the final days of the term (when there is simply no time left), you will find that I am always happy to help you resolve any problems you have, whether they are easy, technical matters that we can address, or substantive issues that may require a little research.

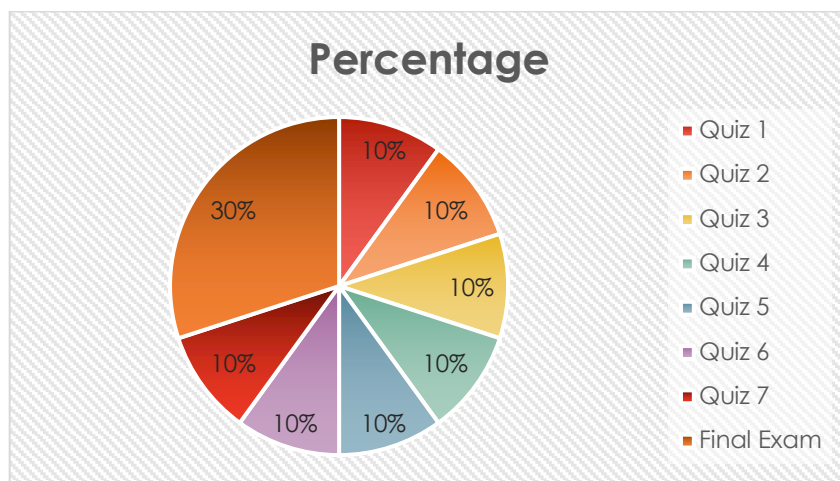
Contact me through Brightspace (using the email function) or by email using your preferred software. My email address is marc@truman.edu. If you choose to email outside of Brightspace **please put "HIST 2100" into the "subject line" of your email message**. Every attempt will be made to respond within 24 hours (72 over weekends). If I have to be away from email for more than a day, I will alert you.

You may also visit me during my office hours (it is best to make an appointment to make sure I am available).

Your professor contacting you. Occasionally I will send out mass email messages to class members about various technical issues, quiz or final-exam issues or reminders, etc. To ensure that you receive these email messages, your Truman email account must be activated and functioning properly. **Check that account regularly**, even if you usually use a different email account. Also, do all you can to make sure that our messages (whether through Brightspace or regular email) are not being filtered out as spam.

Grades:

Extra credit is not possible in this class!



Quizzes (70% of course grade):

For each of the seven lessons, there will be an online quiz and you must complete all of them to pass the course. Each quiz tests your knowledge of the material for that particular lesson. Each quiz must be completed in 32 minutes once you start it and is comprised of 10 multiple-choice questions. The quizzes are open-book. While taking a quiz on a particular lesson, you may consult the Vile text, the materials in (and linked to) the appropriate **LESSON**, and any notes you have taken. Be careful not “lock out” your quiz or exam by hitting “back” buttons (more on this below in “Technical Hints” below).

All seven quizzes are available in the **QUIZZES** tab on Brightspace. The tab called **MY GRADES** shows your current scores. Make sure that a score has registered for each quiz that you have taken, because you cannot receive credit for any lock-out, which appears as a little pencil-and-paper symbol that says “Attempt in Progress.”

Final exam (30% of course grade):

Missouri state statute 170.011 requires that this course have a final exam; like the quizzes, it will appear in **QUIZZES, FINAL, & SURVEY**. In order to pass the course, you **MUST** take this final exam. The final exam will be available on-line until the

end of the term. You will have 90 minutes to complete for the final exam once you start it.

Final course grade: There are 100 points total, and the basic scale is the usual: 90-100 is A; 80-89 is B; etc. Because there are hundreds of students enrolled in this on-line course, there can be **no mechanisms for extra credit, no extensions, and no excusing someone from a quiz or the final.** What you earn is what you get. For better or for worse (and a HUGE percentage of the students in HIST 2100 get As), one unit will have very little effect on your overall Truman GPA.

Course Requirements:

Required readings: There is one textbook: John R. Vile, *A Companion to the United States Constitution and Its Amendments* (6th ed.). Pickler Library has purchased an e-version, which you can access through [this link](#). To use this link off campus you must first connect to Truman's system via either the VPN or the Virtual Desktop (view.truman.edu). Visit its.truman.edu for further information and the download instructions for the VPN client. You can also buy or rent a new or used paper copy or ebook through the bookstore or various online book sellers.

In addition to the textbook, you are required to read online summaries and commentaries, prepared by the Truman history faculty, and to view some multimedia web-resources. These helpful materials are your basic guides to the course (and "they will be on the test," in case you wanted to ask). You will find the lesson summaries in the Brightspace **LESSON** tabs. The materials are available from the first day through the end of the semester. The seven lesson tabs introduce the readings in the Vile textbook, guide you to relevant web resources, and generally prepare you for each quiz. Completing all of the lessons prepares you for the final exam which is cumulative. Some of the web-links have given people trouble in the past. If they do not load properly for you, try finding the same link in Brightspace's **EXTERNAL LINKS** tab; sometimes the links operate better there. If that fails, adjust your spam filters that may be too restrictive, or simply use a university computer to do that part of the course.

Graded Work: The course is divided into seven lessons, which consist of assigned readings in the Vile textbook and accompanying on-line text and web-linked materials. For each lesson, you will take an on-line quiz after studying the materials for that lesson. You **SHOULD** read the textbook selections and the online materials, ponder and digest them, and **THEN** take the appropriate objective quiz, found under the Brightspace link called **QUIZZES, FINAL, & SURVEY**. The quizzes **ARE** open book, but you have just 32 minutes for each (they are timed), so preparation is necessary. Also, see warnings about using other sources, below. Once you finish Lesson 1 and Quiz 1, go on to Lesson 2, etc., until you finish HIST 2100 by taking the final exam and completing the course evaluation.

You need to read and understand, and not merely skim, the assigned readings; we advise you not to look for “answers” in the course material by simply using keyword searches. Also, using Wikipedia or google searches are likely to yield you wrong answers on some of the questions, because the assigned textbook and the online materials are the authorities for all the tests. Such “quick and dirty methods” will also not prepare you very well for the final exam. The online final exam tests your mastery of the entire course's materials, and passing the final exam is necessary to pass the course.

Course ending: All seven quizzes and the final will remain available until the last day of the term, which is the last day of final exams. On 6 December at 5:00 pm all quizzes and the final exam will shut down. **It is your responsibility to take the quizzes in a timely fashion and to be sure that all scores have registered properly in the system. Any quiz or final not taken by the end of the course will receive a score of zero and will result in a failing grade for the class.** I strongly advise you to avoid waiting until the proverbial last minute (even the last week) to take the quizzes. The quizzes and the final will be closed at the appointed time with a pre-programmed, mass action, and after that time the instructors cannot resurrect any quiz or final for any individual, no matter what. We also cannot accept any answers that are written or emailed; everything must be processed in the Brightspace testing system.

Technical Hints Using Brightspace:

Avoiding Lock-outs: Once you have opened a quiz or the final exam on Brightspace (meaning: you clicked “Begin” to start), you cannot exit until that quiz is completed. You cannot “save” a few answers and finish the quiz later. If you back out of the quiz by using the “back” button on your browser, or you accidentally close the window or otherwise remove the quiz from your screen, or the system crashes, or you lose your wireless connection, etc., you will not be able to go back into that quiz. That quiz will be “locked out.” **If this happens to you, you must contact me to clear that locked-out attempt. Doing so will clear all of your previous answers so you must start again.** Most students get locked out once in a while and sometimes we do not even know WHY it happened. It's no big deal; there is absolutely no reason to panic. The same things can happen while doing the final exam, especially because it is three times as long as a quiz. Again, as long as you have given yourself enough time to finish the course before it ends, there is no need to panic if a lock-out occurs. Just let me know as soon as it happens, and I will help you get back on track.

Note these three features of the mechanics of the Brightspace quizzes and how to avoid being locked out (according to our latest advice):

- If you log in directly to Brightspace, rather than through TruView, your chances of getting “timed out” and thrown off the system are far less. To log onto Brightspace, just type learn.truman.edu into your browser. (You do need

a good broadband connection. Undependable wireless connections are likely to lead to lock-outs.)

- **Don't back out of a quiz for any reason**, or you will be locked out. Also, **never use the "Save Answer" button !** That may cause the program to freeze up and lock you out. Instead, click on the arrow to go to the next question; your answer will be automatically saved.
- Although the quizzes and the final exam are open book you should **never attempt to consult materials in the same browser window you are using for the quiz/exam**. Instead, open a separate browser tab or window. You might feel even more secure if you download the relevant lesson materials to your computer where you can refer to them as you please, as you do the quiz on the active Brightspace window or use a different browser altogether. For example, if you are using Google Chrome for the quiz, try using Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, or Safari to view the lesson materials.

If you encounter technical difficulties in navigating the online HIST 2100 course materials on Brightspace, please contact me first not the ITS Help Desk. I will do my best to resolve the problems as quickly as possible; ITS can take a while, so we will use them only as a last resort. Every now and then the whole computer system crashes and gives weird messages about "denied access"; that rare problem always seems to correct itself quickly, though it may lock out the quiz that you happen to be doing at the time.

Academic honesty (required statement as per Truman rules)

Personal and scholarly integrity is expected of everyone in the class. Failure to live up to those responsibilities, risks earning a failing grade on the assignment or examination, a failing grade for the course, and/or in serious cases expulsion for the academic program or University. The University policy on academic dishonesty as published in the Student Conduct Code and General/Graduate Catalog applies.

Link to Other Truman Policies Every Student Should Know

<https://wp-internal.truman.edu/provost/syllabus-resources-for-students/>

COURSE OUTLINE:

Below is a rough sketch of the seven lessons and quizzes, along with the corresponding parts of the Vile textbook for each lesson. In addition to the assigned chapter, remember that the quiz questions assume that you have completed the corresponding online lesson. You may also need to make use of the glossary and the index of the textbook to understand all the terms and their definitions.

Lesson	Reading
1. Background to the Constitution	Vile, chap. 1
2. The Federal System	Vile, chaps. 5–6
3. Branches of Government: Legislative	Vile, chap. 2
4. Branches of Government: Executive and Judicial	Vile, chaps. 3–4, and “Reading Supreme Court Decisions,” 227–33
5. The Bill of Rights and the First Twelve Amendments	Vile, chaps. 7–10
6. The Post–Civil War, Progressive Era, and Recent Amendments to the The Bill of Rights	Vile, chaps. 11–13
7. Missouri History and Constitution	Online readings
8. FINAL EXAM	
9. Course Evaluation	