

INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS: MEANING AND FUNCTION

Academic year 2024/2025
2nd Term

SYLLABUS

Course:	INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS: MEANING AND FUNCTION
Code:	202334
MA Degree:	Máster en Estudios Norteamericanos
Department and Area:	Filología Moderna. Filología Inglesa.
Type of Subject:	Mandatory
Credits ECTS:	5
Course and semester:	2024-25 second semester
Lecturers:	Crespo Palomares, Cristina Cañero Serrano, Julio
Office hours:	To be determined at the beginning of the term
Language of instruction:	English

1.a PRESENTATION

Este curso ofrece a los estudiantes la posibilidad de analizar la figura presidencial en Estados Unidos desde un enfoque polifacético. Partiendo de la Ley Suprema del país, los alumnos tendrán acceso a los aspectos más notables de la Presidencia estadounidense, desde las causas (y, por supuesto, los efectos) de su creación, hasta los aspectos menos conocidos y más mundanos de este símbolo nacional. Los presidentes de Estados Unidos serán escrutados, pues, a través de su papel como líderes nacionales e internacionales para demostrar si sus presidencias pueden considerarse fuertes o débiles. Estas indagaciones se basarán sobre todo en la capacidad de los presidentes para ejercer su influencia política sobre el Congreso y poner en práctica su valor ejecutivo. Por último, conoceremos la relación (si es que existe) entre los distintos presidentes estadounidenses y España.

Recomendaciones:

Dado que todas las actividades se desarrollarán en inglés, se espera que los alumnos tengan al menos un nivel C.1 en el idioma dentro del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas (MCERL).

1.b PRESENTATION (in English)

This course offers students the possibility of analyzing the presidential figure in the United States from a multifarious approach. Departing from the Supreme Law of the country, the students will have access to the most notable aspects of the American Presidency, from the causes (and, of course, the effects) for its creation, to the less-known and more mundane aspects of this national symbol. The presidents of the United States will be scrutinized, then, through their role as national and international leaders to demonstrate whether their presidencies could be considered strong or weak. These inquiries will be based mostly on the presidents' capacity to exercise their political influence over Congress and implement their executive values. Finally, we will learn about the relationship (if it exists) between the different US presidents and Spain.

Recommendations:

Since all activities will be conducted in English, students are expected to have at least a C.1 level in the language within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

2. COMPETENCES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

General and basic competences:

GC1.- Students will acquire deeper and more specific knowledge of the disciplines inherent in American Studies.

GC2 Students will be able to use the acquired preparation as a resource and reference model to adequately address theoretical and practical issues related to the different areas of specialization achieved through the suggested itineraries in this degree program.

GC3.- Students will be able to continuously, autonomously exercise self-directed learning, developing new approaches and analytical methods within American Studies.

GC4.- Students will become familiar with the most recent innovations in the field of American Studies.

GC5.- Students will acquire the necessary skills for carrying out research work.

GC6.- Students will apply theoretical and analytical contributions from different fields of knowledge towards a common scientific objective during their participation in sessions, through group work, written assignments, and their final master's thesis (TFM).

GC7.- Students will obtain knowledge that provides a basis or opportunity to be original in the development and/or application of ideas, often within a research context.

BC8.- Students will use their acquired knowledge and problem-solving abilities in new or unfamiliar environments within broader (or multidisciplinary) contexts related to their field of study.

BC9.- Students will integrate knowledge and deal with the complexity of formulating judgments based on information that, while incomplete or limited, includes reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities associated with the application of their knowledge and judgments.

BC10.- Students will communicate their conclusions and the underlying knowledge and reasons to specialized and non-specialized audiences clearly and unambiguously.

BC11.- Students will have learning skills that will enable them to continue studying in a largely self-directed or autonomous manner.

Transversal competences:

TC1.- Students will develop the ability to critically analyze texts, speeches, data, and events related to North America.

TC2.- Students will learn to integrate approaches and methods from various disciplines in the study of North America.

TC3.- Students will enhance their skills to communicate ideas clearly and persuasively, both in oral presentations and academic essays.

TC4.- Students will understand and appreciate cultural differences in North America, as well as power dynamics and intercultural relationships.

TC5.- Students will address complex problems related to North America creatively and originally, generating new ideas, innovative approaches, and creative solutions.

Specific competences:

SC1.- Students will be able to question the validity of assertions about the idiosyncrasy of American culture.

SC2 - Students will be able to discern the various milestones of North American political and cultural history, both diachronically and synchronically.

SC3.- Students will be able to conduct research with an appropriate structure, clear writing, solid argumentation, and adherence to all citation and source referencing standards typical of this type of work while assimilating theories or opinions presented in other studies on the topic.

SC4.- Students will have the ability to interpret and evaluate all types of current American texts (press, advertising, reports, communications, texts of a scientific or economic nature, ideological, historical, literary, etc.), uncovering their ideology, objectives, and function.

SC5.- Students will have a comprehensive understanding of transatlantic cultural, political, and historical relations from the creation of New England to the present day.

SC6.- Students will be able to make interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to American cultural constructs, regardless of their nature.

Learning outcomes:

LO1. Political Research and Analysis:

Students will be able to critically investigate and analyze the political system of the United States, identifying its key institutions, actors, and political processes.

LO2. Debate and Discussion:

Students will be capable of actively participating in debates and discussions on relevant political topics in the United States, articulating and defending evidence-based arguments.

LO3. Case Study:

Students will be capable of analyzing specific cases of American politics, identifying patterns, trends, and lessons learned that contribute to a deeper understanding of the political system.

LO4. Political Simulation:

Students will be capable of participating in simulations of American political processes, such as elections, legislative debates, or diplomatic negotiations, applying theoretical knowledge in a practical setting.

LO5. Comparative Research:

Students will be capable of comparing the American political system with the political systems of other countries, identifying similarities, differences, and lessons that can be applied to the American context.

3. CONTENTS

Topic contents	Hours
Lesson 1. HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS	3 hours
Lesson 2. THE BASIS OF US POLITICAL SYSTEM: DEMOCRACY, FEDERALISM & CONSTITUTIONAL VALUES	3 hours

Lesson 3. THE LEGISLATIVE BRANCH: THE CONGRESS	3 hours
Lesson 4. THE JUDICIAL BRANCH	3 hours
Lesson 5. THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH: THE ESTABLISHMENT	3 hours
Lesson 6. THE ELECTORAL PROCESS	3 hours
Lesson 7. THE PRESIDENCY	3 hours
Lesson 8. THE PRESIDENT AS NATIONAL LEADER AND WORLD LEADER	3 hours
STUDENTS PRESENTATIONS & EVALUATION	6 horas

4. TEACHING-LEARNING METHODOLOGIES - TRAINING ACTIVITIES

4.1. Distribution of credits

Type of activity	Hours
In-person or synchronous interaction (for theoretical classes, practical classes, and formative assessment)	36 hours
Asynchronous in-person guidance by the instructor (online mode only): forums, case resolution, formative assessment, etc.	5
Independent student work	84 hours
Total:	125 hours

4.2. Methodologies, materials and teaching resources

Methodology	Teaching materials
<p>Onsite classes</p>	<p>The lectures will provide theoretical explanations of the topics under discussion, supported by a variety of teaching materials and resources including specialized textbooks, academic articles, and relevant government documents. These resources will be available to students through the Blackboard learning platform, where they can access them at any time to complement their learning.</p> <p>The seminars will explore the topics in more detail through analysis and discussion in individual and/or group settings. Seminars will be based on the interpretation of texts, statistics, maps, newspapers, films, and other multimedia materials that allow students to deepen their understanding of the political system of the United States. These activities will also take place on the Blackboard platform, where students can participate in online discussions, share resources, and collaborate on group projects.</p>
<p>Oral and written presentations</p>	<p>In addition to the mentioned activities, students will have the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the United States political system through an oral presentation on the political life of one of the American presidents. This</p>

presentation will require thorough research on the selected president, addressing key aspects of their life, political career, achievements, and legacy. Students will be tasked with critically analyzing the president's impact on American politics and their relevance in historical context. This oral presentation will provide students with an invaluable opportunity to develop research, communication, and analytical skills, fostering enriching debate and a deeper understanding of the United States political system.

Alongside the oral presentation, students will also be required to complete a written assignment that expands on and delves deeper into the topics covered in the presentation. This assignment will allow students to explore specific aspects of the selected president's political life in greater detail, substantiating their arguments with solid evidence and critical analysis.

Materials will be provided by the lecturer at the beginning of the course or before every onsite class. They will include diverse materials, such as movies, academic articles, political/historical documents, websites, etc. Students may be supported through a platform (EPD), which will be used mainly for class communication.

5. ASSESSMENT: Procedure and grading criteria¹

Continuous assessment:

¹ Based on the regulations governing the evaluation of the academic performance of students at the University of Alcalá in all undergraduate and master's degree courses, approved by the Governing Council on July 22, 2021.

The entire evaluation process will be inspired by the continuous assessment of the student, ensuring the acquisition of both content and competencies of the subject. The assessment aligns with what is established in the assessment regulations of the UAH.²

Ordinary Call

Students should have attained the desired level in each of the competencies specified in the assessment criteria:

1. To understand and interpret the different formal aspects related to the three branches.
2. To assimilate the most important aspects of the American presidential figure.
3. To recognize the main ideological principles and political activities of the studied presidents.
4. To demonstrate high standards of presentation, written English, and oral English in all submitted coursework.

Students should have achieved the desired level in each of the competencies specified in the assessment criteria. Specific assessment criteria include the ability to differentiate between facts and abstract patterns emerging from them, which are elaborated on throughout the course. Also, the ability to memorize and utilize the most relevant facts and recognize these patterns in texts. Patterns encompass both specific cultural knowledge and meta-knowledge about their validity. Additionally, the term 'patterns' encompasses the acquisition and utilization of strategies for various text forms, such as statistics, maps, fictional texts, or informational texts. Another assessment criterion is the ability to write an essay in a methodologically and formally correct manner.

Students are cautioned against plagiarism, which will not be tolerated. Any ideas from external sources, whether quoted, summarized, or paraphrased, must be adequately documented. According to Article 34 of the University's evaluation regulations, any plagiarism discovered in the final version of a paper will be penalized and could result in module failure. The instructor will provide assessment cover sheets for written assignments, verifying that the submitted work is either entirely original or appropriately referenced.

Students should familiarize themselves with the document that governs academic integrity at UAH, "Código ético de buenas prácticas en la investigación (Approved by the Governing Council of the University of Alcalá, on October 31, 2019)".

Grading criteria

² Normativa de evaluación de los aprendizajes de la UAH (30 septiembre de 2021).

<https://www.uah.es/export/sites/uah/es/conoce-la-uah/organizacion-y-gobierno/.galleries/Galeria-Secretaria-General/Normativa-Evaluacion-Aprendizajes.pdf>

The final grade of the students will depend on their active and valuable participation in class (20%), class activities (20%), the preparation of an oral presentation (30%), and an individual research paper (30%). Class participation is HIGHLY encouraged, and it will be assessed accordingly. Active participation will not only be restricted to the seminars but also to lectures, which will also be conducted upon the comments and ideas posed by students.

Likewise, their final grade will be based on the following grading criteria:

- **Outstanding (MH):** Students display an outstanding grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been achieved at an exceptionally high level. Performance in all the tasks shows that students have read and thought at a level well beyond what is expected in the module. Students attend lectures and are always well-prepared for discussion in seminars. They obtain outstanding results in the exams.

- **Excellent (SB):** Students display an excellent grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been achieved at a very high standard and an exceptionally high level. Performance in all the tasks shows all or most of the appropriate characteristics expected for this type of work. Students attend lectures and are practically always well-prepared for discussion in seminars, with almost no absences. They obtain excellent results in the exams.

- **Very Good (N):** Students display a very good grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been met fully and many have been achieved at a good or very good standard. Performance in all the tasks shows a good knowledge of the syllabus contents. Students attend lectures and seminars, with few absences, and have done most of the preparation for them. They have a good foundation in the prescribed readings and build on ideas developed in lectures and seminars. They obtain very good results in the exams.

- **Satisfactory (A):** Students show a satisfactory grasp of the aims and contents of the module. All assessment criteria have been met, but some barely exceed the threshold standard to pass the module. Performance in all the tasks shows some of the appropriate characteristics concerning content, illustration, organization, and expression. Students are present in lectures and seminars, with few absences, and occasionally contribute to discussions. They obtain acceptable results in the exams.

- **Fail (S):** Students show an unsatisfactory grasp of the aims and contents of the module. Some assessment criteria do not reach the threshold standard to pass the module. Performance in all the tasks shows a limited understanding of essential concepts and/or minimal research. Students have multiple absences and when they come, they are often not prepared, or they do not say much. Their results in the exams are insufficient considering the requirements of the course.

Assessment procedures

Continuous Assessment:

The primary assessment process in this course will be continuous. Therefore, students are required to attend at least 80% of the classes, including lectures, seminars, workshops, and ECTS tutorials. They must also complete and submit all the activities assigned to them, which include the following:

- Delivering an individual presentation in the final week of the course
- Submitting an academic essay (2,000-2,500 words)

Extraordinary Call

The same as in the ordinary call.

Final evaluation:

Students may opt for the final evaluation, notwithstanding that their reasons must be assessed on a case-by-case basis, including the completion of in-person practices, work obligations, family obligations, health reasons, and disability. Part-time enrollment alone does not grant the right to choose the final evaluation.

Students of the Master's Degree, to opt for the final evaluation, must request it in writing from the Master's Director within the first two weeks of the subject's delivery, explaining the reasons preventing them from following the continuous assessment system. In the case of students who, for justified reasons, have not formalized their enrollment on the course start date or during the subject's delivery period, the period will begin upon their enrollment in the degree program. The Master's Director must assess the circumstances presented by the student and make a reasoned decision. If 15 business days pass without the student receiving a written response to their request, it will be deemed approved.

There will be an opportunity for recovery at the end of the second semester for students who have failed their continuous assessment or final exam. This will also take the form of a two-hour written exam, with a format like the final exam, which will constitute 100% of the recovery grade.

Exceptionally, if the characteristics of the subject advise against a final evaluation mode, it must be expressly indicated, and the reason explained. During the development of evaluation tests, the guidelines set out in the Regulations establishing the Coexistence Rules of the University of Alcalá must be followed, as well as the possible implications of irregularities committed during such tests, including the consequences for committing academic fraud as per the Student Disciplinary Regulations of the University of Alcalá.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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