

PSCI 1101: Intro to American Politics

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Fall 2022

August 29, 2022-December 8, 2022

Online and asynchronous on Canvas

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Office Hours: 3:30-4:30pm Mondays and Wednesdays (general, in-person), Mondays 4:30-5:30pm (on Zoom, for this class specifically), and by appointment

Course Overview

The Trump and Biden presidencies have been nothing if not polarizing. Since Trump's election America has faced a variety of crises: a pandemic requiring coordination between state and national levels, significant social unrest and protest seeking to address police brutality and racial inequality, questions of election legitimacy and voter suppression, foreign policy challenges in Afghanistan and Ukraine, and the highest levels of inflation in decades. Yet all of these flashpoints highlight broader themes in American politics including the role of the electoral college in Presidential elections, the balance of power in a federal system, the effects of social movements and protest on representation and policy change, and the tug of war to influence policy between the executive and legislative branches. The purpose of this course is to introduce you to the institutions, processes, and actors that make up the American political system and to encourage you to think critically about the nature and quality of American democracy. In doing so, you will gain a better understanding of how our government works, as well as develop a knowledge of the opportunities that exist and the barriers that often thwart citizen participation in the American political system.

Learning Objectives

After taking this course, students will:

- Be familiar with the history of the American Constitution and important challenges and compromises made by the founders.
- Understand the roles and constraints of the various branches of government at the national and state level.
- Understand how elections work in the United States and their effects on the American party system.
- Understand the evolution of civil liberties and civil rights, including the effects of the 14th Amendment and important legislation like the Voting Rights Act.
- Be better consumers of the news by being able to place current events into the broader context of the American political system.

Required Materials

1. *The American Political System* (Core Third Edition) by Ken Kollman. Note that the “Core Third Edition” is slightly different from the longer “Third Edition” so be sure to double check before purchasing the book. You can buy or rent a hard copy or use an ebook version (\$35) found here: <https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393675290>

Assignments and Grading

Participation and Canvas Discussions (15%): Since this is an online and asynchronous course we will use Canvas discussion boards to hold “classroom” conversations and discussions. Participation in these discussions is mandatory and will comprise 15% of your final grade. Each course topic will have discussion a question or prompt and students are **required to post one response to the question/prompt and one response to another student’s post** (the exception is the first discussion for student introductions, you do not need to respond there). For your initial response to the discussion question/prompt you should write short paragraph (4-6 sentences) that answers the question or prompt. You may also include thoughtful questions or points of confusion to be answered by me or other students. If the question or prompt has multiple sections you may focus on one or respond to them all. Responses to other students’ comments should be 1-2 sentences and offer some useful feedback, additional context or commentary that supports or challenges the comment, points of clarification, or constructive criticism. **Your initial post must be completed by Friday of the assigned week, and responses to other students’ comments must be submitted by the unit deadline (usually Sunday night)**. Each discussion will be worth two points total: one point will be awarded for meeting the basic requirements for a post (you write an on-topic response of sufficient length), a half point will be awarded for quality (demonstrating critical thinking, clear understanding of the topic, offering an interesting question, etc.), and a half point will be awarded for a response to another student’s post (a thoughtful 1-2 sentence response is sufficient). **Late initial posts will receive up to half credit.**

With that in mind, here are a few points of “netiquette” to guide your posting: 1) think before you write and be as clear as possible – without nonverbal cues it can be easy to be misinterpreted, 2) be generous and respectful, give the benefit of the doubt to others, and treat others as you would face-to-face, 3) don’t use all caps (this is the yelling of the online world), 4) use proper grammar and structure (e.g. please write “are you” rather than “R U”), 5) try not to procrastinate your posts or responses – since other students rely on your posts for their responses it’s best to not wait until just before the deadline to make your post.

Quizzes and Short Assignments (25%): There will be a variety of quizzes (10-20 minute timed quizzes administered through Canvas) and short assignments throughout the semester. Collectively, the quizzes and assignments will be worth 25% of your final grade. These quizzes and assignments will be composed of multiple-choice and short answer questions. Important note: this grade item will be calculated as a running tally of total points, NOT as an average of the individual quizzes/assignments. In other words, some quizzes or assignments will be worth more points than others and your final score will be your total points earned out of the total possible points. For example, if you scored a 3/3 on one quiz and a 4/5 on another, your final score would be a 7/8 or 87.5%, NOT an average of 100% on the first quiz and an 80% on the second.

Research Paper (20%): There will be one 5-6 page research paper assignment due to Canvas **11:59pm December 1st**. The research paper will require students to pose a question and to design an empirical test using data to answer that question. More information will be provided in a separate assignment sheet

Exams (40%): There will be two exams: **a midterm exam October 6th-12th and a final exam December 5th-8th**. Each exam will be worth 20% of your total grade. The exams will be administered electronically through Canvas and will have a 75 minute time limit. Note that the final exam will NOT be cumulative.

Grading Scale

Grades will be assigned as follows:

| A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | C- | D+ | D | D- | F |
|--------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| 94-100 | 90-93 | 87-89 | 83-86 | 80-82 | 77-79 | 73-76 | 70-72 | 67-69 | 63-66 | 60-62 | <60 |

Class Policies

I will use email as the primary means of communication. Be sure to check your “@colorado.edu” mailbox regularly. If you send me an email please allow 24 hours for me to respond. If I fail to respond, please resend your message. Open communication is critical! If you have a legitimate excuse and need an accommodation for class assignments or exams, you must inform me in advance. Unless an alternative arrangement has been made in advance **late assignments will result in a penalty of 10 percentage points per day.**

Both students and faculty are responsible for maintaining an appropriate learning environment in all instructional settings, whether in person, remote or online. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. For more information, see the [classroom behavior](#) policy, the [Student Code of Conduct](#), and the [Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance](#).

Finally, I reserve the right to make changes to this document. Any changes will be reflected on Canvas.

University Policies

Covid-19: As a matter of public health and safety, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements and all public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. CU Boulder currently requires COVID-19 vaccination and boosters for all faculty, staff and students. Students, faculty and staff must upload proof of vaccination and boosters or file for an exemption based on medical, ethical or moral grounds through the MyCUHealth portal.

The CU Boulder campus is currently mask-optional. However, if public health conditions change and masks are again required in classrooms, students who fail to adhere to masking requirements will be asked to leave class, and students who do not leave class when asked or who refuse to comply with these requirements will be referred to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. For more information, see the policy on classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct. If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please follow the steps in the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

If you feel ill and think you might have COVID-19, if you have tested positive for COVID-19, or if you are unvaccinated or partially vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you should stay home and follow the further guidance of the Public Health Office (contacttracing@colorado.edu). If you are fully vaccinated and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19, you do not need to stay home; rather, you should self-monitor for symptoms and follow the further guidance of the Public Health Office (contacttracing@colorado.edu). {Faculty: insert your procedure here for students to alert you about absence due to illness or quarantine. Because of FERPA student privacy laws, do not require students to state the nature of their illness when alerting you. Do not require "doctor's notes" for classes missed due to illness; campus health services no longer provide "doctor's notes" or appointment verifications.}

Accommodation for Disabilities: If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) on the Disability Services website.

Preferred Student Names and Pronouns: CU Boulder recognizes that students' legal information doesn't always align with how they identify. Students may update their preferred names and pronouns via the student portal; those preferred names and pronouns are listed on instructors' class rosters. In the absence of such updates, the name that appears on the class roster is the student's legal name.

Honor Code: All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#). Violations of the Honor Code may include, but are not limited to: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution (honor@colorado.edu; 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the [Honor Code](#) will be assigned resolution outcomes from the Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution as well as be subject to academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found on the [Honor Code website](#).

Discrimination and Harassment: CU Boulder is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. University policy prohibits sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination and harassment, and related retaliation by or against members of our community on- and off-campus. These behaviors harm individuals and our community. The Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) addresses these policies, and individuals who believe they have been subjected to misconduct can contact OIEC at 303-492-2127 or email cureport@colorado.edu. Information about university policies, [reporting options](#), and support resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#). Please know that faculty and graduate instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when they are made aware of any issues related to these policies regardless of when or where they occurred to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about their rights, support resources, and resolution options. To learn more about reporting and support options for a variety of concerns, visit [Don't Ignore It](#).

Religious Holidays: Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, **let me know by the end of the third week** of the semester if you expect to miss any class for religious observance. See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

PSCI 1101 Fall 2022 Schedule

Updated: September 4, 2022

Note: all units are listed in the order in which you should complete them, and the deadline for all units is 11:59pm on the final day.

Week 1: August 29th-September 4th

1. Course Introduction
 - 1.1 Course Intro Lecture
 - 1.2 Student Introduction Discussion Post
 - 1.3 Unit 1 Quiz
2. Government and Collective Action Problems
 - 2.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.1
 - 2.2 Government and Collective Action Problems Lecture
 - 2.3 Unit 2 Discussion
 - 2.4 Unit 2 Quiz

Week 2: September 5th-11th

3. The Constitution
 - 3.1 Reading: Kollman Ch. 2
 - 3.2 The Constitution Lecture
 - 3.3 Unit 3 Discussion
 - 3.4 Unit 3 Quiz

Week 3: September 12th-18th

4. Federalism
 - 4.1 Reading: Kollman Ch. 3
 - 4.2 Federalism Lecture
 - 4.3 Unit 4 Discussion
 - 4.4 Unit 4 Quiz

Week 4: September 19th-25th

5. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
 - 5.1 Reading: Kollman Ch. 4 + Appendix A-24 and A-25
 - 5.2 Civil Liberties and Civil Rights Lecture
 - 5.3 Unit 5 Discussion
 - 5.4 Unit 5 Quiz

Week 5: September 26th-October 2nd

- 6. Public Opinion
 - 6.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.9
 - 6.2 Public Opinion Lecture
 - 6.3 Unit 6 Discussion
 - 6.4 Unit 6 Quiz

Week 6: October 3rd-9th

- 7. Political Participation
 - 7.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.10
 - 7.2 Political Participation Lecture
 - 7.3 Unit 7 Discussion
 - 7.4 Unit 7 Quiz

EXAM 1: October 6th-12th

Week 7: October 10th-16th

- 8. Elections and Campaigns
 - 8.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.13 + pp. 477-479
 - 8.2 Elections and Campaigns Lecture
 - 8.3 Unit 8 Discussion
 - 8.4 Unit 8 Quiz

Week 8: October 17th-23rd

- 9. Interest Groups
 - 9.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.11
 - 9.2 Interest Groups Lecture
 - 9.3 Unit 9 Discussion
 - 9.4 Unit 9 Quiz

Week 9: October 24th-30th

- 10. Political Parties
 - 10.1 Reading: Kollman pp. 447-464, 482-487
 - 10.2 Political Parties Lecture
 - 10.3 Unit 10 Discussion
 - 10.4 Unit 10 Quiz

Week 10: October 31st-November 6th

- 11. Congress
 - 11.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.5
 - 11.2 Congress Lecture

11.3 Unit 11 Discussion

11.4 Unit 11 Quiz

Week 11: November 7th-13th

12. The Presidency and Bureaucracy

12.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.6 + Ch. 7

12.2 The Presidency Lecture

12.3 Unit 12 Discussion

12.4 Unit 12 Quiz

Week 12: November 14th-20th

13. The Courts

13.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.8

13.2 The Courts Lecture

13.3 Unit 13 Discussion

13.4 Unit 13 Quiz

Week 13: November 21st-27th

Thanksgiving week!

Assignment: Relax (mandatory!)

Week 14: November 28th-December 4th

14. The Media

14.1 Reading: Kollman Ch.14

14.2 The Media Lecture

14.3 Unit 14 Discussion

14.4 Unit 14 Quiz

Final Paper Due 11:59pm December 1st to Canvas

EXAM 2: December 5th-8th