

PSCI 1101: Introduction to American Politics
Summer 2015, B Session
MTWThF 2:30-4:05 pm
MUEN E118

Professor: Nancy Billica, Ph.D.

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This course introduces the philosophical traditions, historical background, constitutional structure and contemporary functioning of American government. We will be critically examining the nature and quality of American democracy and evaluating the influence of these various factors on the development of public policy. An overarching goal of the course is to demonstrate the continuous interplay between the American people and the governmental institutions and practices that have evolved since the founding.

READINGS

There is one required textbook: Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser & Lynn Vavreck, *The Logic of American Politics*, 7th ed., CQ Press, 2015. (Earlier editions also acceptable.)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students will be assessed on the basis of assignments designed to promote concept mastery and individual inquiry and discussion, as follows:

- **Knowledge Assessments (30% total, or 10% for each of 3 tests):** Four in-class tests are scheduled, three of which will count towards the final score (skip one or drop the lowest score). Assessments will draw on both readings and class material and will consist of concept identification, definitions and multiple choice questions. There will be no make-up tests.
- **Short writing assignment (20%):** A research and analysis assignment will be due at the beginning of week 4 of the class (on Monday, July 27th). Description and assignment requirements will be posted on the Desire2Learn class page (<https://learn.colorado.edu>). The writing assignment must be submitted in class in hard copy format.
- **Final assignment (30%):** The final assignment, due in lieu of a final exam on the last day of class (Friday, Aug. 7th), will include a mix of factual questions, interpretation, analysis, and reflective writing. This final assignment will be distributed and discussed in class on Monday, July 27th.
- **Current events discussion preparation (10% total, or 2% for each of 5 prepared current event items):** American politics is happening every day! We will regularly discuss current events in class, with each student investigating and preparing a minimum of 5 current event items. Description of requirements are posted on the Desire2Learn class page. All prepared current events discussion items must be submitted via email before class on the due date for full credit.
- **Class participation (10%):** There will be plenty of opportunities to participate, both in full class and small group discussion. Most important, you have to be present in class to be participating. Attendance will be recorded daily.

CLASS POLICIES & EXPECTATIONS

- **Use of Technology in the Classroom:** Students are permitted to use computers and other electronic devices during class for note-taking and other class-related work only. Other uses can be very distracting, detrimental, and disrespectful to yourself, your instructor and your classmates. Those using technology during class for work not related to class will be asked to leave and may lose their privileges to use those devices through the remainder of the semester.
- **Students with Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (at least one week prior to an assignment due date or exam) explaining your required accommodations so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Injuries under Quick Links at Disability Services website (<http://disabilityservices.colorado.edu/>) and discuss your needs with me.
- **Religious Observances:** 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, please contact me in advance to explain your circumstances and to discuss any special scheduling needs. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html
- **Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. 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 differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. See policies: <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code
- **Discrimination & Harassment:** The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH and related policies and resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://hr.colorado.edu/dh/>
- **Honor Code:** All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>.
- **Plagiarism:** All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism.
- **Class Participation:** You have to be there – physically and mentally – to be participating. This is an important element of the course, both in grading and for the intellectual value of the class for all involved. Related to this, students are expected to refrain from activities such as web-surfing, emailing, texting and other competing forms of multi-tasking that distract both you and everyone around you.
- **Late Assignment Policy:** All assignments are due in hard copy format in class on the specified due date and are considered incomplete until received in hard copy format. Late papers may be submitted for reduced credit, as follows:

Same day, after class	- 25%
Next day or more after due date	- 50%

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CLASS SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

DATE	TOPIC & READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Tue 7 July	Course overview and introduction to American government Question: What do we expect from government?	
Wed 8 July	Principles of American government Question: How is democracy reflected in the American political system?	<u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kernell <i>et al.</i>, Chap 1 • <i>Declaration of Independence</i>
Thu 9 July	Principles of American government: Historic development of the U.S. Constitution Question: How has the concept of constitutionalism affected American political development?	<u>Due:</u> Current events item 1 <u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kernell <i>et al.</i>, Chap 2
Fri 10 July	U.S. Constitutional politics and design Question: Why this constitution? What is the underlying logic?	<u>Assessment 1:</u> Chaps 1-2; <i>Declaration of Independence</i>
Mon 13 July	U.S. Constitutional design: Separation of powers and checks & balances Question: What is the theory underlying this constitution?	<u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>U.S. Constitution</i> • <i>Federalist No. 10</i> • <i>Federalist No. 51</i>
Tue 14 July	U.S. Constitutional design: federalism Question: How are powers divided between states and the national government?	<u>Due:</u> Current events item 2 <u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kernell <i>et al.</i>, Chap 3 • Skim: CO <i>State Constitution</i> http://www.i2i.org/Publications/ColoradoConstitution/iscolocn.htm
Wed 15 July	U.S. Constitutional design: the Bill of Rights Questions: Basis for these rights and liberties? How do we distinguish between rights and liberties?	<u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Bill of Rights</i>
Thu 16 July	Civil liberties: personal rights Question: What protects us from government?	<u>Due:</u> Current events item 3 <u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kernell <i>et al.</i>, Chap 5
Fri 17 July	Civil liberties: procedural rights Question: What protects us from each other?	<u>Assessment 2:</u> Chap. 3 & 5; <i>U.S. Constitution</i> ; <i>Federalist</i> Nos. 10 & 51, <i>Bill of Rights</i>
Mon 20 July	Civil rights Question: What has influenced our evolving sense of rights?	<u>Read:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kernell <i>et al.</i>, Chap 4

Tue 21 July	Congress: lawmaking & representation Question: What is the role of Congress?	<u>Due</u> : Current events item 4 <u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 6
Wed 22 July	Congress: evaluating the contemporary institution Question: How representative is the institution? Who has influence?	
Thu 23 July	Congress & the President Question: Is the lawmaking system broken?	<u>Due</u> : Current events item 5 <u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 7
Fri 24 July	The Presidency Question: How much power does the president really have?	<u>Assessment 3</u> : Chaps 4, 6, 7
Mon 27 July	Public Policy Question: What drives policy agendas in the American political system?	<u>Due</u>: Short writing assignment Final writing assignment distributed
Tue 28 July	Bureaucracy Question: Who controls the bureaucracy?	<u>Due</u> : Current events item 6 <u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 8
Wed 29 July	The Federal Judiciary Question: How do the courts shape public policy?	<u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 9
Thu 30 July	The Public & American Politics Question: What role for citizens in influencing politics? Do citizen views really matter?	<u>Due</u> : Current events item 7 <u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 10
Fri 31 July	Voting, Campaigns and Elections Question: What structures American elections	<u>Assessment 4</u> : Chaps 8, 9, 10
Mon 3 Aug	Political Parties Question: How important are parties in this political system?	<u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chaps 11-12
Tue 4 Aug	Interest Groups & lobbying Question: Interest group influence – good or bad?	<u>Due</u> : Current events item 8 <u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 13
Wed 5 Aug	The News Media	<u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 14
Thu 6 Aug	American Politics in Review	<u>Due</u> : Current events item 9 <u>Read</u> : • Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 15
Fri 7 Aug		Final writing assignment due