

PSCI 1101: Introduction to American Politics

Fall 2020

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Class	Day	Time	Room	Instructor
Lecture	T/R	9:30-10:20	REMOTE	Dr. Sokhey
Section 01	W	11:30-12:20	LIBR E114	Ms. Mader
Section 02	F	4:10-5:00	REMOTE	Mr. Shapiro
Section 03	M	10:20-11:10	REC C250	Mr. Trimble
Section 04	M	11:30-12:20	REMOTE	Mr. Shapiro
Section 05	M	9:10-10:00	REMOTE	Ms. Register
Section 06	M	10:20-11:10	DUAN G1B20	Mr. Bradley
Section 07	T	8:00-8:50	REMOTE	Mr. Garrett
Section 08	TH	8:00-8:50	LIBR E114	Mr. Bradley
Section 09	T	11:10-12:00	MATH 100	Mr. Trimble
Section 10	M	12:40-1:30	LIBR E114	Mr. Nadarevic
Section 11	W	1:50-2:40	UMC 212	Ms. Mader
Section 12	M	1:50-2:40	LIBR E114	Mr. Nadarevic
Section 13	W	12:40-1:30	REMOTE	Mr. Garrett
Section 14	TH	8:00-8:50	REMOTE	Ms. Register

1 Course Description

In this introductory course, we will examine the basic components of American democracy, including institutions, political parties, and of course, everyday citizens. However, as we find ourselves in the midst of the 2020 presidential election, we will examine all of these things through the lens of electoral politics. Thinking about issues and developments as we approach Election Day (and observe its aftermath), we will relate what we see to theories of politics and enduring debates over the meaning of representation.

We will begin by looking at the history and foundations of American politics, before moving on to examine the various connections (or “linkages”) between citizens and government — this will force us to consider topics such as public opinion, the media, voting behavior/elections, and the roles played by political parties and organized interests. In the final third of the semester, we will turn our attention to governmental institutions, including Congress, the Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary; we will close by considering how these (and other) components of the American political system work to structure policy outcomes. Over the term, we will emphasize ideas of conflict, process, and the ubiquity of politics.

My objectives for this course are to help you understand:

1. the basic structure of American government.
2. how the Constitution affects the organization of government, its relationship across levels, and its relationship with citizens.
3. political behavior as it occurs at both the individual and mass levels, as well as in groups/organized interests, and through electoral politics.
4. the fundamental organization of the branches of government, and the roles that each play in policy-making processes.
5. how to apply course knowledge/skills as thoughtful (and potentially active) members of our democratic society.

Please note: Although we will follow an online format for much of the course (an unfortunate necessity given COVID-19), this is a rigorous class; it includes a number of readings that are advanced/difficult. Students should expect to spend roughly 8-10 hours per week on reading assignments (in addition to following lectures and attending recitation). Readings are to be completed ahead of the class meeting for which they are assigned.

1.1 A Comment on the Online Environment

While the substance and goals of this class remain unchanged from the conventional classroom, we will not meet in-person for the large lecture, and only some recitations will meet in-person. The main lectures will be delivered live via zoom during our regularly scheduled class time (links/information for how to join these lectures will be posted on the course website on Canvas); they will also be recorded for those who miss them (information on accessing these videos will be posted on Canvas). Online classes provide you with flexibility and some control over your learning/the pace of material, but also require that you hold yourself to the broader schedule and required deadlines. Deadlines are firm (see below for details)—assignment and exam links close at specific times. It will also be important that you take the online format seriously (both in terms of viewing and interacting with material/your colleagues), as it will not only enhance your learning experience, but aid in the experiences of your colleagues.

2 Course Policies

2.1 Classroom Behavior; Respectful Discourse

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 policies on classroom behavior¹ and the Student Code of Conduct.²

Over the semester we will tackle subjects that evoke passion and controversy — this will be especially true given the state of politics in the US, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the nature of the 2020 campaign. You may disagree with others, and you may feel uncomfortable when you are confronted with certain information, opinions, or arguments. Working through and respecting differences is an important part of both higher education and democratic process — please try to be respectful of others and civil in tone when you ask questions or make comments. If we have disruptive or inappropriate behavior in the zoom environment, we may remove students from the session and/or end the session abruptly.

¹<https://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-course-related-behavior>

²https://www.colorado.edu/sccr/sites/default/files/attached-files/2019-2020_student_code_of_conduct0.pdf

2.2 Requirements for COVID-19 — In-Person Recitations

The main lecture for this class will meet remotely, and our exams will take place over Canvas; some recitations will meet in-person as long as we are able to safely do so. As a matter of public health and safety due to the pandemic, all members of the CU Boulder community and all visitors to campus must follow university, department and building requirements, and public health orders in place to reduce the risk of spreading infectious disease. Required safety measures at CU Boulder relevant to the classroom setting include:

- maintain 6-foot distancing when possible,
- wear a face covering in public indoor spaces and outdoors while on campus consistent with state and county health orders,
- clean local work area,
- practice hand hygiene,
- follow public health orders, and
- if sick and you live off campus, do not come onto campus (unless instructed by a CU Healthcare professional), or if you live on-campus, please alert CU Boulder Medical Services.

Students who fail to adhere to these requirements will be asked to leave recitation, 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 policies on COVID-19 Health and Safety and classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct. If you require accommodation because a disability prevents you from fulfilling these safety measures, please see the “Accommodation for Disabilities” statement on this syllabus.

Before returning to campus, all students must complete the COVID-19 Student Health and Expectations Course. Before coming on to campus each day, all students are required to complete a Daily Health Form. Students who have tested positive for COVID-19, have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for or had symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home and complete the Health Questionnaire and Illness Reporting Form remotely. If you find yourself sick or quarantined, please contact me or your TA as soon as possible (email is fastest) if you will not be able to meet course requirements.

2.3 Special Accommodations/Disability

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to me or your TA 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.

Again, we are more than happy to work with you this fall to make sure your needs are addressed. However, in order to do so we must receive documentation from the university, and this documentation must be received by us at least one-week prior to a course event (e.g., exam) or deadline. If we receive documentation less than 1-week before a course event/deadline, we (will do our best but) cannot guarantee that we will be able to accommodate your needs.

2.4 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.³ Please notify us about potential conflicts in the first week of the term.

2.5 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. I am happy to call you by the name/pronoun/title you prefer—please feel free to communicate with me on such issues.

2.6 Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering an inclusive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (harassment, exploitation, and assault), intimate partner violence (dating or domestic violence), stalking, or protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, anonymous reporting,⁴ and the campus resources can be found on the OIEC website.⁵

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, dating and domestic violence, stalking, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

2.7 Honor Code (Academic Honesty)

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: 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 the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from me. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the Honor Code Office website. <https://www.colorado.edu/scsr/honor-code> If you violate the honor code, you will receive a “zero” on the assignment/portion of the course grade in question. Any written work for this course may be “run” through plagiarism detection software.

2.8 Contacting Me; Contacting the TAs

I am excited to be working with you this semester. If you have questions, please send an email to me and I will reply as soon as possible (usually in well-under 24 hours; if you do not hear back in 24 hrs., please email again). If your question requires a lengthy explanation/discussion, we can try to find a time to meet over the phone/via video conferencing. Information on how to communicate with me on zoom (for office hours, etc.) will be posted on Canvas. Whenever you contact me (or the TAs), it is important to be professional,

³*Please see full details at : <https://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-absences-classes-or-exams>*

⁴*<https://cuboulder.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV0PnqVK4kkIJIZnf>*

⁵*<https://www.colorado.edu/oiec/>*

meaning that written communication must adhere to the following (if an email or note does not meet these criteria, you may not receive a response):

1. Please give your email a subject title that relates it to the class
2. Please address me/a TA respectfully.
3. Please clearly identify yourself.
4. Please take care to edit your writing for clarity, and include information that helps me to respond to your question (i.e., take the time to explain your question, give sufficient detail, etc.)

2.9 Grading Policies and Standards

We will return graded material as promptly as possible. While we try to be very careful in grading, I am aware that sometimes mistakes happen. If you receive an exam or paper back and believe that a mistake has been made, I will be happy to talk to you about it. Under many circumstances, I will re-grade an entire paper or exam — note that this means that your grade may go up, go down, or remain the same.

2.10 Recordings of Lectures/Classes

I will be recording and posting the zoom lectures and lecture slides for the course (along with other materials as the semester progresses). We'll provide information on where to find these recordings via email and canvas communication.

These—and any other lecture/course materials posted—are provided to assist students enrolled in the course; they are the intellectual property of the instructor and university (and the authors of the materials being used/discussed). The course lectures and materials posted are not to be altered or edited, and are not to be shared. Please do not make (or share) your own recordings of the lectures/classes either (this includes taking screen shots during class, as you may be taking pictures of classmates without their permission).

3 Course Requirements and Evaluation

3.1 Required Texts

I have ordered the following texts through CU's bookstore (though feel free to purchase them from the merchant of your choice). Used copies and e-versions should be available for both texts (just be sure to get the right editions):

1. Bianco, William T. and David T. Canon. 2019. *American Politics Today*, 6th essentials ed. Norton. ISBN 978-0393679946 (“APT”)
2. Kernell, Samuel and Steven Smith, eds. 2019. *Principles and Practice of American Politics, Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 7th edition. Sage-CQ Press. ISBN: 978-1506390475 (“PNP”)

As part of course preparation, I expect you to follow current events/U.S. political news during the semester. Other readings/materials may be made available through the course website on *Canvas*. Note: I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus based on the pace and performance of the class. Please familiarize yourself with *Canvas*, and check it regularly for updates and announcements. I will also communicate with the class via email (as will your TAs), and students are expected to check their CU email on a daily basis.

3.2 Grading and Grade Components

The system used to assign final course grades will be:

- A+: 98-100
- A : 94-97
- A-: 90-93
- B+: 87-89
- B : 84-86
- B-: 80-83
- C+: 77-79
- C : 74-76
- C-: 70-73
- D : 60-69
- F : 59 and below

Final grades will be calculated based upon the following, and you must complete *all portions* of the course to receive a passing grade. I reserve the right to round grades up based on effort and improvement, but grades are not automatically rounded up/this is done at my discretion. (Note: Extra credit opportunities *may* arise—stay tuned.)

1. **Exams:** First “midterm” (15%) + Second “midterm” (20%) + Final (20%): **55%**

There will be three exams, and each will be focused on the course material covered in assigned readings, lectures and class discussions. The exams are *non-cumulative*, and will consist of multiple choice and short answer items. I will remind everyone of what material will be covered on each exam several days beforehand. *The exams will be open book, open note, and open resource, but you are to complete the exams on your own—there is to be absolutely no communication with or assistance from others while taking the exams (whether this were to take place in-person, through cell phones/text messages, or online communications via apps, messages, websites, shared documents, etc.).*

Important: Exams will take place via Canvas at the date/time listed on the syllabus. Once you start an exam, you will have exactly 1 hour to complete it. After 1 hour the computer will automatically end your exam and submit the answers to us. Once you have begun an exam you will not be able to close and re-open it. Exams must be completed in the window to which they have been assigned—after that point you will be logged out and your answers submitted. (Late exams will not be accepted.) If you have accommodations that permit you to have more time on exams, we will gladly make adjustments in Canvas upon receiving your documentation. Make-up exams will administered at my/the TAs discretion, and will follow an essay format.

A word of advice: Prepare for exams as you would for any regular, in-person, non-open book/note test. You only have one hour to complete exams, and thus not enough time to look up all material “on the fly.”

2. **Recitation Grade:** 10% Participation + 15% Reading Reactions: **25%**

One-third of your class time will be spent in a weekly recitation section. Recitations will cover readings that are complementary to — but distinct from — lectures. You are expected to attend and be active participants in your section (whether this happens via zoom or in-person), and to read the material assigned for each week’s meeting ahead of time (please see the course schedule). Accordingly, **participation** in your recitation counts for 10% of your final course grade (please see your TA’s syllabus for details).

The other portion of your recitation grade will come from **reading reactions** that will be turned into your TA through canvas (6 reactions at 2.5% each, for a total of 15% of your final course grade).

Each week of the course—beginning with week three—we will circulate a couple of prompts about the recitation readings for that week. You are to write a 2-3 page “reaction” memo for 6 different weeks of readings (it is your choice as to which six weeks). A reaction memo for a particular week will consist of a ~1-page summary of the readings for that week (following a format provided to you by your TA; these may vary a bit based on your TA’s preferences), and ~1-2 page (typed, 12 pt. font, double-spaced) answer to one of that week’s prompts. The prompts for a given week will be posted on canvas by the Sunday evening prior to the start of that week, and are due, submitted through canvas, by 11:59 pm Friday of that week. The TAs will not be discussing the specific prompts for a given week directly in recitation; you must go beyond simply “listening in on recitation” to come up with your answer for a given week’s readings. That is, in answering a prompt, you will be required to give specific supporting evidence and examples from the readings to demonstrate that you have read and thought about the material. Please communicate with your TA for additional details.

There will be more discussion/open dialogue in recitation sections than we can (possibly) have in the large lecture (especially via zoom). Accordingly, I ask you to please treat your instructor and colleagues with respect when asking questions, making comments, and otherwise participating in recitation activities.

3. **Research Paper:** Paper (15%) + Benchmark Assignment (5%): **20%**

You will be required to write a 4-5 page paper on the 2020 elections. The paper will be due the week of **November 16th** (the precise due-date within this week will be announced in October). A “benchmark” assignment designed to help you complete this assignment (worth 5% of your final course grade) will be due prior to this in late October/early November. Details/detailed directions on the benchmark assignment (including its due date) and paper will be provided by early October. Late papers and benchmark assignments will be accepted at the discretion of the instructor/TAs.

4 Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

4.1 Foundations: American Government — History and Framework

Learning Objectives

- We will discuss the difference between “politics” and “political science.”
- We will discuss the fundamental characteristics of American democracy.
- We will consider the ways in which the Constitution affects government’s organization, the relationship between state and national governments, and the relationship between these governments and citizens.
- We will learn about the fundamental political principles underlying the U.S. Constitution.

Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 1: 8/24-8/28. The American Political System — Politics and Political Science

Tuesday 8/25: Introduction to the class, syllabus.

Thursday 8/27: Read the Preface of *American Politics Today* (APT hereafter)

Recitation: Introduction to the class

Week 2: 8/31-9/4. Understanding American Politics

Tuesday 9/1: Read Chapter 1, APT

Thursday 9/3: Chapter 1, APT (continued)

Recitation: Read Chapter 1 in *Principles and Practice of American Politics* (A chapter in *Principles* means all pieces within, not just the first selection (PNP hereafter))

Week 3: 9/7-9/11. The U.S. Constitution and the Founding

Tuesday 9/8: Read Chapter 2, APT

Thursday 9/10: **note—lecture will be pre-recorded/not live this day due to the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.** Read the *Declaration of Independence*, *Articles of Confederation*, *The Constitution & Amendments*, and *The Federalist Papers* — pieces are located in the appendix of APT

Recitation: Chapter 2, PNP

Note: Campus is closed on 9/7 for Labor Day — Monday recitations will not meet

Week 4: 9/14-9/18. Federalism

Tuesday 9/15: Read Chapter 3, APT

Thursday 9/17: Chapter 3, APT (continued)

Recitation: Read Chapter 3, PNP

Week 5: 9/21-9/25. Civil Liberties

Tuesday 9/22: Read Chapter 4, APT

Thursday 9/24: Chapter 4, APT (continued)

Recitation: Read Chapter 5, PNP

Week 6: 9/28-10/2. “Midterm” Exam 1

Tuesday 9/29: Catch-Up/Review

Thursday 10/1: Midterm Administered in class

Recitation: No new readings — catch-up and review

4.2 (Mass) Politics: Citizens and “Linkages” to Government

Learning Objectives

- We will learn about the ways in which citizens participate in public affairs.
- We will learn about how cultural, economic, and social factors influence participation and preferences.
- We will think about how parties and interest groups connect citizens and government.

Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 7: 10/5-10/9. Public Opinion & the Media

Tuesday 10/6: Read Chapter 6, APT

Thursday 10/8: Chapter 6, APT (cont.)

Recitation: Read Chapters 10;14 PNP

Week 8: 10/12-10/16. Political Parties & Elections

Tuesday 10/13: Read Chapter 7, APT

Thursday 10/15: Read Chapter 8, APT

Recitation: Read Chapter 11 PNP

Week 9: 10/19-10/23. Elections & Interest Groups

Tuesday 10/20: Chapter 8, APT (continued)

Thursday 10/22: Read Chapter 9, APT

Recitation: Read Chapter 13, PNP

Week 10: 10/26-10/30. “Midterm” Exam 2

Tuesday 10/27: Catch-up and Review

Thursday 10/29: Midterm Administered in Class

Recitation: No new readings — catch-up and review

4.3 (American Governing) Institutions

Learning Objectives

- We will consider how the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government are organized and what responsibilities they have.
- We will look at the roles the branches play in policy-making processes.
- We will consider the ways in which the branches of government interact with/represent the general public.

Topics and Reading Assignments

Week 11: 11/2-11/6. Congress

Tuesday 11/3: Read Chapter 10, APT

Thursday 11/5: Chapter 10, APT (continued)

Recitation: Read Chapter 6, PNP

Week 12: 11/9-11/13. Presidency & Bureaucracy

Tuesday 11/10: Read Chapter 11, APT

Thursday 11/12: Read Chapter 12, APT

Recitation: Read Chapters 7-8, PNP

Week 13: 11/16-11/20. The Courts & Civil Rights

Tuesday 11/17: Read Chapter 13, APT

Thursday 11/19: Read Chapter 5, APT — **Research Paper due this week**

Recitation: Read Chapter 4;9, PNP

Week 14: 11/23-11/27. Fall Break; Transition to all-online recitations

Tuesday 11/24: Catch-Up

Note: Shortened Fall Break—No Classes Thursday and Friday

Week 15: 11/30-12/4. Domestic Policy

Tuesday 12/1: Read Chapter 14, APT

Thursday 12/3: Course Review and Conclusions

Recitation: Course Review and Conclusions

Week 16: 12/7-12/11. The American Political System — Course Conclusion

Monday 12/7: Last Day of Classes

Tuesday 12/8: Reading day (No Class)

Recitation: only Monday recitations will meet (review)

Final Exam December 13, 7:30-10:00 p.m.

Note: I reserve the right to modify the syllabus and schedule.