

**PSCI 1101: Introduction to American Politics (Honors)**

**Instructor: Dr. Janet Donovan**

**MWF 2-2:50 LIBR M498**

**Office hours Monday 11:30-1:30, Ketchum 219**

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**TA: Owen Fite**

**Office hours Tuesday 10am-noon, Ketchum 234**

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**Course Description:** This course introduces the U.S. system of government and politics. We will emphasize interrelations among levels and branches of government, formal and informal institutions, processes, and political behavior. This semester, we will also focus on how each individual can affect the political process, and the importance of information and media literacy in a representative democracy. Each student will choose a political issue to follow throughout the semester for a semester project, learning how the U.S. political system addresses the issue in government, elections, extra-governmental institutions and media. This course meets MAPS requirement for social science: general or U.S. history and is approved for the old arts and sciences core curriculum: contemporary societies or United States context. Please see your advisor for additional information on how this course fulfills graduation requirements.

**Course Objectives:**

1. Foster an understanding of the U.S. political system enabling students to operate as fully participating citizens and providing foundation for additional political science coursework.
2. Learn about the changes in the U.S. political system over time.
3. Evaluate the current status of the U.S. political system and identify areas for improvement.
4. Examine the importance of information and information literacy in the functioning of a representative democracy
5. Provide an opportunity for students to gain an in-depth understanding of an issue of individual importance through the semester project.
6. Improve writing, researching and critical thinking skills through the semester project.

**Grade Basis:**

Exams:

Midterm 1	15 points
Midterm 2	15 points
Final	15 points

Semester Project:

Project Assignments	12 points
Paper	15 points
Attend & Participate	15 points
Activities & Discussions	13 points

**Grading Scale:**

98-100	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
73-77	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
< 59	F

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Total: 100 points

**Required Texts:**

Bianco, William T and David T Canon. 2016. *American Politics Today*, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Norton. ISBN 978-0393283594

Canon, David T, et al. 2017. *The Enduring Debate*, 8th edition. Norton. ISBN 978-0-393-28365-5

*Follow U.S. political news daily*

*Additional readings as assigned, to be made available through Desire2Learn*

**What to Expect:** The good news and the bad news is that this is a rigorous course. As a 3 credit hour course, students should expect to spend 6-9 hours per week reading the course text, taking notes, completing assignments and studying, in addition to the class meeting, for a total of 9-12 hours per week commitment to the course. As an honors course, there is an expectation that students will engage more deeply with the material than in a standard course. The class follows a set schedule, which is outlined in the course schedule. All graded work must be completed on schedule. Please note the three exams and the semester paper are all required to receive a passing grade in the course.

**Requirements:**

**Exams:** There are 3 exams in this class, 2 midterms and a final. The dates for these exams can be found in the course schedule. The exams will include a combination of term identification questions and essay questions. The midterms will be conducted in class, and the final exam will be in the regular classroom during the assigned final exam slot. Make-up exams are permitted only in cases of documented medical or family emergency, or participation in a university sanctioned activity. Prof. Donovan must be informed in advance, if physically possible of such an emergency. All make-ups are at Prof. Donovan's discretion and will be in a different format than the original exam. Each exam is valued at 15 points each. Students must take all 3 exams to receive a passing grade in the course. More information will be provided near exam time.

**Project Assignments:** Each student will choose a political issue of interest to follow throughout the semester. Students will complete 3 project assignments. The purpose of the assignments is to assist students in learning about their chosen issue. Project assignments must be turned in by the designated dates. Late assignments will receive a substantial grade reduction, and assignments more than 1 week late will not be accepted. The assignments are designed to prepare students for the project paper. If completed properly, students should not need to do any additional research beyond the project assignments to gather information for the project paper. Each assignment is worth 4 points, for a total of 12 points of the final grade. More information on choosing a topic will be provided with the first project assignment.

**Project Paper:** Each student will choose a political issue of to follow throughout the semester, turning in 3 project assignments, and use the research from the project assignments to complete the paper. The project paper is due on the designated date. Papers should be 6-8 pages typed, double-spaced, with 1 inch margins, in a 10-12 point standard font. Paper length does not include titles or title pages, bibliography, graphs, pictures, or other non-text materials. Deviations from this length will receive a deduction. The paper is worth 15 points of the final grade and is required to receive a passing grade in

the course. Extensions are given only in cases of documented medical or family emergency and are at the instructor's discretion. Late papers will receive a 1 point deduction per day. More information on the project paper will be provided later in the semester.

**Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation are valued at 15 points, or 15% of the final grade. This is approximately 1 point per week. Students may miss 3 class periods without excuse or penalty, after that, 1/3 of a point will be deducted per day. Excused absences require documented medical or family emergency. Doctor appointments, weddings, undocumented illnesses, etc. are not excused absences. Any absence that is excused is at the instructor's discretion. Please see the disability and accommodation policy below for additional information. Students are expected to participate. Participation is credited at the instructor's discretion, but in general, students should participate meaningfully 2-3 times per week to get full credit for participation over the semester. A student who has perfect attendance, but does not participate, can expect a B grade for attendance and participation.

**Activities:** We will engage in several activities over the course of the semester. These activities may be in class, online, or a combination of the two. Some of these activities are pre-scheduled and are available in the course schedule. The instructor may schedule additional activities, and students will be notified in advance when this is the case. There is no make-up for activities that are missed or not completed on time. Activities will be valued at 13 points total for the semester. Details and point values for individual activities will be provided later in the semester.

#### **Course Policies:**

**Course communications:** Email is the official mode of communication for the University of Colorado at Boulder. Students are required to regularly check their @colorado.edu email (at least every 48 hours) for updates regarding the course. Students are responsible for receiving any messages sent by the instructor to the class email list, or individually to the student. In addition, students are responsible for checking the Canvas site for the course regularly.

**Contacting the Instructor:** Please feel free to contact me with questions about the course. The best ways to reach me are to come by office hours, or to email. You may also call my office phone, but that is a less efficient means of reaching me. I always answer email within 48 hours, so if you do not receive a reply, that means I did not get your email and you should try to contact me again. When addressing me, please address me in person or in email as Dr. Donovan, Professor Donovan or Janet.

**Course Etiquette:** Students are expected to come to class on time and stay the entire time. If it is necessary to come late or leave early, please let me know in advance. If your schedule does not permit you to be on time and in class on a regular basis, please take another course. Students are expected to be respectful of each other and of the instructor; lively debate is encouraged, but personal attacks are prohibited. These guidelines should be obvious, and they will help to make the course a more enjoyable experience for all. For more information on University requirements regarding classroom behavior please see <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code).

**Electronic Devices:** Electronic devices, including computers and mobile phones, are prohibited in class on regular class days. The use of these devices causes serious disruption in class and affects the learning

of all students. Computers, phones and other devices must be turned off and put away during class (off means off, not on mute or vibrate mode). Students may appeal this policy on an individual basis by coming to office hours and providing sufficient reason why an exception to the policy is necessary. Exceptions to this policy are at the instructor's discretion. Students may be asked to bring electronic devices to class for in-class activities but doing so will always be optional.

## SYLLABUS STATEMENTS

### 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](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

### 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 race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

### 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 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](mailto:honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional

information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

## SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND/OR RELATED RETALIATION

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct intimate partner abuse (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, 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](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

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

## 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, students must notify the instructor within the first two weeks of class if a religious observance requires missing a scheduled exam, due date, or activity. To receive an excused absence, please notify the instructor at least one week in advance.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

An accessible, online link to the university policies is available here:

<https://www.colorado.edu/academicaffairs/policies-customs-guidelines/required-syllabus-statements>

### **Reading Schedule:**

Note: Readings are to be completed BEFORE the class for which they are assigned

#### Week 1: Introduction: Introduction to American Politics and Government

Mon. August 26: Introduction to the class, syllabus

Wed. August 28: Group activity: Read chapter 1 in *American Politics Today*

Fri. August 30: Group activity. Read *Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, The Constitution and Amendments*, and *The Federalist Papers* in the Appendix of *American Politics Today*

#### Week 2: The Constitution, Political Culture and the Founding

Mon. September 2: NO CLASS, LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

Weds. September 4: Read chapter 1 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fri. September 6: Read chapter 2 in *American Politics Today*

Week 3: The Founding, Federalism & Civil Liberties

Mon. September 9: Read chapter 2 in *The Enduring Debate*

Weds. September 11: Read chapter 3 in *American Politics Today* and chapter 3 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fri. September 13: Semester Project Group Activity

Week 4: Civil Liberties & Civil Rights

Mon. September 16: Semester Project Group Activity

Wed. September 18: Read Chapter 4 in *American Politics Today*

Fri. September 20: Read Chapter 5 in *American Politics Today*

*Project Assignment 1 due on Canvas by 8pm*

Week 5: Civil Rights & Liberties, Midterm 1 Exam

Mon. September 23: Read Chapter 4 in *The Enduring Debate*

Wed. September 25: Catch up and Review, Semester Project Activity

Fri. September 27: Midterm 1 in class

Week 6: Public Opinion & The Media

Mon. September 30: Read chapter 6 in *American Politics Today*

Weds. October 2: Read chapter 9 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fri. October 4: Read chapter 7 in *American Politics Today*

Week 7: The Media, Political Parties & Elections

Mon. October 7: Read chapter 8 in *American Politics Today*

Weds. October 9: Read chapter 11 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fri. October 11: Read chapter 9 in *American Politics Today*

Week 8: Media, Information Literacy & Elections

Mon. October 14: Media & Political Information Literacy Activity, Readings TBA

Weds. October 16: Read chapter 10 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fri. October 18: Read chapter 10 in *American Politics Today*

Week 9: Interest Groups & Congress

Mon. October 21: Semester Project Activity

Weds. October 23: Read Chapter 12 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fri. October 25: Read chapter 11 in *American Politics Today*

*Project Assignment 2 due on Canvas by 8pm*

Week 10

Mon. October 28: Read chapter 5 in *The Enduring Debate*

Weds. October 30: Catch up and review

Fri. November 1: Midterm 2 in class

Week 11: Presidency

Mon. November 4: Semester Project Activity

Weds. November 6: Read chapter 12 in *American Politics Today*

Fri. November 8: Read chapter 6 in *The Enduring Debate*

Week 12: Presidency & Bureaucracy

Mon. November 11: Read chapter 13 in *American Politics Today*

Weds. November 13: Read chapter 7 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fri. November 15: The Executive Branch, readings TBA

*Project Assignment 3 due on Canvas by 8pm*

Week 13: The Courts

Mon. November 18: Semester Project Activity

Weds. November 20: Read chapter 14 in *American Politics Today*

Fri. November 22: Read chapter 8 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fall break and Thanksgiving, no class November 25-November 29

Week 14: Economic & Social Policy

Mon. December 2: Read chapter 15 in *American Politics Today*

*Semester Project Paper due on Canvas by 8pm*

Weds. December 4: Read chapter 13 in *The Enduring Debate*

Fri. December 6: Read Chapter 16 in *American Politics Today*

Week 15: Foreign Policy and The Future of the American Political System

Mon. December 9: Read Chapter 17 in *American Politics Today*

Weds. December 11: What is the Future of the American Political System?

Fri. December 13: No class, Reading Day

**Final Exam Sunday, Monday December 16, 1:30-3:00  
(please note we will not use the entire final exam slot)**