

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM
PSCI 1101-100
Autumn 2017
Math 100, T/R 9:30-10:20

Professor: John Griffin Office: Ketchum 114D
John.Griffin@colorado.edu Phone: 303-492-3135
Office Hours: T/R 10:30-12, and by appointment

This course is designed to help you gain the knowledge and skills necessary to understand and participate in American politics. You will learn many of the basic features that characterize American politics. More importantly, these basic facts have far reaching implications. They present problems, they animate discussions, they start arguments, and they stimulate research. These issues remain live. To understand the issues, you must understand the basic information. However, far more than simply memorizing basic facts, this course is designed to enable you to enter the dynamic and open-ended debate in pursuit of truth.

Student Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course you will be able to:

- Explain why we have a government
- Summarize the historical origins of the American political system
- Describe the major elements of the American political system
- Explain the consequences of the ways the system works
- Describe current events in American politics
- Identify the main positions citizens hold on important political issues
- Evaluate the arguments supporting positions on important political issues
- Specify our democratic responsibilities in the context of a diverse public

Readings

Required: GOVT9 (or a prior edition), by Sidlow (paperback or ebook); and readings on D2L
Recommended: *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* or other major national news source.

Unless otherwise noted, readings not in GOVT will be available on D2L. Page numbers refer to the numbers on the page itself, not the page of a pdf document. I may also make announcements about the course via your Colorado.edu email accounts, so please check them.

Throughout the semester, we will relate the course's concepts and controversies to current events. Therefore, you are required to stay abreast of those events. If you do not subscribe to a

newspaper, there are several good free online news sources (e.g., www.nytimes.com provides 25 free articles a month or www.washingtonpost.com provides free access to all content).

Grading

Exams

Your grade first will be determined by three exams worth 100 points each and a non-cumulative final exam, also worth 100 points (400 points total). The format of the tests will be multiple choice and identification questions.

In general, we do not change grades. If we have added your scores incorrectly, we'll thank you for noticing and change the grade. Your TA and I will also be happy to discuss with you how you can improve in the class. Please do not ask us questions about exams until 24 hours after they are handed back. All information assigned can appear on the exam, even if we do not discuss it in class. If you believe your work deserves a higher score, you are free to make the argument to us in writing. Your argument must summarize what your test said, what the ideal test would have said at the point in question, and explain why your test should earn a higher grade. The document must be submitted within 7 days from the time we delivered the exam back to you.

Except for a documented emergency, you must take the exams when they are scheduled. There are simply too many students to reschedule exams. If you know that you will not be able to attend one of the exams because of university business (e.g., a sporting event, a debate), you should speak to your TA early in the semester. If you have an emergency on the day of the exam, you will need documentation to prove that your absence was beyond your control. Makeup exams will be administered the week following the exam, usually at 8 AM to avoid class and room conflicts.

Paper Assignment

There will be one short paper assignment (5 page limit). Details of the assignment will be provided early in the course, but suffice to say that the general topic will be largely of your own choosing, and some modest independent research will be expected. The paper will be worth 100 points, or 1/6th of your overall grade. The paper deadline is November 16 at 9:30 a.m., at which time a hard copy should be brought to Math 100 (and/or sent via email to your TA if so requested by him/her).

Participation

You can also earn up to 150 points for class participation – 50 points for attending lectures and 50 and 100 points for attending *and contributing* to your recitation section. Attendance at lectures will be recorded using iClickers, so you should bring your iClicker to *every* lecture. I will also use iClicker to poll the class on retention of information as well as your own political opinions and participation. To earn full credit for recitation attendance you should participate

regularly by asking pertinent questions and offering up answers to your Instructor when invited to do so.

Final Grade Scale

Final grades will be determined as follows:

94-100 = A 90-93.9 = A-
87-89.9 = B+ 84-86.9 = B 80-83.9 = B-
77-79.9 = C+ 74-76.9 = C 70-73.9 = C-
67-69.9 = D+ 64-66.9 = D 60-63.9 = D-
Below 60 = F

Class Policies/Procedures

The Classroom Environment

Tardiness and early departures detract from the learning environment. Therefore, I ask that students arrive on time and remain in class for the duration of the period. Within reason, it is permitted to bring coffee, water, and light snacks to class.

Use of Technology

Research shows that the efficiency advantages of taking notes directly to your computer are outweighed by the distractions to yourself and other students that laptops present. For example, see Fried, 2006, "In-Class Laptop Use and its Effects on Student Learning." *Computers and Education* 50: 906-14. Therefore, I do not permit students to use laptops in class. As well, all cell phones should be turned off to reduce interruptions, such as ringtones and text messaging.

Online Course Evaluations

Every student should complete an evaluation during the evaluation period near the end of the semester. I ask that you provide feedback so that I can improve the course and my teaching in general.

University Policies

Disability

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Center for Community N200, and <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>. If you have a temporary

medical condition or injury, see guidelines at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html>.

Religious Obligations

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please bring any such conflicts to my attention at the earliest possible time.

Conduct

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 nationality. See University policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html>.

The University of Colorado at Boulder Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Procedures, the University of Colorado Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures, and the University of Colorado Conflict of Interest in Cases of Amorous Relationships Policy apply to all students, faculty, and staff. Any student, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of sexual harassment or discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status 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, the above-referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

As a courtesy to the class, please turn off all electronic devices prior to class. Laptops are not permitted. Please do not eat in class. In addition, please respect your fellow classmates by avoiding disruptive activity including arriving late or leaving early.

Academic Integrity

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, aid of academic 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://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>.

Inquiries and Assistance

Your first resource for questions is the Teaching Assistant leading your recitation. Their contact information will be shared with you the first day your recitation is held. The TAs will be sure to bring to the attention of the Professor questions for which they are uncertain of the answer or that are of a serious nature. Another resource at your disposal is the Head TA, Matt Yarborough – maya5022@colorado.edu. Finally, you should be aware of campus resources such as the CU Boulder Writing Center - <http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter> and academic support services - <http://www.colorado.edu/orientation/tutoring-academic-support-services>.

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

8/29 Introduction

8/31 Why Have a Government at all?

9/5 American Political Culture

GOVT, ch. 1

9/7 The Founding and Constitutional Design

GOVT, ch. 2

Declaration of Independence (Appendix A in GOVT)

9/12 Voting for a Constitution

Federalist 51

Antifederalist 17

9/14 Marijuana, Prostitution, and Speeding – the Politics of Federalism

GOVT, ch. 3

9/19 Civil Liberties

GOVT, ch. 4

Liptak, “U.S. is Alone in Rejecting All Evidence if Police Err” (*NY Times*)

9/21 Exam 1

9/26 Public Opinion and the Perils of Polling

GOVT, ch. 8, pp. 171-80

9/28 Who Participates in Politics and Why it Matters

GOVT, ch. 8, pp. 181-191

10/3 Campaigns and Elections I

GOVT, ch. 9

10/5 Campaigns and Elections II

10/10 Exam 2

10/12 What Shapes the News?

GOVT, ch. 10

10/17 The Media's Influence on Politics

10/19 Why Do We Have (Two) Political Parties?

GOVT, ch. 7

10/24 Partisan Loyalties

10/26 Interest Groups, Political Parties, and Accountability

GOVT, ch. 6

10/31 Do Interest Groups Buy Influence?

Rauch, "The Hyperpluralism Trap"
Dunham, et al., "Shakedown on K Street"

11/2 Exam 3

11/7 Congress

GOVT, ch. 11

11/9 Why Do We Hate Congress (but not our Congressperson)?

11/14 Presidency I: Why Presidents Fail

GOVT, ch. 12

11/16 Presidency II

Paper Due either in class or via email to TA, as requested by TA

11/21 Fall Break

11/23 Thanksgiving Holiday

11/28 Why is the DMV so Bad?

GOVT, ch. 13

11/30 The Judiciary

GOVT, ch. 14

12/5 Judicial Selection and Judicial Decision Making

Liptak, "Rendering Justice, With One Eye on Re-election" (*NY Times*)

12/7 Public Opinion and Public Policy

GOVT, ch. 15

12/12 Flex Day

12/14 Study Day

12/16 Final Exam - 1:30-4:00 p.m., in Math 100