

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS
POLITICAL SCIENCE 1101
SPRING 2018**

Instructor:

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Course Times:

Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30-10:20, Muenzinger E050.

Office:

128 Ketchum

Office Hours:

4:00-5:00, Tuesday and Thursday, or by appointment

Overview:

In this course, we introduce students to the study of American politics and the American political system. We learn about different and important actors (such as Congress and the bureaucracy) as well as features (such as federalism) of the American political system, and we strive for a rational-institutionalist explanation of why actors and institutions behave in the ways that they do and why outcomes occur according to certain patterns. Lectures are organized in manner where we use political science theory to explain current events: therefore, students are expected to keep informed about current political developments. Moreover, students are expected to participate actively in the units that we cover throughout the course.

At the end of the course, students should not only possess a solid grasp of the key actors and institutions of the American political system, but they should also be able to use social science theory to explain outcomes in the American political system. The analytical and theoretical skills gained in the course will serve students well regardless of whether they take more specialized political science courses or not. Hopefully, students will also gain the motivation to take part in their own government.

In this course, we often deal with issues that are controversial. I expect that students respect one another for their divergent viewpoints and will not tolerate any disrespect shown by students toward one another. All questions and comments should likewise be treated with respect.

Updates to the syllabus, lecture slides, and grades will be posted on the course website on Canvas.

Readings:

There is one book available for purchase at the CU Bookstore. I have no preference with respect to whether you use the print copy or the electronic copy.

Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2018. 8th Edition. CQ Press.

Course Requirements:

- **Readings:** it is imperative that you do the readings, digest them, and understand them. The concepts in the readings are quite complex and a good way to read is to aim for comprehension and then write down the major points of the reading and then try to explain those points to a friend or colleague. We (your T.A. and I) are happy to answer any questions you have about the readings, and I encourage you to email your T.A. or myself or visit our office hours to address any issues with respect to the readings.
- **Lecture/Recitation:** the course contains both lecture and recitation, and **attendance at both is required**. In lecture, I present main themes and some analysis while in recitation, your T.A. will go more in-depth (and in a more interactive manner) about topics presented in lecture and in the textbook. Attending lecture and recitation is not a substitute for reading the material, and your recitation section will have a separate syllabus. In lecture, we use clickers to gauge student participation. Therefore, please bring your clicker to lecture.
- **Classroom Expectations:** Cell phones and laptops distract from the learning environment of the classroom. Therefore, I ask that all cell phones are turned on silent and that students do not take their laptops out in class.

Grades:

Grades consist of the following components: three exams, unannounced quizzes in your recitation section, a 5-page paper assignment, and a grade based on lecture attendance and clicker participation. You must complete all of the exams and the paper to receive a passing grade in the course.

- **Exams:** these cover lecture and readings, are non-cumulative, and consist of multiple choice, true/false, and fill in the blank questions. There is no review sheet for exams, but your T.A.s hold review sessions prior to each exam. **If you must miss one of the two midterms, makeup exams are entirely essay-based and will only be offered in the last 50 minutes of your scheduled time for the final exam. Additionally, the final time is dictated by the university and cannot be changed. ALL excuses (such as scheduling a**

flight before the final) for missing the final barring personal sickness, family emergency, or a religious holiday will not be accepted.

- **Recitation:** Your recitation grade consists of your participation in recitation as well as your performance on quizzes/assignments given in recitation. Quizzes/assignments are given in your recitation to gauge your knowledge of that week's readings.
- **Research Paper:** Students must write a 5-page research paper. More details on the paper will be given in a few weeks, and the paper is due April 12, 2018.
- **Clicker Questions:** I ask questions to gauge your participation in lecture and each answer translates into one point, and these points are used to calculate your lecture grade. Students missing clicker questions due to arriving late or leaving early will not be able to make up those points.
- **Grade Distribution:**
 - **First Midterm:** 15%
 - **Second Midterm:** 15%
 - **Final:** 20%
 - **Recitation:** 20%
 - **Clicker Questions:** 5%
 - **Research Paper:** 20%
- **Regrade Policy:** Your T.A. is happy to regrade an exam or paper, but any request must be made in writing within a week of receiving the grade. Be aware that the grade may go up, go down, or stay the same. If you are still unhappy with your grade, you must submit an appeal to me within a week of receiving the T.A.'s regrade, and my decision is final.
- **Grading Scale:** The grading scale is as follows. We do **not round up** with respect to grades.
 - 93-100: 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
 - Less than 60: F

University Policies:

- Students are urged to consult University policy regarding plagiarism. Any and all instances of plagiarism will be dealt with seriously. Information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html>.
- Students are also urged to contact me and their T.A. with respect to disability accommodation. Information can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>.
- Additionally, student illness, family medical emergency, death in the family, and religious holiday observance count as excused absences from lecture and recitation. Absences will be excused in these cases with proof of the reason. Please communicate with your T.A. or myself if one of these issues arises.
- Finally, we follow the University's Discrimination and Harassment Policy, which can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>.

Course Outline:

The course is organized into weeks. All readings should be finished before the class on which they are discussed.

- 1/16: Course Introduction**
- No Reading.

- 1/18: Institutional Design**
- Chapter 1.

- 1/23 & 1/25: The Constitution**
- Chapter 2 (through the Fight for Ratification).
 - Finish Chapter 2.

- 1/30 & 2/1: Federalism**
- Chapter 3 (through the Paths to Nationalization).
 - Finish Chapter 3.

- 2/6 & 2/8: Civil Rights**
- Chapter 4 (through the Politics of Black Civil Rights).
 - Finish Chapter 4.

- 2/13 & 2/15: Civil Liberties**
- Chapter 5 (through the Freedom of the Press).

- Finish Chapter 5.

2/20: FIRST MIDTERM EXAMINATION

2/22 & 2/27: Congress

- Chapter 6 (through the Basic Problems of Legislative Organization).
- Finish Chapter 6.

3/2 & 3/6: The Presidency

- Chapter 7 (through the Modern Presidency).
- Finish Chapter 7.

3/8 & 3/13: The Bureaucracy

- Chapter 8 (through Bureaucracy in Action).
- Finish Chapter 8.

3/15 & 3/20: The Federal Judiciary

- Chapter 9 (through the Structure of the Federal Judiciary).
- Finish Chapter 9.

3/22: SECOND MIDTERM EXAMINATION

3/27 & 3/29: NO CLASS due to SPRING BREAK

4/3 & 4/5: Public Opinion

- Chapter 10 (through Is Public Opinion Meaningful?)
- Finish Chapter 10.

4/10 & 4/12: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

- Chapter 11 (through Who Uses the Right to Vote?)
- Finish Chapter 11.
- **RESEARCH PAPER DUE APRIL 12.**

4/17: Political Parties

- Chapter 12 (all).

4/19 & 4/24: Interest Groups

- Chapter 13 (through Contemporary Interest Groups).
- Finish Chapter 13.

4/26 & 5/1: The News Media

- Chapter 14 (through News Media as the Fourth Branch).
- Finish Chapter 14.

5/3: Is There a “Logic” to American Policy?

- Chapter 15 (all).

5/7: FINAL EXAMINATION from 4:30-7:00 pm.