

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS  
POLITICAL SCIENCE 1101  
SPRING 2019**

**Instructor:**

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**Course Times:**

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

**Office:**

128 Ketchum

**Office Hours:**

4:15-5:30, 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 a 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 governance and 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. *Logic of American Politics* with Interactive E-Book and CQ Researcher Access Cards. CQ Press. **Available at CU Bookstore.**

## 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 (teaching assistants and myself) are happy to answer any questions you have about the readings, and I encourage you to email your teaching assistant 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 teaching assistant will go more in-depth 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 sign-in sheets to gauge student participation. However, also please bring a clicker because I like to ask the class questions during lecture (the questions asked during lecture are NOT graded or part of your evaluation).
- **Classroom Expectations:** Cell phones distract from the learning environment of the classroom. Therefore, I ask that all cell phones are turned on silent.

## 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. You must complete all of the exams and the paper to receive a passing grade in the course. **This means that failure to complete all of the exams and the paper means that you fail the course even if your grade is above 59.9%.**

- **Exams:** these cover lecture and readings and are non-cumulative, and consist of multiple choice, true/false, and fill in the blank questions. There is no review sheet for exams. **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 time of the final exam 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 16, 2019.
- **Lecture Attendance:** I pass around sign-in sheets every class to gauge attendance. **You have 6 free absences after which each unexcused absence reduces your lecture attendance grade by 1 percent out of 10 possible percentage points.** Thus, if you have 8 unexcused absences, you would receive an 8 out of 10 for the "lecture attendance" portion of your grade. **Excused absences are ONLY given for personal sickness, family emergency, religious holidays, or university-affiliated events (e.g. travel due to representing CU on a sports team).** Use one of your 6 "free" absences for all other reasons. **We start taking attendance on January 22 and do not count exam days OR break, resulting in 26 attendance days. Plan accordingly.**
- **Grade Distribution:**
  - **First Midterm: 15%**
  - **Second Midterm: 15%**
  - **Final: 20%**
  - **Recitation: 20%**
  - **Lecture Attendance: 10%**
  - **Research Paper: 20%**
- **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.

**1/15: Course Introduction**

- No Reading.

**1/17: Institutional Design**

- Chapter 1.

**1/22 & 1/24: The Constitution**

- Chapter 2 (through the Fight for Ratification).
- Finish Chapter 2.

**1/29 & 1/31: Federalism**

- Chapter 3 (through the Paths to Nationalization).
- Finish Chapter 3.

**2/5 & 2/7: Civil Rights**

- Chapter 4 (through the Politics of Black Civil Rights).
- Finish Chapter 4.

**2/12 & 2/14: Civil Liberties**

- Chapter 5 (through the Freedom of the Press).
- Finish Chapter 5.

**2/19: FIRST MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

**2/21 & 2/26: Congress**

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

**2/28 & 3/5: The Presidency**

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

**3/7 & 3/12: The Bureaucracy**

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

**3/14 & 3/19: The Federal Judiciary**

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

**3/21: SECOND MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

**3/26 & 3/28: NO CLASS due to SPRING BREAK**

**4/2 & 4/4: Public Opinion**

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

**4/9 & 4/11: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections**

- Chapter 11 (through Who Uses the Right to Vote?)
- Finish Chapter 11.

**4/16: Political Parties**

- Chapter 12 (all).
- **RESEARCH PAPER DUE AT BEGINNING OF CLASS.**

**4/18 & 4/23: Interest Groups**

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

**4/25 & 4/30: The News Media**

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

**5/2: Is There a “Logic” to American Policy?**

- Chapter 15 (all).

**5/8: FINAL EXAMINATION from 4:30-7:00 pm.**