

PSCI 1101: Introduction to American Politics
Summer A Session 2018
Mon-Fri, 9:15-10:50 am, Guggenheim 206

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Office Hours: after any class; or by appointment
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This course provides an introduction to the study of American politics and the American political system. We will examine basic principles of governance, including those found in the Constitution, the institutions of government, and key actors and processes of decision making. A basic goal is to develop understanding of why political actors and institutions behave the way they do. Along the way we will use political science theory to investigate historic features and decisions of the political system, as well as patterns and changes over time. We will also regularly address current events and use the analytical and theoretical knowledge gained throughout the course to help interpret what is going on in the world around us.

The course is designed to build understanding of:

- the basic structure of American government.
- how the U.S. Constitution affects the organization of government and the relationship between government and citizens.
- institutional responsibilities and relationships (including Congress, the presidency, the bureaucracy, and the judiciary) and the roles each plays in policy development.
- opportunities and avenues for public influence in the direction of American politics (such as through political parties, interest groups, and elections).
- how to apply course knowledge as thoughtful and active members of democratic society.

Readings

There is one required textbook: Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser & Lynn Vavreck, *The Logic of American Politics* (any edition), CQ Press.

In addition, we will regularly discuss and apply course concepts to current events. Thus, you are expected to pay attention to U.S. national news and be ready to participate in class discussion on the issues of the day.

Course Requirements

- **Class participation (10 percent):** There will be numerous opportunities to take part in active discussion. Most important, you have to be present in class to be participating. Attendance will be recorded daily.
- **Writing assignments (3 * 10% = 30 percent):** Three assignments will be required, each designed to deepen understanding and provide opportunity for application of the concepts covered in the readings and in class. Each is worth 10 percent of the class grade. Specific description and requirements will be posted on Canvas and due to Canvas before class on the specified due dates (no paper copies need to be submitted).
- **Exams (3 * 20% = 60 percent):** Three in-class exams will draw on both readings and class material and will focus on concept identification, definition and explanation. The exams will consist of multiple choice and brief written responses.

Due Dates:

Fri	8 June, before class	Assignment 1	10%
Wed	13 June, in class	Exam 1	20%
Tues	19 June, before class	Assignment 2	10%
Tues	26 June, in class	Exam 2	20%
Fri	29 June, before class	Assignment 3	10%
Fri	6 July, in class	Exam 3	20%

Classroom Expectations & University Policies

- 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.
- Topics in American politics are often controversial. Students are expected to treat each other with respect, to listen to divergent viewpoints, and to be open to learning from one another. Disrespectful language and/or behavior will not be tolerated.
- Students are responsible for ensuring that assignments are successfully submitted to Canvas on time and accessible for grading purposes (.doc, .docx or .pdf formats). If you're having trouble with Canvas, you may submit a back-up copy via email as well.
- Papers are due on the due dates. Late papers will be accepted late for reduced credit, as follows: Same day, after class begins: -10%; next day: -20%; each day thereafter, an additional 10% deduction. No late papers accepted after one week overdue.
- Make-up exams allowed only for excused and documented absences.
- **Students with Disabilities or Special Needs:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner explaining your required accommodations so that your needs can be addressed. See the Disability Services website (<https://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/>) for guidelines, and discuss your needs with me.
- **Religious Observances:** Students with conflicts due to religious observance may seek schedule and other accommodation as needed. Please contact me in advance to explain your circumstances and to discuss any special needs. See the campus policy regarding religious observances for full details (<https://www.colorado.edu/policies/observance-religious-holidays-and-absences-classes-andor-exams>).
- **Classroom Behavior:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment and should be familiar with university policies on classroom behavior (<https://www.colorado.edu/policies/student-classroom-and-course-related-behavior>) and the student code of conduct (https://www.colorado.edu/osccr/sites/default/files/attached-files/2017-2018_student_code_of_conduct_1.pdf). 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 nationalities. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun.
- **Misconduct, Discrimination & Harassment:** CU is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. Acts of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment or related retaliation against or by any employee or student will not be tolerated. CU's Discrimination and Harassment Policy prohibits discrimination, harassment or related retaliation for any reason. See the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance for more information: <https://www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity/>.
- **Honor Code:** All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy (<https://www.colorado.edu/policies/academic-integrity-policy>). Academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council. All students should be knowledgeable of the Honor Code: <https://www.colorado.edu/osccr/honor-code>.

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Class Schedule & Assignments, Summer 2018, A Session

DATE	TOPIC & READINGS	ASSIGNMENTS
Mon 4 June	Course overview and introducing American politics	
Tue 5 June	Basic principles of the American political system What does government do? What are basic functions?	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 1
Wed 6 June	U.S. Constitutional politics and design: Why this constitution?	
Thu 7 June	U.S. Constitution: Basic principles & historic foundations	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 2
Fri 8 June	U.S. Constitutional design: What is the underlying logic? Separation of powers and checks & balances	Due: Writing Assignment 1 (submit to Canvas before class)
Mon 11 June	Federalism and the Constitution	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 3
Tue 12 June	Federalism and the relationship between national and state governments	
Wed 13 June	Exam 1	Prepare for exam covering Chapters 1, 2 & 3 and materials covered in class
Thu 14 June	U.S. Constitutional design: the Bill of Rights What is the basis for these rights and liberties? How do we distinguish between rights and liberties?	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 5
Fri 15 June	Civil liberties: personal rights What protects us from government?	
Mon 18 June	Civil liberties, procedural rights & civil rights What protects us from each other?	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 4
Tue 19 June	Civil rights: Our evolving sense of rights; current issues in civil rights and equal protection	Due: Writing Assignment 2 (submit to Canvas before class)
Wed 20 June	Congress: Representation & organization	
Thu 21 June	Congress & lawmaking: understanding and evaluating congressional processes	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 6
Fri 22 June	Congress & the polarization of contemporary politics: Why such division in American politics?	

Mon 25 June	The Presidency How much power does the president really have?	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 7
Tue 26 June	Exam 2	Prepare for exam covering Chapters 4, 5, 6 & 7 and materials covered in class
Wed 27 June	Federal administration and the federal budget Who controls the bureaucracy?	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 8
Thu 28 June	The Judiciary	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 9
Fri 29 June	Voting, campaigns & elections	Due: Writing Assignment 3 (submit to Canvas before class)
Mon 2 July	Political parties	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 12
Tue 3 July	Interest groups	Read: Kernell <i>et al.</i> , Chap 13
Wed 4 July	NO CLASS! 4 th of July Holiday	
Thu 5 July	Balancing interests in the contemporary political world	
Fri 6 July	Exam 3	Prepare for exam (noncumulative) covering Chapters 8, 9, 12 & 13 and materials covered in class