

THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM
PSCI 1101
Summer 2020, Maymester
Via [ZOOM](#), 12:30-3:30

Professor: John Griffin Office: Ketchum 114D (office hours will be held remotely)
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Office Hours: by appointment

Grader: Ganesh Gorti, Ganesh.Gorti@colorado.edu

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 engaging 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 government
- Summarize the philosophical and 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
- Identify and evaluate ethical and moral elements of our political engagement

Readings

Most of the class material will be in the form of politically-relevant podcasts. Because I want these to be up to date, links to them will be distributed the afternoon/evening prior to each class.

There are only a small number of required readings for the class.

Throughout the semester, we will relate the course's concepts and controversies to current events. Therefore, you are asked to stay abreast of those events. If you do not subscribe to a national newspaper, there are several good free online news sources.

Grading

Your grade will be determined by three exams worth 100 points each and class participation (attendance, written reactions, class contributions) worth 100 points (400 points total). 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		

The three exams will ask you to summarize what you learned in the course in that week, following a rubric we will provide.

You will be expected to provide written reactions (questions, points of disagreement) to each of the podcasts. A link will be distributed for this purpose.

Course 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. In addition, please respect your fellow classmates by avoiding disruptive activity such as 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/>.

Rescheduling Exams

Except for a documented emergency, you must take the exams when they are scheduled. If you know that you will not be able to complete one of the exams because of university business (e.g., a sporting event, a debate), you should see me early in the class. If you have an emergency on the day of the exam, you will need documentation to prove that your absence was beyond your control.

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.

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

5/11 Introduction

Why Government?

5/12 Founding and Constitution

The U.S. Constitution
Declaration of Independence

Federalist 51

Federalism

5/13 Civil Liberties

Civil Rights

5/14 Public Opinion

5/15 Exam 1

5/18 Campaigns and Elections

5/19 Politics and the Media

5/20 Political Parties

5/21 Interest Groups

5/22 Exam 2

5/25 Memorial Day, No Class

5/26 Congress

5/27 The Executive Branch

5/28 The Judiciary

5/29 Exam 3