

Introduction to American Politics

Fall 2018

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Introduction to the Course: This course is a general introduction to American government's organization, political behavior, and political institutions. We will address such questions as, How do people form political preferences and what most informs their voting behavior? What is the role of political parties in advancing public policy through elections and in Congress? How do interest groups shape public policy and influence legislation? How do so-called "identity politics" shape contemporary political discourse and policy outcomes? Students will learn and discuss theories of political science and engage in informed discussion of how the theories explain contemporary debates in American politics. Students will reinforce lectures and readings through active participation in class discussions and writing assignments that engage core political science theories on elections and governance.

Objectives

- Acquaint students with the fundamentals of American government
- Introduce students to core political science theories and research
- Familiarize students with political science concepts on American elections and law-making
- To develop students' critical thinking and writing skills through class discussions and writing assignments

BOOKS:

We will draw primarily from the following two required books:

- *The Logic of American Politics, 6th edition.*
- *Principles and Practices of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings, 5th edition.* (abbreviated on syllabus as P&P)

All other readings will be made available online. Students will be expected to come to class having read the material and being prepared to engage in the arguments that they present. Students will be alerted in advance to what readings are recommended rather than required, or are skim-worthy.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Three short (5-page) response papers: 15% each

- For three weeks of your choosing, write a discussion of how the political science theories that week apply to current events. You may choose to focus on one reading or multiple readings and how well (or poorly) the political science theories explain the developments in a contemporary political/policy debate. In doing so, you should demonstrate an understanding of the core arguments presented that week, and an ability to broaden the discussion to real-world examples. You *must* cite all sources used.

Midterm: 20%

Final exam: 25%

Attendance and participation: 10%

Papers shall be submitted by the start of class. Papers should be double-spaced in 12 point font with one-inch margins. Exams will be a combination of IDs and short essays, with a study guide distributed one week in advance.

Final Course Grading: The final grade for the course will be assigned based on the following scale:

A: 93+%	A-: 90-92%	B+: 87-89%
B: 83-86%	B-: 80-82%	C+: 77-79%
C: 73-76%	C-: 70-72%	D+: 67-69%
D: 63-66%	D-: 60-62%	F: > 60%

Policy Regarding Late Assignments: It is imperative that students turn in work at the specified deadlines. Failure to do so will result in a third letter grade reduction per day late unless you have received an extension in advance. Work will not be accepted at all more than one week late unless said extension was granted in advance. All students must sit for the final exam at the assigned day and time, with the only exception of university-approved absences.

All members of the academic community should be able to engage fully in the academic opportunities and services provided, regardless of disability status, and to that end accommodations to this course can be made if necessary. Please feel free to discuss with me any concerns you may have.

Statement on Academic Integrity: It is expected that all students will work in accordance with the student honor code. Thus, plagiarism, cheating, and receiving unauthorized assistance with the work in this course will not be tolerated. Should a student violate academic integrity in this class, the matter will be reported to the university administration. If you have questions about citations of sources, ask prior to submitting the given assignment.

COURSE OUTLINE:

Week 1: Foundations of American Politics

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 1
- Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, Chapter 1 (excerpt in P&P)
- Garrett Hardin, *The Tragedy of the Commons* (excerpt in P&P)
- Bruce Ackerman, *The Citizenship Agenda* (excerpt in P&P)

Week 2: The American Founding and Constitution

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 2
- Articles of Confederation
- The Constitution of the United States Federalist 10, 51
- Anti-Federalist 3

Week 3: Federalism

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 3
- Federalist 16, 17, 39, 45
- *United States v. Morrison*
- *United States v. Lopez*
- Donald F. Kettl, *Federalism: Sorting Out Who Does What* (in P&P)

Week 4: Civil Rights

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 4
- Anti-Federalist 84
- *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- *Brown v. Board of Education*
- MLK, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”
- *UC Regents v. Bakke*
- *Heart of Atlanta Motel v. United States*

- Michelle Chen. “Millennials Have Lived Through a Doubling of School Segregation.” *The Nation* (June 15, 2016)

Week 5: Civil Liberties

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 5
- *Griswold v. Connecticut*
- *Roe v. Wade*
- *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*
- *Brandenburg v. Ohio*
- *DC v. Heller*
- *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*
- Dara Lind. “Why the ACLU is adjusting its approach to ‘free speech’ after Charlottesville.” *Vox*.
- Nicole Lewis. “The NFL and the First Amendment: A Guide to the Debate.” *The Washington Post*.

Midterm

Week 6: Congress

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 6
- Federalist 53, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63
- David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, (excerpt)
- Richard Fenno, “Home Style and Washington Career”
- John Aldrich and David W. Rhode, *Congressional Committees in a Continuing Partisan Era* (in P&P)
- Emily Greenhouse. 2015. “The Numbers Don’t Lie: Women Make More Effective Legislators Than Men.” *Bloomberg*.
- R. Douglas Arnold. “Can Inattentive Citizens Control Their Elected Representatives?” in *Congress Reconsidered*

Week 7: The Presidency

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 7
- Federalist 70
- Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (excerpt in P&P)
- Sam Kernell, *Going Public* (excerpt in P&P)
- Aaron Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies.”
- Brandice Canes-Wrone, “Administrative Politics and the Public Presidency.”

Week 8: The Bureaucracy

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 8
- Terry Moe, “The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure.”
- David E. Lewis, *The Politics of Presidential Appointments* (excerpt in P&P)
- David Epstein & Sharyn O’Halloran, *Delegating Powers* (excerpt)
- Mathew McCubbins, Roger Noll, and Barry Weingast, “Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control.”

Week 9: The Judiciary

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 9
- Federalist 78
- *Marbury v. Madison*
- Antonin Scalia, “Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System: The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws.” (excerpt in P&P)
- Stephen Breyer, “Active Liberty: Interpreting Our Democratic Constitution.” (excerpt in P&P)
- H.W. Perry, *Deciding to Decide* (excerpt)
- Lee Epstein and Jack Knight, *The Choices Justices Make* (excerpt)

Week 10: Public Opinion

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 10
- James Stimson, Michael MacKuen, & Bob Erikson, *Dynamic Representation* (excerpt)

- Martin Gilens, “Two-Thirds Full? Citizen Competence and Democratic Governance.”
- Christopher M. Federico, “Ideology and Public Opinion.”
- Matthew Baum, “Media, Public Opinion, and Presidential Leadership.”
- Andrew Gelman. 2014. “Tracking public opinion with biased polls.” *Washington Post*.

Week 11: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 11
- Mo Fiorina et al, *Culture War?* (excerpt)
- John Sides & Jake Haselswerdt, “Campaigns and Elections.”
- Donald P. Green, Bradley Palmquist, & Eric Schickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds* (excerpt)
- Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting* (excerpt)
- Paul Blumenthal, Super PACs and Secret Money (P&P)

Week 12: Political Parties

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 12
- John Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (excerpt in P&P)
- Larry Bartels, *Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996* (excerpt in P&P)
- Morris P. Fiorina, *Parties as Problem Solvers* (excerpt in P&P)

Week 13: Interest Groups

- *The Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 13
- E.E. Schattschneider, *The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System* (excerpt in P&P)
- Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (excerpt)
- *Citizens United v. FEC*
- Citizens United v. FEC, in Plain English. *SCOTUSblog*

Final Exam