

Poli 100: Introduction to American Government

Instructor: Rachel Porter

Email: rachsur@live.unc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 3:15-4:45 and Thursday 3:15-4:45

Office Location: Hamilton 303

Classroom: Murphy, Room 104

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In order to fully understand our complicated and contentious political climate and events, it is necessary to understand how the American political system works. We will work toward that understanding together by exploring the system from two angles: *institutions*, or the structure of the United States government; and *behavior*, or the actions and motivations of political actors, both politicians and the general public. We will discuss what problems the government and political system seek to solve and why they sometimes succeed and sometimes fail to solve those problems.

REQUIRED TEXT

- Kollman, Ken. 2017. *The American Political System*. 3rd Edition. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of the opinions of others. Although class attendance is not mandatory, you will be held responsible for all material in the textbooks and in lectures, even if you miss a class. Moreover, I expect all students to attend class prepared to participate in any class discussion and to show up on time. I reserve the right to hold “pop” quizzes if no one is participating in class discussion. Laptops, tablets, and other forms of electronic media are not to be used in this class. If you need an exception to this rule, please see me. I am willing to make accommodations.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams (2) The first exam will be taken in class on March 5th. The last exam will be taken during the final exam period, which is scheduled for May 7th. The first exam will be worth 20% and the second exam will be worth 30%. The final exam will be cumulative.

Writing Assignments (2) Each paper will be five to six pages in length. The due dates are February 19th and April 18th. The papers are to be handed in in class. Each paper will be worth 20% of your grade for this class. Papers must be printed and handed in at the beginning of class on the date due, otherwise considered late. A 10% reduction will be taken off the final paper grade for every day late. Information regarding the writing assignments will be distributed in class and on Sakai.

General Participation Your general class participation will be evaluated, constituting 10% of your final grade. I strongly encourage all students to actively participate in discussion. Class attendance is part of your participation grade, as is participation in discussion. If you attend every class, but never say a word you can do no better than a B- for participation; though a B- is not guaranteed, as you must show evidence of active listening (i.e. sleeping, being on Facebook/Twitter, etc., and emailing do not demonstrate active listening).

If you are uncomfortable speaking up in class, please consider this section an opportunity to grow and push yourself to contribute to the discussion — and come chat with me in office hours if you are having trouble participating.

Research Participation All students who enroll in Political Science 100 are required to participate in research studies conducted in the Political Science Department should they be conducted during the semester you are enrolled in the course. The total time commitment to such studies will not exceed 3 hours. Failure to satisfy the research participation requirement will result in an incomplete for the course. This requirement does not substitute for other course requirements, nor does it generate extra credit. You will be alerted to studies via Sakai. The subject pool and the research studies are currently administered by Professor Anna Bassi. Should you have any questions please email her. It is important to note that if studies are made available they must be completed in a timely manner, as the studies are not always available throughout the semester. In the event that you would rather not actively participate in an actual study, you have the option of satisfying the research participation requirement in a different way. This alternative assignment consists of writing a 4-page research paper. This assignment needs to be completed by the last day of classes.

GRADING

A final grade of “incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. In addition, written assignments that do not follow the guidelines of the assignment and/or have poor grammar and spelling will be severely penalized. As a general rule, make-ups for exams will not be given. Students who must miss exams because of scheduled activities of an official University student organization, a religious holiday, or a verifiable illness should contact the instructor *in advance* of missing an exam so that alternative arrangements can be made.

GRADING SCALE

A 94-100, A- 90-93, B+ 87-89, B 84-86, B- 80-83, C+ 77-79, C 74-76, C- 70-73, D+ 67-69

ASSIGNMENTS & TESTS

You are responsible for keeping a copy of all written assignments for the course. This ensures that we will not run into problems with lost assignments. You are also responsible for keeping copies of the assignments once they are handed back. Sometimes errors do happen, and a grade may not be recorded for you. If this happens you must be able to produce the graded paper to verify that the assignment was completed and that the grade is correct.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty is broadly defined as submitting work that is not your own without attribution, and is not acceptable in this or any other academic course. Any academic dishonesty found on an assignment results in a failing grade for that assignment and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent permissible under University of North Carolina guidelines, which can be accessed at: <http://honor.unc.edu>.

COMMUNICATION

I am very happy to meet with students outside of class time. Whether it be to discuss concerns about the course, remediation with the material, or simply to engage further with the topic, please feel free to stop by Hamilton 303 during my office hours. If you are unable to meet during my office hours, which are listed at the top of this syllabus, please email me to set up a time to talk. Email is the best mode of communication with which to reach me. While I do my best to respond to emails as quickly and thoroughly as possible, please expect a response within 24 hours and plan accordingly.

Office hours are an important resource that should be utilized to improve understanding of materials or ask more personalized questions. Office hours before an exam will be held at regular times and, unless noted by me, no additional office hours will be held - so plan accordingly. Prior to writing assignments due dates I will be available during office hours to read over paper outlines provide feedback. Please do not bring completed papers and, be advised, office hours before paper deadlines may be busy.

ELECTRONICS POLICY

In class, our aim is to engage deeply with the subject matter as well as with each other. This means that we must actively listen to each other and formulate thoughtful responses. As a result, electronic devices (e.g. laptops, tablets, and cell phones) will not be needed, so you should keep them muted or turned off to avoid distracting yourself or your classmates. To come prepared for class, you may either bring a printed copy of the readings, notes on the readings, or both. With that being said, there may be occasional times that we will want to use available electronic devices to reference online resources during in-class activities, but I will let you know when it is appropriate to do so.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who need academic accommodation should contact UNC's Office of Accessibility, Resources, and Services (<https://accessibility.unc.edu/>) or the Learning Center (<http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>). Further, please either set up a time to meet with me *or* write me an email about the accommodations you will require. This should be done during the first week of class.

Date	Class Topic	Readings & Assignments
1/10	Introductions, Syllabus, Course Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Readings
1/15	The State of American Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mara Liasson, <i>NPR</i>, The State Of Our Politics Is Divided, Mis-trustful And Engaged
1/17	Why is Politics Ineffective?: Questions & Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman, Chapter 1
1/22	Articles of Confederation & Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman, Chapter 2 Richard Stengel, <i>TIME</i>, One Document, Under Siege
1/24	Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman Chapter 3 Libby Nelson, <i>Vox</i>, Everything You Need to Know about Com-mon Core
1/29	Congress I: Districts & Getting Elected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman Chapter 5, pp.147-164 David R. Mayhew, The Electoral Connection
1/31	Congress II: The Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman Chapter 5, pp.165-180
2/5	Congress III: Polarization & Dysfunction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ezra Klein, <i>Vox</i>, What is Congressional Dysfunction? Frances Lee, <i>Washington Post</i>, American politics is more com-petitive than ever... Sean Theriault, <i>Washington Post</i>, Polarization we can live with. Partisan warfare is the problem.
2/7	Presidency I: Historical Perspective & Today	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman Chapter 6, pp 199-224 Ezra Klein, <i>Vox</i>, The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency” David Graham, <i>The Atlantic</i>, The Strangest Thing About Trump’s Approach to Presidential Power
2/12	Judiciary I: The Federal Courts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman Chapter 8, pp. 285-311
2/14	Judiciary II: SCOTUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman Chapter 8, pp. 311-324
2/19	Civil Rights & Civil Liberties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman Chapter 8, pp. 109-132 Roger Parlo, <i>The New Yorker</i>, Christian Bakers, Gay Weddings, and a Question for the Supreme Court

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2/21	Gerrymandering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Gerrymandering, <i>Vox</i>, see Sakai for link • Black Representation in North Carolina, <i>FiveThirtyEight</i>, see Sakai for link
2/26	Gerrymandering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Gerrymandering, <i>Vox</i>, see Sakai for link • Black Representation in North Carolina, <i>FiveThirtyEight</i>, see Sakai for link
2/28	Bureaucracy	• Kollman Chapter 7
3/5	Catch-Up and Review (First Paper Due)	• No Readings
3/7	Midterm Exam	• No Readings
3/19	Public Opinion I: Measuring Public Opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman, Chapter 9, pp. 330-340 • Vann R. Newkirk II, <i>The Atlantic</i>, What Went Wrong With the 2016 Polls? • Nate Silver, <i>FiveThirtyEight</i>, The Polls Are All Right
3/21	Public Opinion II: Forming Political Attitudes	• Kollman, Chapter 9, pp. 341-361
3/26	Public Opinion III: Are Americans Divided?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnathan Weiler and Marc Hetherington, Prius Or Pickup? How the Answers to Four Simple Questions Explain America's Great Divide (Chapter 1)
3/28	Elections I: Mechanics	• Kollman, Chapter 13
4/2	Elections II: The Electoral College	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garrett Epps, <i>The Atlantic</i>, The Electoral College Wasn't Meant to Overturn Elections • Tim Alberta, <i>Politico</i>, Is the Electoral College Doomed?
4/4	Elections III: Political Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Chapter 10, pp. 380-397 • Dylan Matthews, <i>Vox</i>, Obama suggested making it illegal not to vote. Heres how thats worked in Australia
4/9	Elections IV: Candidate Nomination & Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brookings Institute, The 2018 Primaries Project: The ideology of primary voters • Adam Nagourney, <i>New York Times</i>, Heres How Californias Jun- gle Primary System Works • Dan Balz, <i>New York Times</i>, Californias open primaries are a cautionary tale about political reform
4/11	Political Parties I	• Kollman Chapter 12

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4/16	Political Parties II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonathan Rauch, <i>The Atlantic</i>, How American Politics Went Insane
4/18	Politics & The Media (Second Paper Due)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Chapter 12, pp. 542-566 • Jonathan Rothwell, <i>New York Times</i>, Biased News Media or Biased Readers? An Experiment on Trust
4/23	Money in Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maggie Koerth-Baker, <i>FiveThirtyEight</i>, How Money Affects... • Andrew Prokop, <i>Vox</i>, The Citizens United era of money in politics, explained • Michelle Ye Hee Lee, <i>Washington Post</i>, Eleven donors have plowed \$1 billion into super PACs since they were created
4/25	The 2020 Presidential Election	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Readings
4/29	Catch-Up and Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Readings
4/7	Final Exam	