

Department of Political Science
Political Science 1100: American Government

Instructor: Prof. Jennifer Selin

Overview

This course offers an introduction to American government intended to provide students with a background in the concepts and ideas that political scientists use in the study of American politics. We will develop a systematic way to think about politics, the institutions of government, and the public's influence on national policy. Among the topics we will discuss are the Constitution, civil rights and civil liberties, Congress, the executive branch, the federal judiciary, public opinion and the media, campaigns and elections, political parties, and interest groups.

This course has three primary aims. The first is to introduce important facts and fundamental principles of American politics to help students understand the current American political system and its history. Among the questions we will consider are:

- *What role can the national government play in state policy?*
- *How powerful is the President of the United States?*
- *What policy does an agency like the Environmental Protection Agency make?*
- *How much influence does the Supreme Court have in the United States?*
- *Does public opinion matter to politicians?*
- *What is the influence of the media on American politics?*

A discussion of these topics and others will provide students with a solid understanding of how American politics works. This understanding will allow students to analyze, critique, and debate American politics.

The second goal of the course is to prepare students for upper level courses in political science. In order to achieve this goal, students will be exposed to the conceptual material political scientists use to characterize politics. We will apply these concepts to frame our thinking about important issues in American politics.

Finally, this course is designed to motivate further study of American politics. We will often reference current events in class in connection to assigned readings and students are encouraged to keep abreast of political news. Where appropriate, we will also use case studies to further illustrate theoretical concepts. Students are encouraged to read materials outside of those assigned for class and to approach me with questions.

Books

The required texts are as follows and can be purchased at the Missouri Bookstore.

Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2018. *The Logic of American Politics*, 8th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Kernell, Samuel, and Steven S. Smith, eds. 2018. *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 7th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Assessment

Student assessment is targeted to help provide students with a broad background in the concepts and debates that are central to the study of American politics. Students will be assessed according to their knowledge of course material and their ability to analyze, explain, and apply that knowledge. Students are expected to do more than just regurgitate or summarize assigned readings – the most successful students will be able to synthesize material from lectures and readings and apply those concepts to analyze political issues.

This is a demanding course that will require students to dedicate an appropriate amount of time to understanding covered material.

Student assessment will be as follows:

Quizzes (3): 30%

Midterm: 30%

Last Exam: 40%

I expect all students to attend class on days assessments are administered. That said, I recognize that serious illnesses and emergencies do occasionally arise. If you find yourself in such a situation when an exam is administered, please notify me before the start of the exam and stay in touch during your absence. In the interest of fairness, the opportunity to take a make-up exam will be limited to students who experience serious illnesses or family emergencies and are unable to be in class on the day of the exam.

Quizzes

The three quizzes will assess students' knowledge of key readings, facts, and concepts. Students should use these quizzes to gauge their understanding of the course material and to help focus their studies for the midterm and final. The quizzes will be relatively short and consist of multiple choice and short answer questions.

Exams

Both the midterm and the final will be in multiple choice format. These exams are designed to give students the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired from attending class and reading assigned material to current issues in American politics.

Grading Scale

The following scale will be used to convert numeric course grades into letter grades:

F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A	A+
0-59	60-62	63-66	67-69	70-72	73-76	77-79	80-82	83-86	87-89	90-92	93-96	97-100

Academic Integrity

University standards for academic integrity apply in this class. Put simply, **I do not tolerate cheating or plagiarism of any kind**. You are expected to know and understand the university's policies on this matter.

Disability Resources and Educational Services

To ensure that disability-related concerns are properly addressed from the first day of class, I ask that students with disabilities who require assistance to participate in this class contact me as soon as possible. To obtain disability-related academic adjustments and/or auxiliary aids, students with disabilities should both contact me and the Disability Center as soon as possible. To contact the Disability Center, you may call 573-882-4696, email disabilitycenter@missouri.edu, or visit the Center's website: <http://disabilitycenter.missouri.edu>.

Class Schedule

The schedule for the course is provided below. Students are responsible for all readings listed prior to the class period in which they are discussed. In general, we will discuss readings from Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser, and Vavreck (KJKV) in the beginning of the week and the readings from Kernell and Smith (KS) towards the end of the week. Any reading not found in either of the two required books is posted on Canvas in the "Files" section.

Organizing Ideas and Concepts

KJKV, Chapter 1

KS, Mancur Olson (1-1)

KS, Garrett Hardin (1-2)

The Constitution

KJKV, Chapter 2

KS, Federalist No. 10 (2-1)

KS, Federalist No. 51 (2-2)

Federalism

KJKV, Chapter 3

KS, Donald Kettl (3-1)

Gonzales v. Raich, 545 U.S. 1 (2005)

Murphy v. NCAA, (2018), 138 S.Ct. 1461 (2018)

Quiz # 1

Civil Rights

KJKV, Chapter 4

Korematsu v. United States, 323 U.S. 214 (1944)

KS, Justin Levitt (4-2)

Civil Liberties

KJKV, Chapter 5

KS, *Roe v. Wade* (5-2)

KS, Gerald N. Rosenberg (5-3)

Congress

KJKV, Chapter 6

KS, Sarah A. Binder (6-2)

KS, John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde (6-3)

Quiz # 2

The Executive Branch

KJKV, Chapter 7

KS, Richard E. Neustadt (7-1)

KS, Samuel Kernell (7-2)

KS, Terry M. Moe (8-1)

KS, David E. Lewis (8-2)

The Judiciary

KJKV, Chapter 9

KS, Antonin Scalia (9-1)

KS, Stephen Breyer (9-2)

Review and Midterm

Midterm

Public Opinion

KJKV, Chapter 10

KS, Morris P. Fiorina (10-2)

KS, Alan I. Abramowitz (10-3)

Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

KJK, Chapter 11

KS, Samuel L. Popkin (11-1)

KS, Michael Schudson (11-3)

Political Parties

KJKV, Chapter 12

KS, John H. Aldrich (12-1)

KS, Morris P. Fiorina (12-3)

Quiz # 3

Interest Groups

KJKV, Chapter 13

KS, E.E. Schattschneider (13-1)

KS, Jennifer Nicoll Victor (13-2)

The News Media

KJKV, Chapter 14

KS, Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow (14-1)

KS, Alexis C. Madrigal (14-2)

Review and Wrap-Up

Last Exam