

# Political Science 105: Introduction to American Politics

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Office Hours: W 4-5pm.

Office: Harkness 336

Class Hours: MTWR 1pm-4pm

Class Room: Harkness 329

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## Course Policies

**Introduction:** What strategic decisions do members of Congress make to achieve their goals? How do political institutions affect policy outcomes? Drawing from political science research, as well as contemporary events, this course will introduce students to the foundations of American government and politics. Students will examine important political institutions and the linkage mechanisms that connect institutions, political actors, and ordinary American citizens. This course is appropriate for majors and non-majors with an interest in understanding how and why the American political system works as it does.

### Objectives:

- To provide a basic understanding of the institutions of the American government
- To introduce students to concepts and research within political science
- To provide opportunities to improve critical thinking and analytical skills
- To explain contemporary political phenomena using theoretical foundations

**Readings:** Most content will be given during lectures. In addition the following text will be used:

[KS] Principles and Practice of American Politics - Classic and Contemporary Readings 6th Edition, *Kernal, Samuel; Smith, Steven S*

Other materials and readings will be made available to you via blackboard, or have links provided in the online version of this syllabus. I reserve the right to change/update readings, and/or adjust the weeks as needed to fit class scheduling demands.

**Grading:** Your grade will be based on three in class exams each worth 25% of your final grade, three short response essays each worth 5%, and participation and attendance worth 10%. There

will be no opportunities for extra credit.

**Exams:** Exams will be given during the first part of class. The first exam will be given on July 12, the second exam on July 19, and the third exam on July 27. Each exam is worth 25% of your final grade. Exams will not be cumulative but may include any material covered in class or in the readings since the previous exam. No notes or materials can be used during the exams.

**Short Responses:** Short responses will be due at the beginning of class on Mondays. The first response is due on July 10, the second on July 17, and the third on July 24. The prompt for each short response will be given out in class the Thursday before it is due. Responses should be one page typed and should be clear, concise, and identify and discuss the course material. Each response is worth 5% of your final grade.

**Participation and Attendance:** It is your responsibility to come to class and participate. Participation includes, but is not limited to, attendance, being on-time, paying attention, avoiding digital distractions, participating constructively in discussion, asking questions during and after class, coming to office hours, sending me emails with questions, etc. There are unlimited ways for you to demonstrate that you are committed to this class, so there is no reason to not get all of these points.

**Academic Honesty:** Students must conduct themselves in accordance with the University's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade and a report to the necessary dean(s) and academic advisors for disciplinary action. It is harder to cheat and not get caught than it is to simply do the work. All work turned in for a grade must be your own. Plagiarism will result in a failing grade and a report to the necessary dean(s) and academic advisors for disciplinary action. This includes putting uncited work in your papers and assignments. If you have a question about whether you are unintentionally plagiarizing, ask.

**Rochester Policies:** It is the student's responsibility to report to the University any disabilities that require accommodation. I will follow any and all required provisions to ensure every student has the equal opportunity to be successful in this course. All students in the course are expected to do the same.

## Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class sufficiently ahead of time.

### Monday, July 3

*Institutional Design, The Constitution, & Federalism*

- KS 1-1 Mancur Olson. From *The Logic of Collective Action*
- KS 1-2 Garrett Hardin. *The Tragedy of the Commons*
- KS Appendix - Constitution of the United States
- [NYTimes Op-Ed, States Will Lead on Climate Change in the Trump Era](#)
- KS 3-2 Jonathan Rauch. *A Separate Peace*
- KS 3-3 Thad Kousser. *How America's "Devolution Revolution" Reshaped Its Federalism*

### Tuesday, July 4

No class.

### Wednesday, July 5

*Congressional Development*

- BB Thomas B. Reed, "Obstruction in the National House," *North American Review* 149 (1889), 421-28.
- BB Joseph Cooper and David W. Brady, "Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn," *American Political Science Review* 75 (1981), 411-25.
- BB Gerald Gamm and Kenneth A. Shepsle, "Emergence of Legislative Institutions: Standing Committees in the House and Senate, 1810-1825," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 14 (1989), 39-66
- KS 6-3 John Aldrich and David Rohde "Congressional Committees in a Continuing Partisan Era"

### Thursday, July 6

*Modern Congress*

- KS 6-1 Steven S. Smith, "Congress, The Troubled Institution."
- KS 6-2 Sarah A. Binder, "The Politics of Legislative Stalemate."
- KS 11-2 Gary C. Jacobson, "No Compromise: The Electoral Origins of Legislative Gridlock."

## Monday, July 10

*Short response 1 is due*

### *The Presidency*

- KS 7-1 Richard E. Neustadt, From “Presidential Power”
- KS 7-2 Samuel Kernell, From “Going Public.”
- BB James W. Ceaser, Glen E. Thurow, Jeffrey Tulis, and Joseph M. Bessette, “The Rise of the Rhetorical Presidency,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 11 (1981), 158-71.

## Tuesday, July 11

### *The Judiciary*

- KS 9-3 Alexander Hamilton, “Federalist No. 78”
- KS 9-4 Robert A. Carp and Kenneth L. Manning, “Selecting Justice: The Ideology of Federal Judges Appointed by President Obama”
- [How the NRA Learned to Play Hardball on Supreme Court Nominations](#)

## Wednesday, July 12

*Exam 1*

### *Public Policy*

- BB Kenneth T. Jackson, “Race, Ethnicity, and Real Estate Appraisal: The Home Owners Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration,” *Journal of Urban History* 6 (1980), 419-52.
- BB Thomas J. Sugrue, “Crabgrass-Roots Politics: Race, Rights, and the Reaction against Liberalism in the Urban North, 1940-1964,” *Journal of American History* 82 (1995): 551-78.

## Thursday, July 13

### *The Bureaucracy*

- [Donald Trump Is Choosing His Cabinet. Here’s the Latest List.](#)
- [Rick Perry, Ex-Governor of Texas, Is Trump’s Pick as Energy Secretary](#)
- KS 8-2 David E. Lewis, From “The Politics of Presidential Appointments.”

## Monday, July 17

*Short response 2 is due*

### *Interest Groups I*

- KS 13-1 E.E. Schattschneider, "The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System"
- BB Martin Gilens, "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (2005), 778-96.

## Tuesday, July 18

### *Interest Groups II*

- Measuring the impact of lobbying on elections and policy

## Wednesday, July 19

*Exam 2*

### *Elections I*

- KS 11-1 Samuel Popkin, From "The Reasoning Voter"
- KS 11-3 Michael Schudson "America's Ignorant Voters"
- [Washington Post, In defense of the electoral college](#)

## Thursday, July 20

### *Elections II*

- The median voter theorem and deviations from the median
- [New York Times, Why politics is stuck in the middle](#)
- Retrospective versus prospective voting
- Economics and voting

## Monday, July 24

*Short response 3 is due*

### *Political Parties*

- KS 12-1 John Aldrich, From "Why Parties?"
- KS 12-2 Larry Bartels, From "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996"

**Tuesday, July 25**

*Partisanship vs. Polarization*

- KS 10-3 Morris Fiorina, From “Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America”
- KS 10-4 Alan Abramowitz, “The Polarized Electorate”

**Wednesday, July 26**

*Public Opinion and the Media*

- KS 10-2 John Zaller and Stanley Feldman, “A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions Versus Revealing Preferences”
- BB Hillygus, D. Sunshine. “The Evolution of Election Polling in the United States,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 75 (2011) 962-981
- BB Hetherington, Marc. “Why Polarized Trust Matters,” *The Forum* 13 (2015) 445-458

**Thursday, July 27**

*Exam 3*

*Topic TBD.*