

POLITICAL SCIENCE 111 INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

University of Michigan
Department of Political Science
Fall 20–

Instructor:	Jesse M. Crosson	Class Time:	TBD
Office:	Haven Hall 6742	Class Location:	TBD
Email:	jessemc@umich.edu	Office Hours:	TBD

Course Description:

This course introduces students to the central processes and institutions of American politics, and particularly our national politics. Beyond teaching basic concepts about American politics and government, this course will train you think critically about politics. By the end of this course, you should be familiar with several theoretical frameworks for understanding American politics and will be able to apply those frameworks to new situations. Additionally, you will learn about how political scientists think about politics: what kinds of questions they asking, where they look for answers, and how they go about testing their proposed answers.

Such skills are important because politics plays an important role in your lives. Political leaders today must confront a wide variety of problems facing the country: millions of immigrants face uncertainty about their future in the U.S., the federal government is amassing trillions of dollars of debt that you will inherit, the military is subject to frequent and malicious cyber attacks from state and non-state actors, and infrastructure across the country is crumbling—among many other challenges.

Politics matters to you. You can also matter to it. Citizen engagement in politics doesnt necessarily change policies directly, but it does increase the chances of securing the outcomes you prefer. What citizens do and think affect the kind of politics we get. Public opinion and political participation of the masses matter, but their impact is greatly affected by the institutions of government, including elections, the calculations of executives and legislators, political parties and interest groups, and so on. This course will help you to understand those institutions and their interactions and thereby locate yourself in American politics. To this end, we will use a textbook that equips you with useful analytical tools very early in the course. It is important that you comprehend these tools clearly and quickly, as they recur in subsequent chapters and class periods.

Course Pages:

All course materials, except for textbook chapters, can be found at this courses Canvas site. Please check the site regularly, as I will be provided announcements and updates via that channel.

Required Texts: Please pick up a copies of

- Ken Kollman. 2017. *The American Political System*, Core 3rd edition. W. W. Norton
 - Ken Kollman. 2017 *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*, Fourth Edition.
- Other readings will be made available via the Ctools site.

Prerequisites: No prerequisites are required.

Grading Policy and Relevant Dates:

Class Participation and Attendance	20%
Midterm Essay 1	10%
Midterm Essay 2	20%
Midterm Exam	25%
Final Paper	25%

Attendance and Participation

You are expected to come to class every day. However, I understand that life happens, so I give my students one no-questions-asked absence each semester. After that, students lose .5% from their participation/attendance grade for each additional absence. If you have a legitimate reason to miss more than one class (such as a sickness), you will need written documentation. Please feel free to send any questions you may have about this policy. Beyond attendance, your attendance/participation grade is governed by how active and involved you are in class. In order to receive full participation credit, a student must make *an average of one well-formulated, considerate contribution (answer to a question, posing a good question, etc.) per class*.

At the midpoint of the semester, I will inform you of where you stand regarding attendance/participation. At that time, if you appear to be falling behind, we may speak about strategies to generate opportunities for easy participation. I recognize that speaking in front of your peers and instructor may seem intimidating, and I have a wide variety of strategies for aiding students who struggle in this regard. Even if I do not seek out a meeting with you specifically, you should *always* feel free to discuss these strategies with me during office hours!

Midterm Essay 1

This essay will ask you apply one of the core theoretical frameworks / classic political problems to explain a current political episode. I will provide prompts for this essay after our 3rd week of class, and the assignment will be due at the end of the 5th week of class. When I provide the prompt, I will also provide a detailed rubric that I will use to grade your assignments.

As you see above, this essay is worth less than any of the other assignments in this course. The purpose for this difference is to create a low-stakes environment for learning more—through experience—about college-level, analytical writing. I will be providing many comments on these essays, and some of you may be disappointed in your grade. But that's okay: the assignment will not ruin your course grade, and it will give you an opportunity to prepare to write an excellent Midterm Essay 2.

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Midterm Essay 2

For this essay, you will read two long-form columns on a political challenge facing the U.S. government. Using course concepts you have learned, you will make a case for which perspective—if any—best explains why the challenge has arisen. Then, applying and extending the logic of the perspective you have chosen, you will offer a possible solution. The purpose of this assignment, then, is to encourage you to think deeply not only about what a theory *says*, but what it says about how the world *works*. As with Midterm Essay 1, a prompt will be provided later in the semester, along with a detailed rubric. The prompt will be released directly after the midterm examination, and the essay will be due by the last day of class.

Because this paper is designed to be more difficult and occupies a greater percentage of your grade than Midterm Essay 1, you are encouraged (but not required) to send me a draft of your paper for review, before final paper submission. I will read any and all drafts sent to me within a week of the due date. However, bear in mind that the higher the quality of the draft you send me, the better I will be able to help you succeed!

Final Exam

This exam will cover material presented in class *after* the midterm. That is, it is not cumulative. It will be a mix of multiple choice questions, short essays, and one long-form essay.

Schedule and weekly learning goals

The schedule is tentative and subject to change. Please note that **all readings listed with each date should be completed by the date under which they are listed!**

Part 1: American Political Institutions

Week 1, 08/08 - 08/12: Course Overview and Tools for Studying Politics

- Kollman, *The American Political System* [hereafter TAPS], chapter 1.
- Olson, *Logic of Collective Action*, in Kollman, *Readings in American Politics* [hereafter KK], pp. 6-18.
- Hardin, “Tragedy of the Commons,” in KK.

Week 2, 08/15 - 08/19: The U.S. Founding; Drafting of Constitution

- TAPS, chapter 2 (pp. 31-64).
- James Madison, *The Federalist*, Number 10, in KK.
- James Madison, *The Federalist*, Number 51, in KK.
- Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, in KK.

Week 3, 08/22 - 08/26: Federalism

- TAPS, Chapter 3.

- James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 39, in KK.
- William Riker, excerpt from *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance*, in KK.
- Robert Mickey, *Paths Out of Dixie: The Democratization of Authoritarian Enclaves in America's Deep South, 1944-1972* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), excerpts from chapters 1 and 2 (19 pages).

Week 4, 08/29 - 09/02: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- TAPS, chapter 4 (pp. 101-133).
- U. S. Supreme Court, *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*, in KK.
- U.S. Supreme Court, *Obgerfell v. Hodges (2015)*.

Week 5, 09/05 - 09/09: Congress

- TAPS, chapter 5 (pp. 137-181)
- *The Federalist*, Nos. 53 and 62. (Canvas)
- David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, in KK.
- Gary W. Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U. S. House of Representatives*, in KK.
- Laurel Harbridge and Neil Malhotra, from "Electoral Incentives and Partisan Conflict in Congress: Evidence from Survey Experiments", in KK.

Week 6, 09/12 - 09/16: The Presidency

- TAPS, chapter 6 (pp. 185-222)
- Richard M. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*.
- Charles M. Cameron, *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*, in KK.
- William G. Howell, *Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*, in KK.

Week 7, 09/19 - 09/23: The Bureaucracy

- TAPS, chapter 7 (pp. 225-259)
- James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*, in KK.
- Mathew D. McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz, “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Fire Alarms versus Police Patrols,” in KK.

Week 8, 09/26 - 09/30: The Judiciary

- TAPS, chapter 8 (pp. 263-295).
- Gerald Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring about Social Change?*, in KK.
- Greg Stohr, *Grutter v. Bollinger: An Argument for the Ages*, in KK.
- *National Federation of Independent Business v. Sebelius* (2012), in KK.

MIDTERM EXAM: Last day of Week 8, in class.

American Political Behavior**Week 9, 10/03 - 10/07:** Political Parties

- TAPS, chapter 12 (pp. 409-442).
- Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, in KK.
- John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, in KK.
- Marty Cohen, et al, *The Party Decides*, in KK.

Week 10, 10/10 - 10/14: Public Opinion

- TAPS, chapter 9.
- John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, from KK.
- Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?*, in KK.
- Donald R. Kinder and Cindy D. Kam, *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*, in KK.

Week 11, 10/17 - 10/21: Political Participation

- TAPS, chapter 10.
- Steven J. Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*, in KK.
- Janelle Wong, et al, *Asian American Political Participation*, in K K.

Week 12, 10/24 - 10/28: Elections and Representation

- TAPS, chapter 13.
- Brandice Canes-Wrone et al. "Out of step, out of office: Electoral accountability and House members' voting." *American Political Science Review*. (Canvas)
- Richard Fenno, *Home Style*, in KK (Unit 5).

Week 13, 10/31 - 11/04: Interest Groups and Social Movements

- TAPS, chapter 11 (pp. 377-406).
- Rick Hall and Alan Deardorff, *Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy* (Canvas).
- Ken Kollman, *Outside Lobbying*, in KK.
- Michael Heaney and Fabio Rojas, excerpt from *Party in the Street* (Canvas).

Late Policy

Late papers will be penalized one letter grade every day they are late. Papers will *not* be accepted more than 3 days late.

Classroom Environment

Please note that the classroom is a space where participation of all students is welcome, protected, and expected, regardless of differences in race, sex, gender, nationality, disability, religion, ideology, or otherwise. Students will be respectful of each other both during section and while completing any assignment outside of class that requires group interaction. As noted above, I recognize that political science is a discipline in which we discuss ideologies, viewpoints, and situations about which reasonable people may passionately disagree. Being the case, I ask that you display the utmost respect for fellow peers and their ideas during class. If at any point you fail to treat one another with such respect, I reserve the right to deduct from your daily participation grade.

Please let me know if you feel the classroom lose such a level of respect at any time, so that we can address your concerns. Additionally, if you feel that your views are being disrespected in outside-the-classroom interactions related to this course, please do not hesitate to speak with me.

Cell Phones and Laptops

To limit disruptions, please turn off your cell phone when you come to class. If your cell phone does ring, I will ask you to turn it off and put it away. Repeated issues with cell phones will result in decreases in your participation grade. In fairness, if my cellphone goes off during class, I will bring doughnuts from Dom's Bakery in Ypsilanti to the following session. If you are expecting an important phone call during section, please get in touch with me before class and we can arrange something. Text messaging is not permitted.

I have no problem with you using your laptop to take notes. However, if you do choose to use your computer, I ask that you please sit towards the front of the classroom and refrain from browsing Facebook / other social media, or otherwise distracting yourself with your computer. Doing so may affect your participation grade.

Academic Misconduct and Grade Appeals

While the vast majority will not engage in academic misconduct, it must be reiterated that academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Please see the LSA website (<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/academicintegrity/>) regarding this topic for more thorough explanation of the plagiarism, cheating, and general academic misconduct policies.

Grade appeals must be submitted in writing to me at least 24 hours after the grade is returned. I will review your appeal and choose to either keep the same grade or change it.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at least two weeks prior to the time when the accommodation will be needed. Some aspects of this course, the assignments, the in-class activities, and the way the course is usually taught may be modified to facilitate your participation and progress. As soon as you make me aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD (734-763-3000; <http://www.umich.edu/sswd>) typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such.

Contacting Me

My office, office hours, and e-mail can be located at the top of the syllabus. The best way to contact me is to come to office hours (or by scheduling an appointment if necessary). Office hours are intended as a resource for you; they are a time where we can discuss questions about the material, assignments, or your experience in class. You can also contact me through e-mail. I will respond to e-mails within 24 hours on a weekday and within 48 hours on the weekend and holidays. As you might expect, an e-mail sent during school hours will have a faster turnaround than an e-mail sent at 2 a.m. the night before an exam. If you wish to contact me this way, please include "PS111" in the subject line of the e-mail.