

# Political Science 1301

## INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

Trinity University  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2020

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<b>Instructor:</b>	Jesse M. Crosson	<b>Class Time:</b>	Tues./Thurs., 9:55 - 11:10 AM
<b>Office:</b>	Storch 105	<b>Class Location:</b>	Storch 103 / Zoom
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:jcrosson@trinity.edu">jcrosson@trinity.edu</a>	<b>Office Hours:</b>	Wed. 9-12:00, 2-5:00; & by appt.

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### 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 course's TLearn site. Please check the site regularly, as I will be providing announcements and updates via that channel.

### Required Texts:

Please pick up a copies of

- Ken Kollman. *The American Political System*. W. W. Norton
- Ken Kollman. *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*.

Other readings will be made available via TLearn.

**Prerequisites:** No prerequisites are required.

### Grading Policy and Relevant Dates:

Class Participation and Attendance .....	15%
Reading Quizzes .....	10%
Midterm Essay 1 .....	10%
Midterm Essay 2 .....	25%
Midterm Exam .....	20%
Final Exam .....	20%

### Attendance and Participation

You are expected to attend class every day, despite the online nature of the course. However, I understand that life happens, particularly in the present environment, so I will give students two no-questions-asked absences this 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. Bear in mind that I am extremely lenient about what constitutes “written documentation:” just about anything beyond one’s own word should be fine!

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!

### Reading Quizzes

At the beginning of one class per week, I will give a 3 to 5 question quiz related to the readings due on that day. If you did the reading, you should be able to attain a perfect score. However, I realize that, again, life happens, and you may be more prepared during some weeks than others. As a result, I will only count your **ten best** quiz scores toward your final quiz grade. In other words, I will toss your three worst quiz scores.

### Midterm Essay 1: Analyzing Politics Using a Theoretical Framework

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. This will be a 750 to 1,250 word (3-5 page) essay.

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, social scientific, 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.

### Midterm Essay 2: Marshalling Evidence and Analysis to Support an Opinion

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 two weeks 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!** However, I would advise you to read no more than two weeks ahead, as readings are subject to change, based on our weekly progress.

### Part 1: American Political Institutions

#### **Week 1, 01/26 - 01/28: 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].
- Kiewiet and McCubbins, excerpt from *The Logic of Delegation*, in KK.

#### **Week 2, 02/02 - 02/04: The U.S. Founding; Drafting of Constitution**

- TAPS, chapter 2.
- 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, 02/09 - 02/11: 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).
- Matthew Zeitlin, "Laboratories of Democracy: what Seattle learned from having the highest minimum wage in the nation."
- Dara Lind, "Sanctuary cities, explained."

### *Midterm Essay 1 prompts issued*

#### **Week 4, 02/16 - 02/18: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

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

#### **Week 5, 02/23 - 02/25: & Week 6, 03/02 - 03/04: Congress**

- **NOTE:** No class on Tuesday, February 23!
- TAPS, chapter 5 (pp. 137-181)
- *The Federalist*, Nos. 53 and 62.
- 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.
- Excerpt from Frances Lee, *Insecure Majorities*.

### *Midterm Essay 1 Due (Friday, March 5)*

#### **Week 7, 03/09 - 03/11: The Presidency**

- TAPS, chapter 6
- Richard M. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, in KK.
- 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.
- Lazaro Zamora, "Obama's Immigration Executive Actions: Two Years Later"

#### **Week 8, 03/16 - 03/18: The Bureaucracy**

- TAPS, chapter 7
- 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.
- Greg Huber and Charles Shipan, *Diliberate Discretion*, excerpt TBD

### **Week 9, 03/23 - 03/25: The Judiciary**

- TAPS, chapter 8
- 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 9 (3/25), in class.**

## **Part 2: American Political Behavior**

### **Week 10, 03/30 - 04/01: Political Parties**

- TAPS, chapter 12
- John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, in KK.
- Marty Cohen, et al, *The Party Decides*, in KK.
- Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, in KK.
- Excerpt from Carsey and Layman, *Changing Sides or Changing Minds? Party Identification and Policy Preferences in the American Electorate*.
- Lilliana Mason, “I disrespectfully agree: The differential effects of partisan sorting on social and issue polarization.”

*Midterm Essay 2 Prompt Issued*

### **Week 11, 04/06 - 04/08: Interest Groups and Social Movements**

- TAPS, chapter 11
- Rick Hall and Alan Deardorff, *Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy*.
- Jesse Crosson, Alexander Furnas, and Geoffrey Lorenz, “Polarized Pluralism.”
- Ken Kollman, *Outside Lobbying*, in KK.
- Interview with Daniel Gillion, “Can widespread protests bring lasting change?”

### **Week 12, 04/13 - 04/20: Public Opinion**

- **NOTE:** No class on Thursday, April 15!

- TAPS, chapter 9.
- Larry Bartels and Chris Achen, *Democracy for Realists*, Chapter 1.
- Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. McCubbins, The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?, in KK.
- Ben Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, pp 1-26.
- Donald R. Kinder and Cindy D. Kam, *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*, in KK.

### **Week 13, 04/22 - 04/27: 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 KK.

### **Week 14, 04/29 - 05/04: Mass Media and the Press**

- TAPS, chapter 14.
- Groseclose, T. *Left Turn: How Liberal Media Bias Distorts the American Mind*. **Excerpt TBD.**
- Hassell, H. et al. "There is no liberal media bias in which news stories political journalists choose to cover." *Science*.
- Martin, G. and J. McCrain. "Yes, Sinclair Broadcast Group does cut local news, increase national news and tilt its stations rightward." *Washington Post*.

### **Week 14, 05/06: Elections and Representation**

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

*Midterm Essay 2 Due (Tuesday, May 6)*

**Final Exam: TBD**

## 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 (Not Applicable During Remote Semester)

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 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.

## University Policies

### Honor Code

All students are covered by a policy that prohibits dishonesty in academic work. Under the Honor Code, a faculty member will (or a student may) report an alleged violation to the Academic Honor Council. It is the task of the Council to investigate, adjudicate, and assign a punishment within certain guidelines if a violation has been verified. Students are required to pledge all written work that is submitted for a grade: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received any unauthorized assistance on this work" and their signature. The pledge may be abbreviated "pledge" with a signature.

### Title IX/Sexual Misconduct Reporting

As a Responsible Employee who is committed to creating an environment where every member of our community can thrive, I want to let you know that I am a Mandatory Reporter. What that means is that I am required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual intercourse, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, stalking, and related retaliation that I am aware of to the Title IX Coordinator. So, if you share information with me about any incidents that implicate the Sexual Misconduct or Anti-Harassment Policies, I am required to report all information to the Title IX Coordinator to make sure you have information about support resources and complaint resolution options. My report does not initiate the complaint process, and you are in control over how you choose to engage with our Title IX Coordinator. If you or someone you know

has experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, I encourage you to share this information directly with the Title IX Coordinator or one of the individuals who has been designated as a confidential resource on campus. Information about reporting is available here: [Reporting](#).

### Electronic Recordings of Classroom Instruction

The COVID-19 pandemic requires the delivery of online instruction. For this reason, please be aware that all classroom instruction, including student participation in classroom activities, is subject to recording and dissemination on the University's secure course management system (T-Learn). The recordings will be made available only to students enrolled in the course to facilitate online learning and review. Students are expressly prohibited from capturing or copying classroom recordings by any means; violations will be subject to disciplinary action. Instructors who wish to use a recording outside of class must obtain the written consent of any students who are personally identifiable in the recording.

### Required Video Sharing/Online Proctoring

As part of this course, you will be required to use Respondus Monitor or a similar tool on your computer while taking exams. This software allows for online proctoring by monitoring individuals on their computer webcam, as well as video analytics to identify potential cheating. Any recordings will be treated as an education record subject to FERPA protections.

## **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 "PLSI 1301" in the subject line of the e-mail.