

GOVT 020: US Political Systems

Georgetown University

Summer 2016

First session (section 10): MTWT in ICC 210A, 1-3 PM.

Second session (section 20): MTWT in ICC 117, 1-3 PM.

Instructor: Jack Santucci (jms346@georgetown.edu)

Office hours by appointment.

1 Goals

What is the American political system? What are its main parts? How is it different from other democratic systems? Are these differences good or bad? This introductory course in American politics will get you thinking about these questions. Readings, lectures, and discussion of current events help us answer each. A short essay will ask you to specialize. Overall, the course aims to prepare you for deeper study in political science.

2 Required books

Both are for sale at the campus bookstore. Used copies of **KK** should be for sale online.

- Taylor, Steven L., Matthew S. Shugart, Arend Lijphart, and Bernard Grofman. 2014. *A Different Democracy: American Government in a Thirty-One-Country Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (**TSLG**).
- Kollman, Ken. 2013. *The American Political System, 2nd Edition*. W. W. Norton & Company. (**KK**).

3 Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following components:

- Participation and attendance (20%).
- Short paper (40%). Due at 1 PM on the second to last day of class.
- Final exam (40%). Last day of class.

The [Georgetown Honor System](#) has full effect.¹ I will vigorously prosecute any instance of plagiarism.

¹<https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system>

Deadlines are firm, and attendance is mandatory. I will relax these rules for documented medical emergencies and bereavement only.

Audio and video recorders are prohibited. Digital note-taking devices are permitted, but research increasingly shows them to be distracting. If using one affects your participation, switch to pen and paper.

3.1 Participation

Attend class daily, and join in discussion of the readings. Please stay informed about major news events, especially as the November 2016 elections approach.

3.2 Short paper

I will distribute a list of questions in the third week of class. Your job is to answer one of them. The questions will derive from the broad themes stated in the course overview. Please, don't summarize our readings or lectures. Integrate and evaluate them. Make and defend a thesis statement. A wise man once said, "**A** is for **argument**."

Your paper should be 750-1,250 words in length (3-5 double-spaced pages). A title page is not necessary, but a title is. Your name, the date, and the course name must appear at the top of the page. Use the [Chicago author-date](#) citation style.² Do not exceed the maximum length. Margins must be one inch all around, line spacing must be exactly double, and the font must be exactly 12-point. I encourage but do not require double-sided printing. The paper is due in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due date.

Revise, revise. Proofread. Is your writing clear? If you are unsure, read Patrick Dunleavy's [useful essay](#) on good academic writing.³

3.3 Final exam

This will consist of short-answer questions. You will have choice. The exam will be easy to complete in our two-hour meeting period.

Your answers must be hand-written in official university blue books, which I will provide. Please do not use pencil. If you require special exam arrangements, please make them well in advance.

3.4 Instructional continuity

In the event that we cannot meet in person, I will email the class one or more discussion questions. You will be required to write a one-page (250-word) answer to one of them, then email it to me by 3 PM. I will grade the papers and factor them into participation grades. Follow the guidelines under "Short paper" above.

²<https://www.library.georgetown.edu/tutorials/research-guides/turabian-paren-guide>

³<https://medium.com/advice-and-help-in-authoring-a-phd-or-non-fiction/how-to-write-paragraphs-80781e2f3054>

4 Schedule of readings

4.1 Core concepts

Class 1 “Preface” and “Introduction” in TSLG.

Class 2 “Political Engineering and the US Constitution” in TSLG. “Collective Dilemmas and the Need for Government” and “Types of Collective Dilemmas” in KK, Chapter 1.

4.2 Basic institutions

Class 3 “The Constitution” in KK.

Class 4 “Constitutions” in TSLG.

Class 5 “Federalism” in KK.

Class 6 “Federalism and Division of Power” in TSLG.

Class 7 “Congress” in KK.

Class 8 “Legislative Power” in TSLG.

Class 9 “The Presidency” in KK.

Class 10 “Executive Power” in TSLG.

Class 11 “The Bureaucracy” in KK.

Class 12 “The Judiciary” in KK. “Judicial Power” in TSLG.

4.3 Political Parties & Participation

Class 13 “Interest Groups and Social Movements” in KK.

Class 14 “Political Parties” in KK.

Class 15 “Elections and Electoral Systems” in TSLG.

Class 16 “Elections and Campaigns” in KK. “Political Parties, Election Campaigns, and Interest Groups” in TSLG.

Class 17 “Political Participation” in KK.

Class 18 “Comparative Conclusions” in TSLG.

4.4 Public Opinion

Class 19 “Public Opinion” in KK.

Class 20 “Mass Media and the Press” in KK.

4.5 Conclusion

Class 21 APSA Committee on Parties. 1950. “Summary of Conclusions and Proposals.”⁴

Class 22 Review session. Paper due at start of class.

Class 23 Final exam.

⁴<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1950998>