Introduction to the U.S. Political System
Government 020

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Class meets: M-TR, June 1-July 3, 1-3:00 pm, ICC 210A
Office hours: TBD.

1 Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the U.S. political system. We will begin by examining the history of key U.S. political institutions and the rationales behind them. Next, we will turn to the key players competing in the system. After this, we will look at the basic institutions, rules, and policies under which these players compete. Students who complete this course are expected to have a basic mastery of these ideas, which would then allow them to delve more deeply into specific areas of American politics.

2 Goals and Expectations

Goals

By the end of the semester, students should feel confident in their knowledge of the U.S. political system and be able to write a thoughtful paper on some aspect of it.

Expectations

Attendance

Attendance is expected. If you for any reason miss class, you will be expected to cover any missed material on your own (I will not provide additional coverage of the materials to those who miss class). Most class materials will be available online and in the assigned readings, but simply reviewing the lecture slides will not be sufficient to provide coverage of the material. You should ask classmates for their notes as well. As long as you work to catch up on missed material and participate well in class, one or two absences will not
impact your participation grade. There is no need to notify me if you will be absent due to illness, a family emergency, etc. The only exception to this attendance policy is the exams.

All students are expected to take the exams at the scheduled time and turn in their papers on time. If you know that you will be unable to do so due to unavoidable reasons, please contact your Dean. I will require confirmation from your Dean before allowing you to make up the exam, or before accepting any late work.

Technology

Students are expected to refrain from using technology during class (computers, iPads, tablets, phones, etc.).

3 Graded Components

Class participation: 15%
Midterm exam: 25%
Final paper: 30%
Final exam: 30%

Class participation (15%)

This is a lecture class, so you must be present and attentive if you plan to do well. This includes participating in class exercises, occasional discussions, and weekly quizzes. Attendance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for participation.

There will be a quiz on the readings most class sections to test if you have done the reading. Your quiz score will be the average of your 10 best quizzes. Quizzes cannot be made up.

The rest of your participation grade will be based on other class activities.

Midterm exam (25%)

The midterm exam will take place in class on June 15th. It will contain a variety of short identifications, short answers, and short essays on all materials covered up to that point. It will be closed book and closed note.

Final paper (30%)

You will write one paper on a topic discussed in class. I will provide prompts, or you may choose a different topic. Topics must be approved by June 18th. Papers will be due by email at 5 pm on June 30. Late papers will be penalized 10 percentage points per day. More details will be given in class.
Final exam (30%)  
The final exam will take place on July 2. It will be cumulative, and in the same format as the midterm.

4 Required Readings

Many of the readings will be available electronically (on Blackboard), but you are required to purchase the following books form your favorite retailer. I’m personally a fan of Amazon and half.com.


5 Schedule

*Please complete the assigned reading before coming to class*

**June 1: Orientation/Why Government?**
Kollman, Chapter 1
Noel 2010 (online)

**June 2: Constitution and Founding**
Kollman, Chapter 2
Federalist Papers 10, 44, 51, 78, 84 (online)
Antifederalist 84 (online)

**June 3: Federalism & Representation**
Kollman, Chapter 3
Federalist Papers 16, 17, 39, 41 (online)
Antifederalist 17 (online)
Dahl (selections)

**June 4: Preferences and Ideology**
Kollman, Chapters 4, 16, 17, and 18
June 8: Political Parties and Interest Groups  
Kollman, Chapters 11 and 12  
Bawn et al. 2012

June 9: Congress  
Mayhew (selections)  
Coleman, Chapter 5  
Aldrich and Rohde (online)

June 10: Presidency  
Kollman, Chapter 6  
Federalist 70

June 11: Judiciary.  
Kollman, Chapter 8  
*Marbury v Madison* (online)

June 15: Midterm

June 16: Bureaucracy and Delegation  
Kollman, Chapter 7

June 17: Comparative Political Systems

June 18: Elections I: Voting Behavior. Final paper topic must be approved.  
Kollman, Chapter 10

June 22: Elections II: Candidate Behavior & Nominations  
Kollman, Chapter 13  
Sides and Vavreck (online)

June 23: Public Opinion  
Kollman, Chapter 9  
Gelman (all)

June 24: Media  
Kollman, Chapter 14

June 25: Campaign Finance and Lobbying  
Kollman, Chapter 13  
Kaminer 2012  
Bai 2012  
La Raja and Schaffner 2012

June 29: Recent movements: Tea Party & Occupy Wall St. Final Papers Due  
Readings online (TBD)
June 30: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
Kollman, Chapter 4
Brown v Board of Education
Gideon v Wainwright
Griswold v Connecticut
Roe v Wade

July 1: Social, Economic, and Foreign Policy
Kollman, Chapter 15, 16, and 17
Mettler (all)

July 2: Final exam