

Pol 1: Introduction to American Politics

University of California, Davis

Fall 2017

Olson Hall 217: M, W 2:10-4:00 pm

Instructor: Ross Butters

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Office: Kerr Hall, room 667

Office Hours: Wed. 10-12 (and by appointment) ** Subject to change with advance notice

Course Objectives:

This course is designed to introduce students to the systematic study of American politics. One primary goal of this course is to develop an understanding of the forces that influence the behavior of individuals as well as institutions in and around national government. The main question motivating the course is a simple, yet complex one: how well does the American political system live up to the ideals of a representative democracy? To answer this question, we need to know something about how it is supposed to work, where it fails to measure up and why. We develop a framework that will enable us to assess different conceptions of what the ideals of democracy should be and how to evaluate the American system.

We will begin by describing the constitutional basis of American government and analyzing the political processes by which citizens seek to influence their government. The recent campaigns to elect a congress and president in 2016 provide excellent opportunities to examine concrete examples of these ideas. Once we understand how citizens are "linked" to their government, our attention will turn to the formal institutions of Congress, the Presidency, and the Supreme Court. We will identify their distinct powers and examine their relative contributions in shaping public policy.

Required Textbook:

There is one assigned textbook for this course. We will also have assigned readings during various weeks of the course. These readings will be made available on Canvas. All assigned readings, for each week, should be completed before coming to class.

** Readings are interesting and informative. Assigning them does not mean I agree with them.

- Kollman, Ken. 2015. *The American Political System: Core Edition*: New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company¹

¹ The second and third editions of this book are effectively the same. I use the second edition. Purchase whichever edition makes you most excited.

Course Policies:

Attendance, Participation, and Weekly Readings: Class attendance and the corresponding weekly readings are mandatory. All students should come to class prepared to participate in class discussion and to participate with the in-class activities.

Laptops and Nametags: Laptops are **not allowed** in class (except with medical/disability exceptions). Nametags (written in dark ink) **are required**. Bringing a nametag everyday will count as part of your participation grade.

Late Policy and Make-Up Exams: Make-up exams and extensions will be allowed only in the event of a medical or family emergency. The emergency must be documented (doctor's note) in order to be able to take a make-up exam or to have an extension. If documentation is provided, then a decision will be made regarding whether you will be granted a make-up exam or receive an extension. A written medical report must accompany any requests for an incomplete.

Academic Honesty:

Cheating and other violations of the University of California's academic honesty policy are serious offenses. Please refer to the UC Davis policy on integrity of scholarship for further details. Students who engage in cheating will earn an F grade.

Students with Disabilities:

Any student who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements in order to meet any of the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student to request accommodation for individual learning needs. UC Davis will make every attempt to accommodate all qualified students with disabilities.

Grading Policy:

Participation – 15%

- Making a nametag is part of participation – 5%
- Participating in class is part of participation – 10%

Group Quizzes – 15%

- There will be six unannounced group quizzes in randomly selected lectures. Your responses to these quizzes will be graded pass/fail.
- Quizzes will be a question posed on the screen in the front of the lecture hall. You will have a few minutes to meet in small groups and discuss your answer, then a minute to write down a brief answer.
- Turn in your quiz with **your** name on it.
- Lowest quiz is dropped, so each quiz is worth 3%.

Midterm Exam – 30%

- November 1, 2017 at 2:10 PM ** Subject to change with advance notice
- Midterm exam held in regular lecture.

Final Exam – 40%

- December 15, 2017 at 8:00 AM

Extra Credit Opportunities

- Attend a political/policy-related talk around the Davis area this quarter. 1 paragraph on the talk itself, 1 paragraph on how it relates to class. (up to 2 points)
- Tentative opportunity to participate in political science experiment (up to 1 point)

IMPORTANT: No students can receive more than 100% in the course.

Exam Dates (again):

Midterm Exam: 11/1/2017 at 2:10 PM

Final Exam: 12/15/2017 at 8:00 AM

Reading Schedule and Lectures:

Section 1: Foundations of American Democracy

- Meeting 1 (Sept. 27): Course Overview and American Democracy
 - Kollman, Chapter 1, *Introduction*
 - Seth Masket (2017), "[Trump Has Already Crossed the Red Line. Now What?](#)" Vox (August 8).
- Meeting 2 (Oct. 2): The Problem of Human Nature: Self-Interest, Factions, & Collective Action
 - Kollman, Chapter 2, *The Constitution*
 - Federalist #10 (Appendix of Kollman text or online)
- Meeting 3 (Oct. 4): Madison's Theory: Self-Interest & Ambition as the Solution
 - Reread Federalist #10 (Appendix of Kollman text or online)
 - Federalist #51 (Appendix of Kollman text or online)

Section 2: Political Behavior

- Meeting 4 (Oct. 9): Political Participation
 - Kollman, Chapter 10, *Political Participation*
 - Bello, Jason. 2012. "The Dark Side of Disagreement? Revisiting the Effect of Disagreement on Political Participation." *Electoral Studies* 31(4): 782–95.
- Meeting 5 (Oct. 11): Political Preferences
 - Zaller, John & Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 951-971.

- Linn, Suzanna, Jonathan Nagler, and Marco A. Morales. 2013. "Economics, Elections, and Voting Behavior" In Jan E. Leighley eds., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.
- Meeting 6 (Oct. 16): Mass Media and Politics
 - Kollman, Chapter 14, *Mass Media and the Press*
 - Stroud, Natalie. 2014. "Selective Exposure Theories." In Kate Kenski and Kathleen Hall Jamieson eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 2014.
- Meeting 7 (Oct. 18): Vote Choice and Limited Information
 - Schudson, Michael. 2000. "America's Ignorant Voters." *The Wilson Quarterly* 36(3): 16-22.
 - Kollman, Chapter 9, Public Opinion
 - Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperceptions." *Political Behavior* 32(2): 303–30.
- Meeting 8 (Oct. 23): Electoral Context and Vote Choice
 - Jane Green and Will Jennings (2017), "[Voters value competence. That could be bad news for Trump.](#)" Monkey Cage (September 1).
 - Kollman, Chapter 13, *Elections and Campaigns*
 - Stone, Walter J. & Matthew K. Buttice. 2010. "Voters in Context: The Politics of Citizen Behavior" In Jan E. Leighley eds., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.
- Meeting 9 (Oct. 25): Interest Groups
 - Kollman, Chapter 11, *Interest Groups and Social Movements*
 - Re-re-read Federalist #10 (Appendix of Kollman text or online)
- Meeting 10 (Oct. 30): Review for Midterm

Meeting 11: Midterm Examination: November 1

Section 3: Political Institutions

- Meeting 12 (Nov. 6): Parties I
 - Kollman, Chapter 12, *Political Parties*
 - Seth Masket and Julia Anzari (2017), "[Identity Politics, Parties, and Democracy](#)" Vox (August 28).
- Meeting 13 (Nov. 8): Parties II
 - Aldrich, John H, and John D Griffin. 2010. "Parties, Elections, and Democratic Politics." *Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*.
- Meeting 14 (Nov. 13): Congress
 - Danielle Thomsen (2017), "[This is why Charlie Dent and other moderates are disappearing from Congress](#)" Monkey Cage (September 12).
 - Kollman, Chapter 5, Congress
- Meeting 15 (Nov. 15): Roadmap to Re-Election

- Mayhew, David. 1974. "The Electoral Connection and the Congress." In Terry Sullivan & Matthew Sullivan eds., *Congress: Structure and Policy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 1987.
- Evans, C. Lawrence. 2011. "Congressional Committees" In George C. Edwards III, Frances E. Lee, & Eric Schickler eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.
- Evans, Diana. 2011. "Pork Barrel Politics" In George C. Edwards III, Frances E. Lee, & Eric Schickler eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.
- Meeting 16 (Nov. 20): The Presidency
 - Moe, Terry M. & William G. Howell. 1999. "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29(4): 850-873.
 - Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The Presidents Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2): 313-329

NO CLASS NOVEMBER 22

- Meeting 17 (Nov. 27): Presidential Leadership
 - Lee, Frances E. 2013. "Presidents and Party Teams: The Politics of Debt Limits and Executive Oversight, 2001-2013." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 43(4): 775–91.
 - Young, Garry, and William B. Perkins. 2005. "Presidential Rhetoric, the Public Agenda, and the End of Presidential Television's 'Golden Age.'" *Journal of Politics* 67(4): 1190–1205.
- Meeting 18 (Nov. 29): Polarization in the Government and the Electorate
 - Lee, Frances E. 2015. "How Party Polarization Affects Governance." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 261–82.
 - Ross Butters and Chris Hare (2017), "[Three-Fourths of Americans Regularly Talk Politics Only With Members of Their Own Political Tribe](#)" *Monkey Cage* (May 1).
 - **Optional:** Iyengar, Shanto, and Sean J Westwood. 2015. "Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(3): 690–707.
- Meeting 19 (Dec. 4): The Least Dangerous Branch?
 - Kollman, Chapter 8, *The Judiciary*
- Meeting 20 (Dec. 6): Review for Final

Final Examination: December 15