

Political Science 1: Introduction to American Politics Syllabus

Instructor: Matt Lesenyie
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Office Hours: Mondays 12pm-2pm
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Course: 1204 Haring Hall MW 2:10-4pm

Texts

Ken Kollman, *The American Political System*. (1st, 2nd, or 2014 update edition)
Ken Kollman, *Readings in American Politics*. (3rd edition)

Course Requirements

Do the Readings. You are responsible for doing the scheduled reading prior to lecture for which the readings are assigned. Readings and lectures will not always be on the same topics, nor will readings necessarily be covered in lecture.

Show Up On Time. Opt into the environment. If you cannot arrive on time please enter the back door and sit in the back on the aisle to minimize disruption to others.

Prepare. You will be expected to complete the readings for the week that we meet. Useful lectures hinge on students who have read and thought about the assigned material. Because I will be asking students about the week's readings and concepts, it is integral that you have some familiarity with the assigned readings before we meet. Or don't read in advance, I'll still call on you.

Participate. Fundamentally political science is about social problems, not solitary ones. Therefore, your participation and that of your classmates will help to enrich your understanding of these problems. Everyone in this course has something to contribute to this learning environment. You are expected to respectfully share your thoughts and ideas with each other. And by participation I mean engaging the material, not simply answering questions. My hope is that you'll come to recognize the value of this course. Feel free to visit me during office hours or after class if you're unsure of these expectations after today.

Making the Grade

Final course grade breaks down like this:

Participation (15%)

Two Written Assignments (10%)

Midterm (30%)

Final Exam (45%)

Exam Dates:

Midterm examination: Monday, November 2nd

Final Examination: Thursday, December 10th

Midterm exam date subject to change with advance notice. No extensions will be given for any assignment without written medical excuse or prior approval from me. No make-up examinations without prior approval or without a written medical excuse. Late assignments will be penalized at rate of 20% per day.

Schedule of Readings and Lectures

I. Theoretical and Constitutional Foundations. We use James Madison's "Republic" as the fundamental theory that justifies the American Constitution. This theory is based on *Federalist 10* and *51*. Throughout the course, we critically examine Madison's theory in light of how the American system actually works. Pay close attention to the argument Madison makes about human nature, about how people behave in political life, and what the consequences are for the well-constituted government. Do you accept these arguments? Is Madison's Republic a democratic system?

September 28. Course overview, Syllabus and administrative details, key concepts.

- Text, Chapter 1.

September 30. Self Interest as the Problem.

- Garrett Hardin, *The Tragedy of the Commons*, Reader 1.3
- James Madison, *Federalist #10*, Reader 2.1

October 5. Self Interest as the Solution; Madison's Republic

- Re-read *Federalist #10*.
- Text, Chapter 2, p. 44-65
- James Madison, *Federalist #51*, Reader 2.2
- *Constitution of the United States*, Text, p. Appendix

II. Elections and Voting Choice. Elections are supposed to promote representative government. Do they? Can they? How important is a well-informed, interested electorate in producing electoral democracy?

October 7. Preferences and the Logic of Elected Agents

- Angus Campbell et al., "The American Voter" Reader 12.2
- Re-read Text. Principal Agent Problems, p. 19-20
- Kiewiet and McCubbins "The Logic of Delegation" Reader 1.4
- Text, Chapter 13.

October 12. Electoral Context and Voting Choice. Causes and Implications of Two-Party System

- Maurice Duverger: District Magnitude. A math fix for collective action (lecture)

October 14. Political Parties: Politics as a Team Sport. What are they good for? Who do they represent anyway?

- Text, Chapter 12.
- Cohen, et. al. "The Party Decides" Reader 12.3
- Aldrich. "Why Parties: A Second Look" Reader 12.1

III. Electoral Politics: Congress

October 19. Getting Reelected & Constituency Representation

- Text, Chapter 5, pp. 137-153
- David R. Mayhew, "Congress: The Electoral Connection" Reader 5.1.
- Richard F. Fenno, "Home Style" Reader 5.2

October 21. Congressional Organization and the Problem of Collective Responsibility.

- Text, pp. 153-183.
- Cox and McCubbins, "Setting the Agenda" Reader 5.4.

October 26. Getting reelected, constituent representation, and committee organization continued

- David Mayhew, Richard Fenno (Reader 5.1, 5.2.)
- Cox and McCubbins, "Setting the Agenda" Reader 5.4.

October 28. Principal Agent Theory in Film: Political Independence?

- The Candidate movie in class
- Catch up on readings!

***** Midterm Examination Monday November 2nd *****

IV. The Bureaucracy: Politics and Solving Problems...Or Problems not Solved by Politics?

November 4.

- Text pg. 250-260 & p 561-574
- McCubbins and Schwarz. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked" Reader 7.2
- Malcolm Gladwell "Million Dollar Murray" <http://gladwell.com/million-dollar-murray/>

V. Citizen Participation. Who participates in politics, who doesn't, and so what? What difference does it make that many do not vote? How can it be in the citizen's self-interest not to be self-interested?

November 9. The Costs of Citizen Participation

- Text, Chapter 10.
- *Holder v Shelby Co.* (2013) Reader 13.4

November 11. **(No Class)** Public Opinion: Why People Think What They Do?

- Text, Chapter 9.
- Lupia and McCubbins, "The Democratic Dilemma..." Reader 9.1.

VI. Interest Groups. Faction, special interests, pressure groups, and lobbying are all dirty words in American politics, but they form the core of yet another version of representative democracy.

November 16. Interest groups: Our Interests (Are Special Interests)

November 18. Methods of Influence: Inside, Outside, or Downside?

- Text, Chapter 11

VII. The Media: Journalism and Accountability? Or Profit, Dirty Laundry and Car Crashes?

November 23.

- Chapter 14

November 25. No class.

- Song: [Henley - Dirty Laundry](#)

November 30 Principal Agent Theory in Film: Media Independence?

- Matthew Baum. "Soft News Goes to War" Reader 14.1
- Kill the Messenger (shown in class: catch up on readings!)

December 2. Catch up, review

- Essay #2 Due via SmartSite

December 10. Final Exam 1-3pm