

Introduction to American Politics

Fall 2017

University of Rochester-PSC105

Monday and Wednesday 9:00-9:50 a.m.

Gavet 202

Professor Kroeger

Office: 307 Harkness Hall

Email: mkroege2@ur.rochester.edu

Office Hours: Mondays 1:30-3:30 and by appointment

Recitation Leaders:

To be announced

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the study of American political institutions, processes, and behavior. In this course students will learn how to think about the political world systematically. We will discuss the origins of the current governmental system in the U.S., the structure of the U.S. government, and how theories of American government apply to current events and problems that the government and citizens face today. This class is recommended for those thinking about a major or minor in political science or those who want to know more about the American political system and how to think about politics systematically.

Course Requirements

Students are expected to attend lectures every Monday and Wednesday and keep up with the readings. All students will be assigned to a recitation section, which meets once a week. Attendance is mandatory and active, respectful, and thoughtful participation in the sections is expected. Readings are listed by topic, and I encourage you to complete the readings for the topic before the first lecture on that topic, as it will facilitate your learning and comprehension in lecture. It is expected that readings for the week will be finished before your recitation section since discussion of the readings will constitute a significant part of the recitation section.

Grading

Midterm exam: 25% (**October 25th**)

Final exam: 35%

Short papers: 25% (**2 pages each; First due October 4th, Second due November 20th**)

Participation: 15%

Final Exam

The final exam schedule is set by the registrar. Check here for the date and time: <https://www.rochester.edu/registrar/examschedule.html>. I will send an email with the information. Barring extraordinary circumstances, there will be no make-up midterm or final exams.

Academic Honesty

All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. More information is available at: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/index.html>

Disabilities and Accommodations

This classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and I encourage you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully. Students requiring accommodations should contact the Office of Disability Resources:

- 1-154 Dewey Hall
- disability@rochester.edu
- (585) 275-9049

Required Texts

There are two books required for the class; the first is a textbook, and the second is a compilation of readings. The textbook and reader are sold as a package in the bookstore. There are rental options available via Amazon.

- Ken Kollman. *The American Political System*. 2017. New York: W.W. Norton. 3rd Edition. (**Textbook**)
- Ken Kollman. *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*. Editor. 2017. New York: W.W. Norton. 4th Edition. (**Reader**)

Throughout the semester, I will send newspaper articles and other short pieces that deal with topical issues. These are considered required reading and we will discuss them in recitation sections.

Course Outline**Wednesday, August 30th: Course Introduction**

No class on Friday, September 1st or Monday, September 4th: Labor Day

September 6 and 8: Introduction and Constitutional Design

- Textbook: Chapters 1 and 2
- Reader: Olson, Mancur. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*.
- Reader: Brutus. *The Antifederalist, No. 1*.

September 11 and 13: Federalism

- Textbook: Chapter 3
- Reader: Riker, William. *Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance*.

September 18 and 20: Congress

- Textbook: Chapter 5
- Reader: Mayhew, David. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*.
- Reader: Fenno, Richard. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*.

September 25 and 27: Presidency: *Is the president too powerful? Or not powerful enough?*

- Textbook: Chapter 6
- Reader: Canes-Wrone, Brandice. *Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public*.
- Reader: Neustadt, Richard. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*.

October 2 and 4: Bureaucracy and Administrative State: *Is the bureaucracy accountable? Should we run it like a business?*

- **October 4th: First short paper due**
- Textbook: Chapter 7
- Reader: Wilson, James. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*.
- Recitation activity: Notice & Comment

No class on Monday, October 9th: Fall Break

October 11 and 16: Judiciary

- Textbook: Chapter 8
- Reader: Rosenberg, Gerald. *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?*
- Recitation debate: Should we elect judges?

October 18 and 23: Public Opinion

- Textbook: Chapter 9
- Reader: Zaller, John. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.
- Reader: Cramer, Katherine. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*.
- Reader: Campbell, James. *Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America*.

October 25th: Midterm Exam in class

October 30 and November 1: Voting and Participation: *Why don't Americans vote? When they do vote, how do they decide who to vote for?*

- Textbook: Chapter 10
- Reader: Putnam, Robert. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

November 6 and 8: Interest Groups and Social Movements: *Do "special interests" have undue influence in our political process?*

- Textbook: Chapter 11
- Reader: Gilens, Martin. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*.

November 13 and 15: Political Parties

- Textbook: Chapter 12
- Reader: Aldrich, John. *Why Parties? A Second Look* (12.1, page 525)
- Reader: Cohen, Marty, Karol, David, Noel, Hans, and John Zaller. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*.
- Reader: Kollman, Ken. "Who Drives that Party Bus?"

November 20 and 22: Elections

- **November 20th: Second short paper due**
- Textbook: Chapter 13
- Reader: Achen, Christopher and Larry Bartels. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections do not Produce Responsive Government*.
- Reader: Fox, Richard and Jennifer Lawless. "Gendered Perceptions and Political Candidacies: A Central Barrier to Women's Equality in Electoral Politics."

November 27: Mass Media and the Press

- Textbook: Chapter 14
- Reader: Baum, Matthew. *Soft News Goes to War: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy in the New Media Age*.
- Reader: Abrajano, Marisa. *Campaigning to the New American Electorate: Advertising to Latino Voters*.

November 29: Panel of state legislators and local politicians visiting class!

- Senator Ranzenhofer and Assemblyman Morelle confirmed

December 4 and 6: Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, Legal Issues: *Does the federal government successfully provide benefits and protect rights?*

- Textbook: Chapter 4
- Reader: Tesler, Michael. *Post-Racial or Most-Racial? Race and Politics in the Obama Era*.
- Reader: *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

December 11: Economic and Political Inequality

- Reader: Bartels, Larry. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*.

December 13: Course catch-up, wrap-up, and conclusion

December 21 at 8:30am: Final exam tentatively scheduled for this slot, but check registrar's website (<https://www.rochester.edu/registrar/examschedule.html>).