

## **Introduction to American Politics**

Spring 2020

University of Rochester-PSC105

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

Gavett Hall 312

### **Professor Kroeger**

**Office:** 307 Harkness Hall  
**Email:** [mkroege2@ur.rochester.edu](mailto:mkroege2@ur.rochester.edu)  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 10:00-11:30am

### **Teaching Assistants:**

*TBD*

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### **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, attend recitation on Fridays, and keep up with the readings. All students will be assigned to a recitation section, which meets once a week. Recitation attendance is mandatory to receive points in the participation component of the course. Active, respectful, and thoughtful participation in the recitation sections is expected. Readings are listed by class date, 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.

This course follows the College credit hour policy for four-credit courses. This course meets twice weekly for 2 hours per week. The course also includes recitations for 1 hour per week. In this course, students will complete the enriched activities using readings and other class materials. These activities include a combination of scholarly readings, current news, listening assignments (e.g., podcasts and documentaries), team-based work on a podcast, and simulation activities (e.g., a mock Congress activity). As part of this component of the course, students should keep up with current events (I will suggest ways to do so).

**Grading Components**

*Midterm exam: 25% (March 4 at 9am)*

*Final exam: 35% (May 6 at 8:30am)*

*Two short assignments: 25% (due February 10 at 9am and April 8 at 9am)*

*Participation: 15%*

**Late Short Assignments**

If you turn in a short assignment late, you will be docked one third of one letter grade for every 24 hours that the paper is late, with late penalties accruing from the time the paper is due. For example, if your paper earned a B+, but you turned it in a few hours past the time it was due, you will receive a B; if you turned it in 30 hours past the time it was due, you will receive a B-.

Barring extraordinary circumstances, there will be no extensions granted.

**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.

**Grade Disputes**

Grade disputes will not be accepted for 24 hours after receiving the grade back. Grade disputes should be accompanied by a memo detailing the reasons that the student believes a higher grade is warranted. I will not consider regrades without this accompanying memo. The professor will be the grade dispute arbiter and the grade that I determine binds (i.e., if you get a lower grade on the regrade, this lower grade is the final assignment mark).

**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](mailto:disability@rochester.edu)

(585) 275-9049

**Required Texts**

There is one book required for class. This textbook is available via Amazon for around \$52.00 to buy and \$24.00 to rent. The bookstore will have copies available. The other readings are posted on Blackboard.

- Ken Kollman. *The American Political System*. 2017. New York: W.W. Norton. 3rd Edition. (**Textbook**)

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

### Course Outline

DATE	TOPIC	READING
January 15	<i>Lecture:</i> Course Introduction	None
January 17	NO RECITATION	
January 20	MLK Day, No class	Get started on next week's reading
January 22	<i>Lecture:</i> Introduction and Constitutional Design	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapters 1 and 2
January 24	Recitation  Start thinking about bill topic for mock Congress	Brutus. <i>The Antifederalist, No. 1.</i> <a href="http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/brutus-i/">http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/brutus-i/</a>
January 27 and 29	<i>Lecture:</i> Federalism	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 3
January 31	Recitation: Compare institutions and policies across cities or states (choose a city or state in preparation)	*Bring computer
February 3 and 5	<i>Lecture:</i> Congress	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 5
February 7	Recitation: Mock Congress activity	Mayhew. <i>Congress: The Electoral Connection.</i> Pages 13-19 and 81-105.
February 10 and 12	<i>Lecture:</i> Presidency  <b>Bill assignment due at 9am on February 10th.</b>	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 6
February 14	Recitation: Debate (randomly assigned sides) on presidential power	<b>Read:</b> Neustadt. <i>Presidential Power.</i> Pages 3-9.  <b>Listen to:</b> <a href="https://www.npr.org/2017/07/27/539825453/the-presidential-pardon-power-what-are-its-limits">https://www.npr.org/2017/07/27/539825453/the-presidential-pardon-power-what-are-its-limits</a>
February 17 and 19	<i>Lecture:</i> Bureaucracy and the Administrative State	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 7  <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kVqzOt-T_c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kVqzOt-T_c</a> Activity: Come up with all of the regulations you've interacted with this morning
February 21	Recitation: Notice and comment activity	*Bring computer <b>Listen to:</b> <a href="https://www.npr.org/2017/12/24/573275481/new-tax-code-has-long-route-ahead-before-it-can-be-implemented">https://www.npr.org/2017/12/24/573275481/new-tax-code-has-long-route-ahead-before-it-can-be-implemented</a> <b>Watch:</b> <a href="https://archive.org/details/tobacco_poy27a00">https://archive.org/details/tobacco_poy27a00</a>
February 24 and 26	<i>Lecture:</i> Judiciary	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 8

<b>February 28</b>	Recitation: Debate on the election of judges	Rosenberg. <i>The Hallow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?</i> Pages 1-7.
<b>March 2</b>	Lecture: Public Opinion	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 9
<b>March 4</b>	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	
<b>March 6</b>	Recitation: Create and take surveys	Ahler and Sood. "The parties in our heads: Misperceptions about party composition and their consequences." <i>Journal of Politics</i> .
<b>March 9 and 11</b>	<b>Spring break</b>	
<b>March 16 and 18</b>	Lecture: Voting and Participation	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 10
<b>March 20</b>	Recitation: Letter writing activity	<b>Read:</b> <a href="https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/what-calling-congress-achieves">https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/03/06/what-calling-congress-achieves</a>  Putnam. <i>Bowling Alone</i> . Pages 15-28.  Karpowitz, Mendelberg, Shaker. "Gender inequality in deliberative participation." <i>American Political Science Review</i> .
<b>March 23 and 25</b>	Lecture: Interest Groups and Social Movements	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 11
<b>March 27</b>	Recitation: Disentangling influence and campaign contributions activity	Strolovitch. <i>Affirmative Advocacy</i> . Pages 1-12.
<b>March 30</b>	Lecture: Political Parties	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 12
<b>April 1</b>	<i>Prof. Kroeger gone for talk—no lecture</i>	
<b>April 3</b>	Recitation: Come up with a party platform	McCarty. <i>Polarization: What Everyone Needs to Know</i> . Chapter 4—Is the public polarized?
<b>April 6 and 8</b>	Lecture: Elections  <b>Short assignment due at 9am on April 8<sup>th</sup>.</b>	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 13
<b>April 10</b>	<i>Recitation:</i>	Sides and Vavreck. <i>The Gamble</i> . Chapter 3.
<b>April 13 and 15</b>	Lecture: Mass Media and the Press	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 14
<b>April 17</b>	Recitation: Podcast activity	Listen to a few podcasts in preparation for this recitation (I will email out a few).
<b>April 20 and 22</b>	Lecture: Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, Legal Issues	<b>Textbook:</b> Chapter 4
<b>April 24</b>	Recitation: What other rights can you think of?	Read <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>
<b>April 27</b>	Lecture: Polarization and inequality	Gilens. <i>Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America</i> . Pages 1-4, 14-17.
<b>April 29</b>	Lecture: Course catch-up, wrap-up, and conclusion	Bring your questions!
<b>Wednesday, May 6 at 8:30am</b>	<b>Final exam tentatively scheduled for this slot, but check registrar's website for changes</b> ( <a href="https://www.rochester.edu/registrar/assets/pdf/final-exams-spr-2020.pdf">https://www.rochester.edu/registrar/assets/pdf/final-exams-spr-2020.pdf</a> )	