

Introduction to U.S. Politics

University of Rochester, PSCI 105

Fall 2020

Tue/Thur, 9:40 am - 10:55 am, Harkness 115

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Office hours: By appointment, online only

Course Information

Description This course will introduce students to the foundations of the United States government. Students will examine important political institutions and the interactions among them to understand how they shape the behavior of political actors and ordinary U.S. citizens. Specific topics will include: the need for a state, the purposes of elections, federalism, the three branches of U.S. government, and the role of interest groups in U.S. politics. Throughout, the course employs concepts from the rational-choice approach to political science to model key concepts; however, no background in this is necessary. This course is appropriate for majors and non-majors with an interest in understanding how and why the U.S. political system works as it does.

Assignments and Expectations I expect students, especially those able to attend in-person or synchronously online to have read the assigned material and to be prepared to ask questions and engage in discussions that draw upon the readings. Participation and attendance will not be graded. Students will complete four short assignments (each worth 15% of the grade) and two in-class exams (each worth 20% of the grade). Details about each of these elements of course may be found below.

Short Assignments Over the course of the term, students will complete four short assignments. Broadly, these will consist of short essays, 2-4 pages in length, double-spaced. More information will be provided about each of these, but the topics are as follows: 1) identifying a pair of contradictory forces in founding documents/political thought, 2) writing a bill for a law you will argue ought to

exist, 3) a reflection on the election in early November, and 4) an analytical vignette à la Riker about political maneuvering.

Specific times and submission instructions will be given on the assignments themselves, but the due dates are: September 22, October 13, November 5, and December 8.

If you turn in a short assignment late, you will be docked 10% (of the original total points) 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 95%, but you turned it in a few hours past the time it was due, you would receive 85%; if you turned it in 30 hours past the time it was due, you would receive 75%. Barring extraordinary circumstances, there will be no extensions granted.

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).

Exams A mid-term (October 15, 2020) and a final exam (December 16, 2020) will test students' knowledge of particularly important concepts or arguments from the course. Further, students will be asked to demonstrate their knowledge of these ideas and employ key frameworks to conduct original analyses in response to prompts. If you have a conflict with either of these dates, please let me know immediately. The exams will almost certainly be online and probably some kind of open notes deal, though the exact format (such as allotted time to begin/complete) is yet to be determined – we will see how things progress in the early weeks of the semester. Generally speaking, though, there are no make-ups except in extenuating circumstances.

Materials We will not be using a standard “Intro to U.S. Politics” textbook. Instead, we will rely on a variety of primary sources (available on Blackboard) and two books that will provide (rather different sorts of) context for the material we learn. Both books should be available at the bookstore (they will ship orders, as well), but both are also available from online booksellers. Also worth noting: the audiobook version of Kendi’s *Stamped from the Beginning* is currently available for FREE on Spotify.¹

¹I have no problem with you availing yourselves of the audiobook, but I would encourage you to take notes while or at least shortly after you finish a chapter. I’ll say more about this in class.

- Kendi, Ibram X. 2016. *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*. New York: Bold Type Books.
- Riker, William H. 1986. *The Art of Political Manipulation*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

We will look to Kendi (2016) for context around American political development and American political thought. We will look to Riker (1986) for context around the study of politics at the University of Rochester and the use of rational choice to analyze political phenomena.

Assistance and Resources to Promote Student Success Please feel free to reach out to me at any point during the course with any concerns or information that you would like me to know to support your success this semester, as well as with any questions about the course.

The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of a disability please contact the Office of Disability Resources. The access coordinators in the Office of Disability Resources can meet with you to discuss the barriers you are experiencing and explain the eligibility process for establishing academic accommodations. You can reach the Office of Disability Resources at: disability@rochester.edu; (585) 276-5075; Taylor Hall.

The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has a number of resources to improve study habits, including one-on-one study skills consultations, study skills course (CAS 142), quiet study space with peer support (Study Zone), and, for specific courses, one-on-one tutoring, drop-in group tutoring, and weekly study groups.

Student success at the University of Rochester includes more than just academic performance. Please feel comfortable speaking with me about challenges you are experiencing within and outside of the classroom so that I may submit a CARE Referral on your behalf. A CARE Referral is submitted when the level of concern for a student necessitates inclusive, multi-layered support from the campus community. The CARE network administrator shares information only with staff who need to know it in order to help you. I *care* about your success and am committed to my role in helping you get connected to appropriate campus resources.

Course Schedule

A detailed schedule of topics and readings may be found below.

Week	Subject	Class	Constitution/other primary source	Kendi	Reader	Riker	Online	In-person
0	Introduction	27-Aug					All	None
1	A state	1-Sep	Dol, U.S. Const. amend. 3-8	Prologues	Tocqueville	Intro.	L-Z	A-K
		3-Sep	Art. of Conf., U.S. Const. preamble; art. V-VI; amend. 16	Ch. 1-2	Marshall	8	A-K	L-Z
2	Democracy, rep. gov't, elections	8-Sep	U.S. Const. art. I, sec. 4-5; amend. 12, 14-15, 17, 19-20, 22-24, 26	Ch. 3-4	Adams		L-Z	A-K
		10-Sep		Ch. 5-6	Madison, <i>Fed. 39</i>	6	A-K	L-Z
3	Federalism	15-Sep	U.S. Const. art. I, sec. 10; art. IV; art. VII; amend. 9-10	Ch. 7-9	Bryce		L-Z	A-K
		17-Sep			Grodzins	1	A-K	L-Z
4	A legislature	22-Sep	U.S. Const. art. I, sec. 1-3, 6-7; amend. 27	Ch. 10-12	Burke		L-Z	A-K
		24-Sep			Madison, <i>Fed. 35</i>	2	A-K	L-Z
5	The executive	29-Sep	U.S. Const. art. II; amend. 13, 25	Ch. 13-14	Hamilton, <i>Fed. 69</i>		L-Z	A-K
		1-Oct		Ch. 15-16	Howell	3	A-K	L-Z
6	Bureaucracy	6-Oct	Pendleton Act, Paperwork Red. Act	Ch. 17-18	Wilson & Kelling		L-Z	A-K
		8-Oct		Ch. 19-20	Lewis	4	A-K	L-Z
7a	In-class review	13-Oct	No reading, test week!				All	None
7b	Mid-term exam	15-Oct	Exam will be online				All	None
8	Separation of powers/checks and balances	20-Oct	U.S. Const. art. I, sec. 8-9	Ch. 21-23	Madison, <i>Fed. 51</i>		A-K	L-Z
		22-Oct			Thrower	10	L-Z	A-K
9	The judiciary	27-Oct	U.S. Const. art. III; amend. 11	Ch. 24-26	Hamilton, <i>Fed. 78</i>		A-K	L-Z
		29-Oct			Salam	11	L-Z	A-K
10	Election week!	3-Nov	Vote (probably before Tuesday)	Ch. 27-29	Douglass		A-K	L-Z
		5-Nov	Follow news coverage		Anthony		L-Z	A-K
11	Interest groups	10-Nov	U.S. Const. amend. 2	Ch. 30-32	Madison, <i>Fed. 10</i>		A-K	L-Z
		12-Nov			Jamieson	9	L-Z	A-K
12	Mass media	17-Nov	U.S. Const. amend. 1	Ch. 33-35	Orwell		A-K	L-Z
		19-Nov			White	5	L-Z	A-K
13	Move-out and Thanksgiving week	24-Nov	No class or reading				None	None
		26-Nov	No class or reading				None	None
14	Public opinion	1-Dec	U.S. Const. amend 18, 21	Ch. 36-37	Lippmann		All	None
		3-Dec			Hofstadter	7	All	None
15a	Review and Conclusion	8-Dec	ERA	Epilogue	Mayflower	Conc.	All	None
15b	Final exam	16-Dec	Exam will be online				All	None

(See the following section for explanation of the last two columns.)

Attendance

Attendance will, unfortunately, be a somewhat complicated matter. Our room does not have enough space for everyone to attend safely – only half of the class will be attend in person for given session. The final two columns of the schedule above designate who **may** attend in person for each session and who must attend online: *A-K* designates individuals with last names that begin with the letters A through K, while *L-Z* designates individuals with last names that begin with the letters L through Z. In weeks 1-6, *A-K* may attend on Tuesdays and *L-Z* may attend on Thursdays, and in weeks 8-12, *L-Z* may attend on Tuesdays and *A-K* may attend on Thursdays. *All* is used for sessions when everyone should join online, i.e., no one may attend in person, such as the first class meeting, tests, etc.

- The first class session, August 27, 2020, will be entirely online – no one may attend in-person!
- Every session will be accessible live via Zoom at <https://rochester.zoom.us/j/91079787820?pwd=ZWY0TS83bHdCKzVmaWh0cVI5TVU5Zz09> (Meeting ID: 910 7978 7820; Passcode: PSCI*105)
- Every session will be recorded and posted on Panopto (Blackboard -> Tools -> Panopto)
- You are not required to attend in-person ever, even when it is one of the days on which you may, but see below for guidance around attendance.

While attendance is not mandatory either in-person (when it's your day) or via Zoom, I sincerely encourage you to attend synchronously as much as possible. Falling behind on lectures will not set you up for success in this course. Attending the lectures “live” (in-person or via Zoom) is the best way to avoid falling behind on lectures.