

Political Science 1AC: Introduction to American Politics

Professor Sean Freeder (sean.freeder@berkeley.edu)

UC Berkeley, Summer 2018

Class Meetings: 4PM – 6PM, MTWTh

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:30 – 3:30PM in 135 Moses

Graduate Student Instructor: Neil O'Brian, nobrian@berkeley.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this class, we will examine the American political system – the nature of its institutions, the behavior of its people, and the interactions between the two. Insofar as the goal of a political system is to ensure fairness, freedom, justice, and prosperity for all people whose lives it touches, we will investigate whether the American system is capable of achieving these goals. Additionally, we will explore whether we as citizens are capable of holding our political representatives accountable for their actions. As a student in this class, you will be pushed to think critically about *why* we observe certain political outcomes and not others. More generally, you will be encouraged to consider what constitutes evidence of *what* has happened and *why* it happened that way. By the end of the course, you should be better equipped to understand and, ultimately, participate in the American political system.

COURSE READINGS

The readings for the course constitute a mixture of scholarly and journalistic writings. The texts you are assigned have been chosen with the goal in mind of improving your understanding of American politics while maintaining or even enhancing your interest. Many courses are heavily reading intensive, with the end result that many or most students become overwhelmed and thus complete only a small portion of the assigned material; to avoid this, each week provides a large number of short, accessible readings, rather than a moderate amount of lengthy, dense texts. In turn, you will be expected to read all materials in full, and come to class ready to discuss them. Additionally, test questions will cover questions related specifically to the readings, your GSI has the authority to institute weekly reading quizzes if he feels students are not coming to class prepared. This course has no textbook, and no books required for purchase. All materials will be provided online via bCourses.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

The components of your grade are distributed as follows:

Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	30%
Term Paper	25%
Participation	15%
Reading Responses	5%

It is critically important that you attend all *lectures* and *discussion section*, as attendance will be taken in both each day. Because of the very short nature of the summer session, any unexcused absence will be counted against your participation grade. Excused absences (and extensions on assignments) will only be granted in the case of a documented illness, death in the family, or other tragic and/or unavoidable circumstances.

Reading responses will be due at the beginning of the lecture period on Monday for Weeks 2, 3 and 4. In these responses, you will 1) summarize one or more of the readings assigned the previous week, and 2) provide a brief personal reaction. Summaries should be 4-6 sentences long. Responses that make a fair attempt will receive full credit; those with highly inaccurate summaries or missing personal reactions will receive a zero. Please submit all responses via the assignments tab on bCourses. Late responses will not be accepted.

The **Term Paper** will be formally assigned during the second week of class, and will be due Monday, August 6, at the beginning of the lecture period. You will have a choice of topics. All papers will be submitted via bCourses. Any papers submitted late will lose 5% for each day it is late; papers not turned in by Friday, August 10 will receive a zero.

The **Midterm and Final** will both be taken in lecture hall during the normal lecture time. The material on the final will be cumulative, but focus heavily on material covered after the midterm.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty will result in a failing grade for the course. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating, plagiarism, and/or unauthorized collaboration. Academic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive an extension on a test or assignment, or the submission of the same written assignment for two different courses.

TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASS

Students should feel free to use their laptops or tablets to take notes and follow the lecture slides, but should not otherwise use them for extracurricular purposes. The use of cell phones during lecture or discussion is not permitted at any time, for any reason. Your GSI will periodically monitor the room for violations of these standards, and violators will have receive a penalty to their participation grade.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

UNIT 1: THE AMERICAN CASE - HISTORY, FEATURES, AND DEVELOPMENT

July 2: Overview (Understanding political science; folk theory of democracy versus reality; government and collective action problems)

- Yglesias, Matt. [“American Democracy Is Doomed.”](#) Vox. 8 Oct, 2015.

July 3: *The Constitution* (myths versus realities; Articles of Confederation and its discontents; Constitutional development and compromise; the Federalist Papers and ratification; features)

- Federalist 10 & 51
- [The Constitution of the United States](#)
- Robert A. Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 2003, Chapters 2-3.

July 4: HOLIDAY - NO CLASS

July 5: Suffrage (suffrage in the Constitution; Reconstruction and Jim Crow; Second Reconstruction; women’s suffrage; modern challenges to suffrage)

- Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (New York: Basic Books), 2000, pp. xv-xxiv (“Introduction”).

July 9: Federalism (multiple conceptions of federalism; historical developments; contemporary and historical impact)

- Tim Arrango, [“In Clash Between California and Trump, It’s One America versus Another.”](#) *The New York Times*, January 7, 2018.
- Katherine J. Cramer, “Support for Small Government,” in *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 2016, pp. 145-68.

UNIT 2: AMERICAN GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

July 10: Congress (basic features; the legislative pathway; behavior of members of Congress; historical developments; solving collective action problems)

- Mayhew, David. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. Yale University Press. Excerpts.
- Mann, Thomas and Bill Ornstein. Excerpts from [The Broken Branch](#).

July 11: *The Presidency* (the nature of presidency; tools of POTUS; historical developments and relative power over time)

- Prokop, Andrew. [“How Barack Obama is expanding presidential power — and what it means for the future.”](#) Vox. 9 Sep 2014.

July 12: *The Bureaucracy* (basic overview; reform and expansion; delegation, capture and oversight; public goods and regulation)

- Brady Dennis and Juliet Eilpern, "[How Scott Pruitt Turned the EPA into One of Trump's Most Powerful Tools.](#)" *The Washington Post*, December 31st, 2017.

July 16: *The Supreme Court* (structure of the courts; judicial review; countermajoritarian difficulty; legal interpretation; models of judicial decision-making; adversarial legalism)

- The Week Editorial Board. "[Obamacare Survives: why did John Roberts vote with the liberals?](#)" *The Week*. June 28, 2012.

UNIT 3: PARTIES, POLICIES, AND POLARIZATION

July 17: *What Government Does* (how government spends money; changes over time; reasons for expansion; backlash)

- Pierson, Paul. "The Rise and Reconfiguration of Activist Government," in Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, eds., *The Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2014, pp. 19-38.

July 18: MIDTERM

July 19: *Political Parties* (how the founders got it wrong; conceptions of partisanship; why parties matter; partisan shifts over time; third parties and Duverger's Law)

- Bawn, Kathleen, et al. "A theory of political parties: Groups, policy demands and nominations in American politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 10.03 (2012): 571-597.
- FiveThirtyEight Staff. FiveThirtyEight. "[Does America want a third party? Or is it just David Brooks?](#)" February 21, 2018.

July 23: *Polarization* (conceptions of polarization; development and causes; asymmetries; consequences and challenges)

- Abramowitz, Alan, and Steven Webster. "All politics is national: The rise of negative partisanship and the nationalization of US house and senate elections in the 21st century." *Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association Conference*. 2015.
- Pew Research Center. "[Polarization in the American public.](#)" June 12, 2014. Introduction, Sections 2 and 3.

UNIT 4: MASSES, MEDIA, AND ELECTIONS

July 24: *Mass Political Behavior* (a picture of the electorate; System 1 vs. System 2; the Zaller model; mass ideology; mass partisanship; polling)

- Roberts, David. "[Tech nerds are smart. But they can't seem to get their heads around politics.](#)" Vox. 27 Aug 2015.
- Bartels, Larry M. "Democracy with Attitudes." In Michael B. MacKuen and George Rabinowitz, eds., *Electoral Democracy*. University of Michigan Press, 2003.
- Bartels, Larry M. "Homer gets a tax cut: Inequality and public policy in the American mind." *Perspectives on Politics* 3.01 (2005): 15-31.

July 25: *The Media, Old and New* (cost-benefit structure; the media landscape; media effects; the rise of new media)

- Kirby, Jen. Vox. "[Study: Hillary Clinton's emails got as much front-page coverage in 6 days as policy did in 69](#)". December 7, 2017.

July 26: *Voting, Campaigns and Elections* (historical developments; determinants of turnout; determinants of vote choice; primary elections; initiatives and referenda; campaign effects)

- Hopkins, Dan. FiveThirtyEight. "[Most voters haven't changed their mind all year.](#)" November 2, 2016.
- Steger, Wayne. "Conditional Party Arbiters: The Limits of Political Party Insiders in Presidential Nominations," PS, Vol. 49, No. 4, October, 2016, pp. 709-15.

July 30: *Race and Immigration* (social construction of race; immigration and institutions; economic and political variation across ethnic groups)

- Rothstein, Richard. Ch. 1. "If San Francisco, then everywhere?", *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Norton), 2017, pp. 3-14

UNIT 5: WHO CONTROLS THE COUNTRY?

July 31: *Interest Groups and Social Movements* (conceptions of interest groups; tools of interest groups; social movements; pluralism and collective action problems)

- Olson, Mancur. *The logic of collective action*. Vol. 124. Harvard University Press, 2009.
- Mazumder, Shom. Washington Post. "[Yes, marches can make a difference. It depends on these three factors.](#)" January 27, 2017.

August 1: *Money in Politics* (History of campaign finance law; development of Super PACs; change in raw money/allegiances over time; how monetary influence works)

- Lessig, Lawrence. *Republic, lost: how money corrupts congress--and a plan to stop it*. Hachette UK, 2011. Excerpts.

August 2: *Economic Inequality* (descriptive statistics; international comparisons; causes; drift)

- Thomas Piketty, Emanuel Saez, and Gabriel Zuckman, "Economic Growth in the United States: A Tale of Two Countries," *Washington Center for Equitable Growth*, 2016.

August 6/7: *Democratic Accountability* (Non-ideology; ignorance; the "miracle" of aggregation; the electoral blind spot; follow the leader; district-level polling knowledge; heuristics; retrospective voting; myopia; influence of random events; state/local accountability)

- Christopher H. Achen and Larry M. Bartels, *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 2016.
- Gilens, Martin, and Benjamin I. Page. "Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens." *Perspectives on politics* 12.3 (2014): 564-581.

August 8: REVIEW SESSION

August 9: FINAL