

Political Science 220: American Government & Politics * **Spring 2016**
Mondays/Wednesdays, 3:30-4:50pm Annenberg Hall, Room G21
Professor Brian Harrison, Ph.D. brian.harrison@northwestern.edu
Office Hours: Scott Hall, Room 21; Thursdays, 2-4pm

Teaching Assistants:

1. Rhiannon Auriemma; (RhiannonAuriemma2019@u.northwestern.edu)
Office Hours: Fridays, 1-3pm; Location: Scott Hall, Room 212
2. Julia Valdes; (JuliaValdes2012@u.northwestern.edu)
Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1-3pm; Location: Scott Hall, Room 230
3. Evgeniia Mikriukova; (EvgeniiaMikriukova2020@u.northwestern.edu)
Office Hours: Fridays, 1-3pm; Location: Scott Hall, Room 105

Purpose: This course serves as an introduction to the systematic and scientific study of American politics, political institutions, and political actors. Students will be introduced to the basic institutions of American government, especially as established in the Constitution, and with an introduction to currents of thought among social scientists about the workings of U.S. politics and political actors. This course familiarizes students with innovative as well as classic approaches to studying U.S. government. In the end, each student will have a solid grounding in our national political institutions and processes, sharper reading and writing skills, and insight into approaching politics critically and analytically.

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

Overall Course Objectives

- Cultivate an appreciation for and attention to American politics as a habit in everyday life
- Feel like a more informed citizen of the United States and of the world
- Develop a deeper understanding of political science as a discipline and understand how political scientists perform their work

Specific Learning Objectives

- Clearly communicate the importance of American politics in American life through both verbal and written assignments
- Critically analyze biased political media sources, one-sided political analyses, and/or partisan reasoning
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to the study of American political institutions and actors

* This syllabus does not constitute a binding contract and any assignment, reading, or requirement may be altered at the sole discretion of the professor at any time.

Requirements

Readings and Lectures: Students are expected to complete the readings prior to the lectures on the same subject and must attend every lecture. Exams will test you on your understanding of material from both the readings and the lectures.

Discussion Section: Attendance and participation in discussion sections are a vital and mandatory component of the course. Students who cannot attend their designated section times will not be allowed to stay in the course. For discussion sections to be of value to students, everyone needs to participate on a regular basis. Participation involves asking questions and offering comments during your discussions. Think about the readings before section meets- what are the issues at hand and what do you think about them? Discussion grades will be based on attendance, participation, quizzes, or other assignments (given at the TA's discretion). Section-specific assignments are also mandatory and TA grades are final. Mere presence in section will not be enough for a passing grade.

Office Hours: Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the TAs and the professor throughout the term to ask questions and to discuss their progress in the course. Especially if you are having difficulty, you should attend office hours as early as possible in the quarter to discuss strategies for improving your mastery of the course material.

Academic Honesty: In this class, we will be analyzing the thoughts, arguments and evidence of others. This work will be critical in helping you to develop your own ideas. Plagiarism occurs when you present someone else's ideas, arguments, or evidence as your own without attribution or acknowledgement. Plagiarism occurs in (but is not limited to) the following instances: copying or paraphrasing someone else's writing without acknowledgement; using someone else's facts or ideas without acknowledgement; handing in someone else's work, or work that you have handed in for credit for another course. All students are responsible for adhering to Northwestern's policies regarding academic honesty. When in doubt, consult university policies:

<http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/handbook/integrity/>.

Technology Policies: Please silence your cell phones and other electronic devices during lectures and discussion sections. The professor reserves the right to ban all electronic devices from lecture if necessary. Cell phones and all electronic devices must be powered off during exams in this course. **We will assume that students we observe texting or reading a cell phone or any other electronic device during exams are engaged in cheating.**

Copyrighted Class Materials: All course materials including but not limited to class notes, lectures, handouts, and presentations are the copyrighted materials of the professor. The copying, dissemination, and/or sale of any such materials will subject the involved parties to the provisions of the Federal Copyright Act.

Disability Resources: Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor at the very **beginning** of the quarter. Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and to provide appropriate documentation to the professor. All information will remain confidential. **Students should communicate any and all questions regarding medical or personal problems to Dr. Harrison directly.**

Assessment Plan: More details for each assignment will be provided in lecture.

1. **Midterm exam (30%):**

The midterm is an in-class, closed book, hand-written exam. **No makeup exams** are given in this course so plan accordingly: *if you are absent from the in-class midterm exam, you will receive a 0 for the exam.*

2. **Short paper (20%):**

This short paper will respond to one of four or five essay prompts distributed in class. The purpose of this essay is to give students some experience writing a brief memo/paper and to help synthesize concepts learned in preparation for the final exam.

3. **Final exam (40%):**

The final exam will be a closed-book exam administered during its scheduled time, without exception. The final exam is cumulative but emphasizes material from the second half of the course. **No makeup exams** are given in this course so plan accordingly: *if you are absent from the in-class final exam, you will receive a 0 for the exam.*

4. **Section grade: (10%):**

Your section grade is based on attendance, participation, section-specific assignments, effort, and improvement. Questions or problems with grades should be addressed to your TA directly; grades given by your TA are final. No make-up exams will be given for reasons of equity and fairness.

5. **Research study participation** is also required. (See below).

Research Study Participation Requirement: Students enrolled in this course are required to complete a research assignment that can include up to 4 hours of research study participation. These studies require that students set up an appointment to complete participation at a laboratory on campus (or via an on-line survey). Students will learn how studies are conducted and will receive a synopsis at the conclusion of the quarter describing the study's goal, result, and relevance to the class. Students who prefer not to participate in research as a subject may opt to complete an alternative assignment that entails reading any one chapter about political science research and writing a five-page reaction paper. The typical chapter is about 20 pages and thus reading it and writing a five-page paper should take approximately four hours.

During the first week of the quarter, students will receive an e-mail asking them whether they prefer study participation or the alternative assignment. The e-mail will also include details on how to complete either requirement. Failure to complete the requirement during the quarter will result in an incomplete. Failure to complete the requirement during the following quarter will result in a failing grade for the class.

Note that if you are enrolled in multiple classes that require participation, you only need to satisfy the requirement one time. Also, if you already completed the requirement in another course in a previous quarter, you are excused from the requirement.

Richard Shafranek is the contact person for the research requirement. Any questions or concerns should be directed to him at RichardShafranek2018@u.northwestern.edu.

Grade Requests: While teaching assistants are responsible for grading, it is closely supervised by Professor Harrison who will set common guidelines and review assessments. Grading can be a subjective exercise, however, and sometimes, despite best efforts, mistakes are made. Your teaching assistant is your first point of contact for grade requests. In the very rare situation where your teaching assistant cannot resolve your grading request, you may contact me. However, if you want to contest your grade on a specific assignment, you must wait 24 hours after the assignment is returned. You must provide me a one-page (at most) explanation for your request and at my discretion, I may re-grade the assignment. It should be noted that your grade may go up or down as a result of the re-grading.

Course Syllabus

Required Texts

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavrek. 2016. The Logic of American Politics (7th Edition). Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Kernell, Samuel & Steven S. Smith. 2015. Principles and Practice of American Politics (6th Edition). Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Readings not in the Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser, & Vavrek book (Logic) or the Kernell & Smith book (Principles & Practice) are available via Canvas.

Tuesday, 3/29: Introduction to the course, student and professor expectations, syllabus review (*No Assigned Reading*)

Wednesday, 3/30: **The Logic of Governance and Collective Action**

- Chapter 1, Logic
- Reading 1-1, Principles & Practice: Mancur Olson, Jr. from The Logic of Collective Action.
- RECOMMENDED: Reading 1-2, Principles & Practice: Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons.

Week 1 Section: Introductions and section expectations

Monday, 4/4
Wednesday, 4/6

The Constitution: Creation and Debates

- Chapters 2 and 3, Logic
- The Constitution (Logic, Appendix 3)
- Reading 2-3, Principles & Practice: James Madison, “Federalist 10.”
- Reading 2-4, Principles & Practice: Samuel Kernell, “The True Principles of Republican Government.”

Week 2 Section Debate: Should the Constitution be Fundamentally Changed?

Monday, 4/11:

Congress and the Legislative Process

- Chapter 6, Logic
- David Mayhew, 2004. "Congress: The Electoral Connection." From *The American Congress Reader*, Steven Smith, Jason Roberts, and Ryan Vander Wielen (eds). (ONLINE).

Wednesday, 4/13:

The American Presidency

- Chapter 7, Logic
- Reading 7-1, Principles & Practice: Richard E. Neustadt. From *Presidential Power*.

Week 3 Section Debate: Proportional Representation and the Electoral College

Monday, 4/18:

The Judiciary

- Chapter 9, Logic.
- Reading 9-1, Principles & Practice: Antonin Scalia. From *A Matter of Interpretation: Federal Courts and the Law*.

Wednesday, 4/20:

Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

- Chapter 4 and 5, Logic

Week 4 Section Debate: Civil Liberties and the Fight Against Terror, Midterm Review

Monday, 4/25:

In-class activity (No readings assigned)

Wednesday, 4/27:

MIDTERM EXAM

(No make-up exams will be given).

Week 5 Section: Discussion of in-class activity

Monday, 5/2:

Public Opinion and Political Behavior

- Chapter 10, Logic
- Reading 10-1, Principles & Practice. Herbert Asher. “Analyzing and Interpreting Polls.”

Wednesday, 5/4:

The Media and Its Effects

- Chapter 14, Logic
- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, & Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties conflict and its Effect on Tolerance.” *American Political Science Review*, 91(3): 567-583. (ONLINE).

Week 6 Section Debate: Political knowledge and media bias

Monday, 5/9:

Political Parties, Partisanship, and Ideology

- Chapter 12, Logic
- Reading 12-1, Principles & Practice. John Aldrich. From *Why Parties?*.

Wednesday, 5/11:

Political Campaigns and Elections

- Chapter 11, Logic
- Reading 11-1, Principles & Practice. Popkin, Samuel. From *The Reasoning Voter*.

Week 7 Section Debate: Red vs. Blue America: Are We Polarized?

Monday, 5/16:

Inequality, & Race & Ethnicity, SES

- Gay, Claudine. 2002. Spirals of trust? The effect of descriptive representation on the relationship between citizens and their government.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 4: 717-732. (ONLINE)
- Dawson, Michael C. 2001. *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1. (ONLINE).

Wednesday, 5/18:

The Politics of Sexuality & Gender Identity

- Harrison, Brian F. & Melissa R. Michelson. Forthcoming (October 2016). "More than a Game: Football Fans and Marriage Equality." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. (ONLINE)
- Hunter, Marcus Anthony. 2010. "All the Gays are White and all the Blacks are Straight: Black Gay Men, Identity, and Community." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 7 (2): 81-92. (ONLINE)

Week 8 Section Discussion: Affirmative Action and transgender rights

Monday, 5/23:

Political Change: Opportunities & Challenges

- Chapter 15, Logic
- Noel, Hans. 2010. "Ten Things Political Scientists Know that You Don't," The Forum. (ONLINE).

Wednesday, 5/25:

Final exam review. Ask questions, I answer them!
SHORT PAPER DUE in lecture at 3:30pm

Week 9 Section: Final Exam review

Week 10: No lecture; discussion sections will NOT meet.

Monday, 5/30: Memorial Day

Wednesday, 6/1- 6/6: WCAS Reading Period

FINAL EXAM: Thursday, 6/9, 9am-11am

Monday, June 13: Spring grades due at 3p.m.