

Political Science 101
Introduction to American Government

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TTh 12:30-1:45
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Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to both the theory and practice of American government. We will begin by outlining the broad logic underlying the formation of governments as a solution to collective action problems and then move to a specific focus on the formation and development of American democracy. First, we will examine the founding principles and texts from both historical and contemporary perspectives. Next, we will turn our attention to the formal institutions of American government with the aim of understanding the complex web of relationships among these institutions. During the second half of the course, attention will shift away from the formal institutions to the avenues for public influence on policy. We will conclude with a study of the continuing struggle over both the definition and the extension of civil liberties and rights.

It is my hope that this course will provide students with a structured opportunity to struggle with many of the issues challenging both scholars of American politics and concerned citizens. What roles do the rules of the game play in determining outcomes? Who participates and why? How should individual rights and liberties and the needs/desires of the community be balanced? How have both formal and informal institutions of government developed over time, and how well are they responding to the changing needs of the American polity? The attempt to address these and other questions will provide the foundations for course readings, lectures, and discussions.

Students who want to do well in this course should follow a simple but proven formula: come to class regularly and on time; pay attention and ask questions when you do not understand; contribute regularly to class discussions; complete assignments carefully and in a timely manner; and finally, use office hours as a resource and feel free to contact the instructor if you are still experiencing difficulties after completion of the previously outlined steps.

Course Readings

The following textbooks are required reading and are available for purchase at the University Bookstore or through the internet.

Kernell, Samuel and Gary C. Jacobson. 2014. *The Logic of American Politics, 6th Edition*. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. (Referred to as **LOGIC** in schedule)

Barbour, Christine and Matthew J. Streb. 2014. *Clued in to Politics: A Critical Thinking Reader in American Government, 4th Edition*. (Referred to as **CLUED** in schedule)

Additionally, there is **required** supplemental reading available in a folder on Blackboard named **on-line readings**. These readings are indicated in the schedule below by **double asterisks (**)**.

You will also be expected to familiarize yourselves with current events as they pertain to the course material by reading a national newspaper, preferably the *New York Times*. Coverage of current events will be incorporated into lectures, class discussions, assignments, and exams.

Student Responsibilities and Assignments

To succeed in politics (and in all professional life), it is most helpful to be able to write clearly and to speak persuasively. You will also thrive if you develop substantive knowledge and the ability to think analytically. In this course, the assignments are structured to develop these four skills: writing, speaking, analysis, and the ability to synthesize knowledge.

Class Participation

As much of the course will be taught using discussion and interactive activities, participation is an important element of this class. However, in order to constructively contribute to class discussion, reading the assigned material is essential. Thus, students should be prepared for class each day by having read the required material for the session. If you are absent, you cannot participate and thus your grade will suffer. In sum, to succeed in this class you need to keep up with the readings, follow current events in the newspaper and contribute informed points in class.

Papers

Students will be required to write three 3-4 page editorial responses during the semester. These writing assignments will give you the opportunity to sharpen your analytical skills and demonstrate mastery of the course material by making connections between the material and controversial political debates. Details about the paper assignments are attached at the end of the syllabus. Please note that you are required to submit both hard and electronic copies of your papers. Electronic copies should be submitted through **SafeAssign**, which is John Carroll's plagiarism detection system. Instructions explaining how to use SafeAssign can be found here: <http://wiki.safeassign.com/display/SAFE/Submit+a+Paper+to+a+SafeAssignment>

Activities

Students will be assigned a series of activities designed as a supplement to our in class discussions. These assignments will involve the completion of a short task and generally will include a short writing assignment (**1 typed page or less; single spaced, 11 or 12 inch font**). Since activity assignments will draw on unfolding current events, they often will be made on short notice.

Attendance

Class participation is a vital component of this class; therefore, attendance is both critical and required. Attendance will be taken each class period, and students who miss more than three classes will find their **final grades reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for each additional absence over the three-class limit**. In contrast, students with perfect attendance records whose final grades fall in a gray zone on the border between grades will be rewarded for regular attendance. It is your responsibility to make arrangements with a responsible classmate to obtain notes for missed classes.

Quizzes

There will be several announced or perhaps unannounced quizzes throughout the semester focusing on the readings and current events. Quizzes cannot be made-up by students who are tardy or absent.

Grading

Besides those listed above, the course requirements include a midterm exam as well as a **comprehensive** final exam. The midterm exam is scheduled for **Thursday, February 27** and the final is scheduled for **Tuesday, May 6**. Although the final exam is cumulative, it will be weighted more heavily towards the material covered after the midterm. The exams will be comprised of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions and study guides will be distributed the week before the exam.

Final course grades will be calculated as follows:

Participation	10%
Essays (3)	10% (each)
Activities/Quizzes	15%
Midterm Exam	20%
Final Exam	25%

In *general*, I use the following scale to assign **final course grades**:

93-100 = A	80-82.9 = B-	67-69.9 = D+
90-92.9 = A-	77-79.9 = C+	63-66.9 = D
87-89.9 = B+	73-76.9 = C	< 62.9 = F
83-86.9 = B	70-72.9 = C-	

Blackboard

Blackboard is an online educational site, which enables more efficient communication between students and faculty. I will utilize it throughout the semester for a variety of purposes including making class announcements, organizing small groups for class projects, clarifying class discussions, presenting review documents and submitting grades. Checking the class site on a daily basis is essential for success in the class so if you are not familiar with how Blackboard works, please take a few minutes to explore it.

Course Policies

Late Assignments and Missed Exams

Late papers will be penalized one grade for each day they are late. To receive full credit, activity assignments must be turned in during the class period in which they are due, as well as on SafeAssign. Late activity assignments, regardless of how late they are, may be turned in for half credit. Failure to take exams at the scheduled time also will result in a grade of zero. Exceptions to this policy must be cleared in advance and can only be granted when students present documentation of exceptional circumstances.

Academic Honesty

Academic misconduct, as defined by the University in the Undergraduate Bulletin, will not be tolerated. All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment, and will be reported to the Dean.

Disability

In accordance with federal law, if you have a documented disability (Learning, Psychological, Sensory, Physical, or Medical) you may be eligible to request accommodations from the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). Please contact the Director, Allison West at (216) 397-4967 or come to the office located in room 7A, in the Garden Level of the Administration Building. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive so it is best to register at the beginning of each semester. Only accommodations approved by SSD will be recognized in the classroom. Please contact SSD if you have further questions.

Campus Inclusiveness

At John Carroll University, we are committed to fostering a respectful and inclusive campus community. Incidents of bias which are intentional or unintentional actions against someone on the basis of an actual or perceived aspect of their identity, including actions that occur in classrooms, can and should be reported on the Bias Incident Reporting Form, accessible at <http://sites.jcu.edu/bias/>. Questions about bias can be directed to members of the Bias Response Team: Lauren Bowen, Associate Academic Vice President (bowen@jcu.edu), Bud Stuppy, Director of Human Resources (cstuppy@jcu.edu) or Danielle Carter, Director of the Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion (dcarter@jcu.edu).

Electronic Device Policy

Please turn off all electronic devices before class begins. Do not simply put your phone on vibrate as sound of the vibration can cause a disturbance to those sitting around you. If your cell phone rings during class, or if you decide to text during class, I will ask you to leave the class for the remainder of the period and will deduct one point from your final grade. (Laptops are not allowed to be used during class.)

Office Hours

If you find yourself experiencing any difficulties with the course materials or assignments, you should speak with me as soon as possible. Taking corrective steps early is a strategy that promotes mastery of the material and a desirable outcome in terms of your grade. In addition, please feel free to stop by to discuss any other course-related concerns or feedback you might have. If my regular office hours are inconvenient for you, we can arrange an appointment that fits into your schedule.

Course Schedule

The following represents an approximate calendar of class discussions. Every attempt will be made to adhere to this schedule. However, departures from the schedule may occur depending on class progress and will be announced in class and on Blackboard. **(The readings listed for each class period are those we will be discussing in that class and should therefore be read sometime before class begins.)**

I. Course Introduction and Overview

January 14

Welcome—
Take political survey at:

<https://www.idealogy.com/en/quiz/1416351b5>

II. Foundations of American Government

- January 16 Solving the Collective Action Problem
Read: Logic, Chapter 1
Clued, Preface (xv-xviii)
- January 21 Solving the Collective Action Problem
Read: Clued: Chapter 1 & Chapter 2
*Olson; Jehl***
- January 23 The Founding and the Constitution
Read: Logic Chapter 2, Appendix 3
- January 28 The Constitution (continued)
Read: Clued pp.67-68; 4.4; 13.4
*Levinson; Savage; Brutus***
- January 30 Federalism
Read: Logic, Chapter 3
- February 4 Federalism (continued)
Read: Clued 4.1-4.2
*Rauch ***

III. Institutions of American Government

- February 6 Congress
(first essay due)
Read: Logic, Chapter 6 (pp.231-252);
*VA; JFK; Galloway***
- February 11 Congress (continued)
Read: Logic, Chapter 6 (pp. 252-295)
*Mayhew; Fenno***
- February 13 Congress (continued)
Read: Clued, Chapter 7
*Zelizer; Collins***
- February 18 The Presidency
Read: Logic, Chapter 7
- February 20 The Presidency (continued)/
Read: Clued, Chapter 8
*Neustadt; Kernell***

February 25 The Bureaucracy
Read: Logic, Chapter 8 p. 347-350 (skim remainder)
Clued, Chapter 9

February 27 **Midterm Exam**

SPRING BREAK

March 11 The Judiciary
Read: Logic, Chapter 9

March 13 The Judiciary (continued)
Read: Clued, Chapter 10
*Carp et. al ***

III. Public Influence on National Policy

March 18 Public Opinion
(second essay due) *Read: Logic, Chapter 10 (pp. 435-465; 477-478)*
Clued, Chapter 11

March 20 Public Opinion (continued)/
Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
Read: Logic, Chapter 11

March 25 Voting etc. (continued)
Read: Clued, Chapter 14

March 27 Voting etc. (continued)
*Read: West***
Television ads

April 1 Political Parties
Read: Logic, Chapter 12 (pp. 525-536; skim to end)
Clued, Chapter 12 (12.1-12.3)
*Barnes***

April 3 Interest Groups
Read: Logic, Chapter 13(skim)
Clued, Chapter 13
*Adler***

April 8 Media (continued)
Read: Logic, Chapter 14 (skim)
Clued, Chapter 15

April 10 Media (continued)
(third essay due) *Read: Ackerman; McChesney; Levite***

V. Citizen Rights and Liberties

April 15 Civil Rights
Read: Logic, Chapter 4

April 24 Civil Rights (continued)
Read: Clued, Chapter 6

April 29 Civil Liberties
Read: Logic, Chapter 5

May 1 Civil Liberties (continued)
Read: Clued, Chapter 5

Final Exam Tuesday, May 6 (1:00-3:00 PM)

The **Logic** textbook is meant to be the primary text for the class. It provides a good summary of the mechanics of national government and politics. To the extent that you are unfamiliar with the mechanics, this book will provide you with nearly all the information you need. The **Clued** text will help you develop your critical thinking skills, the most important skill set you will learn here at John Carroll. Please invest ample time to the selections and to the CLUES at the end of each reading as they will help you when it comes time to write your opinion response papers. The supplemental readings describe different aspects of national government and politics, most of them focusing on specific incidents or people. These readings are intended to give you concrete examples of how the political process works, to illustrate some of the generalizations that are presented in the Logic book. During class sessions we will take up specific aspects of each section that merit closer scrutiny. In class, the primary concern will be why politics and government work the ways they do.