

Political Science 201-A1
The American Political System
University of Dayton
Spring 2018

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Class: MWF 10:10-11:00 AM, SJ 013
Office: St. Joseph 205
Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the institutions and processes of American government, as a means of facilitating responsible citizenship, critical thinking, and an appreciation of the social sciences as a method of academic inquiry. To that end, this course will cover a wide range of subjects with thematic emphases on the constitutional basis of American government, and its effect on the design, interpretation, and implementation of law; the material and psychological bases for engagement in the political system among citizens, in general, as well as political elites; and the relevance of politics and government to the life experience of the student as well as others within our community and beyond.

Two fundamental premises guide this course. First, no matter one's level of interest in politics and government, both are relevant to all of us as citizens whose lives, careers, and communities are directly affected by the laws produced and administered under our system of government. Second, the political system – and our role within it – is complex, and this often causes confusion and frustration among citizens. Given the importance of the political system, as well as its complexity, students should feel encouraged to ask questions, explore ideas, and question prevalent assumptions. Political expertise is not required to succeed or even participate in this course; to the contrary, students should feel emboldened to grow from wherever they start, recognizing that the diversity of our knowledge bases as well as our social and political perspectives will help us all to learn more effectively together.

Learning Outcomes

The goals for this course reflect the substantive emphases and pedagogical premises described above. In particular, students are expected to:

- Analyze and evaluate the core values informing the American system of government;
- Comprehend, interpret, and apply the content of the U.S. Constitution, in relation to the institutions and processes of American government;
- Evaluate the motivations for, and current condition of, engagement in the American political system, among citizens in general and within various social groups;
- Apply substantive content to better understand current events and the impact of American government on individuals' lives, including the student's;
- Cultivate the student's capacity for civic engagement;
- Develop the student's writing, analytical, and critical thinking skills.

Course Expectations

Class Participation & Attendance: Students are expected to attend class regularly, attentively, and on time. *Students who are absent from 10 or more class sessions will fail the course;* excused absences do count toward this total. Also, excessive tardiness may be counted toward this total. Students who behave in a distracting way – including sleeping or using a phone or computer – may be asked to leave, and if so will be counted as absent.

Late Assignments: Written assignments will be penalized by 10% of the total points available for each 24-hour period that they are submitted past the deadline, beginning immediately after the deadline has passed. Also, 25% of exam points will be deducted for failing to take an exam at the scheduled time. Exceptions will be made only for excused absences, as documented by the relevant university administrators and with the instructor's approval.

Course Text (required):

Kollman, Ken. 2014. *The American Political System*, 2nd edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Honor Pledge, University Resources, and Policies

University of Dayton Honor Pledge

I understand that as a student at the University of the Dayton, I am a member of our academic and social community. I recognize the importance of my education and the value of experiencing life in such an integrated community. I believe that the value of my education and degree is critically dependent upon the academic integrity of the university community, and so in order to maintain our academic integrity, I pledge to:

- Complete all assignments and examinations by the guidelines given to me by my instructors;
- Avoid plagiarism and any other form of misrepresenting someone else's work as my own;
- Adhere to the Standards of Conduct as outlined in the Academic Honor Code.

In doing this, I hold myself and my community to a higher standard of excellence, and set an example for my peers to follow.

Students are expected to abide by the University of Dayton Honor Pledge.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any student suspected of either cheating or plagiarism will be referred to appropriate administrative proceedings at the University of Dayton. Additionally, the student will receive a zero for the assignment.

Learning Support and Writing Resources

A wide range of support and resources are available to UD students and I strongly encourage students to avail themselves of these opportunities. The LTC's Office of Learning Resources (OLR) is a learning resource for all students and it offers a wide variety of services to assist you in achieving academic success at the university, including study skills classes and workshops, tutoring and consultations, disability screenings, and a website with many resources (<http://learningsupport.udayton.edu>). Please contact OLR at 937-229-2066 or visit their office on the ground floor of Roesch Library (LTC 023) if you would like to talk about how you could be a more effective learner.

The Write Place is a free service available to all UD students that offers peer-to-peer writing support on any writing assignment and at any stage of the writing process. Students can drop-in to the Write Place without making an appointment. It is located in Roesch Library Room 502. Contact Christina Klimo, Write Place Coordinator, if you have any questions at klimochm@notes.udayton.edu or 229-2066.

Students with Disabilities

If you feel you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, please contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Formal disability-related accommodations are determined through the Learning Teaching Center's Office of Learning Resources (OLR). It is very important that you be registered with OLR and notify me of your eligibility for reasonable accommodations with a signed SLS Self-Identification Form. We can then plan how best to coordinate your accommodations. For more information, please contact OLR at 937-229-2066, by email at disability.services@udayton.edu, or stop by the OLR office in LTC 023.

Grade Calculation

Current Events	20%
Reading Quizzes	20%
Mid-Term Exam	20%
Final Exam	20%
Constitutional Amendment Project	20%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Scale:

A: 93%-100% A-: 90%-93% B+: 87%-90% B: 83%-87% B-: 80%-83%
C+: 77%-80% C: 73%-77% C-: 70%-73% D: 60%-70% Fail: <60%

Note: If your final course grade falls within 0.25% of the next highest letter grade, I will round it up (e.g. 86.75% = B+, 89.75 = A-, etc.).

Perspective on Grading

I welcome students to discuss grades with me at any point in the semester, if concerns arise. Often, this helps a student to understand the basis for his/her grade, or to clarify something that I misunderstood when first evaluating the work.

However, let me be clear about my expectations for such conversations: It is not appropriate for a student to come to me with a general objection, such as “I thought I did better on this paper” or “I need an A.” I grade your performance on assignments. I do not grade your *expected* performance, or you as a *person*. Your grade on each assignment will be broken into parts. After grading each part, I simply calculate the sum total to derive your overall grade on the assignment. The same applies to your course grade: I grade each assignment, and then sum them (in accordance with the weighting formula detailed on our syllabus) to determine your final grade. This is a *mathematical* process, not a discretionary one.

Therefore, if you want to talk with me about the possibility of changing a grade, you need to be able to tell me which specific part of that grade might be in error, and why. If you cannot tell me which part you think I got wrong/misunderstood and why, you are not ready to discuss your grade.

Finally, I do not “fix” grades. I do not offer extra assignments at the end of the semester to help you reach the grade that you wanted; if I did so, I would have to extend the same opportunity to the entire class. We will talk a lot about measurement in this course, and I view your grade as a measure of your learning. If I add in other elements to your grade that do not measuring actual *learning*, such as your desired GPA or your graduate school ambitions, I have corrupted the measurement (and acted unethically). Please know that I will not do so, and you shouldn’t ask for that.

Graded Assignments

Reading Quizzes

A reading quiz may take place at the beginning of class on each day that we have a new reading assignment. The quiz will consist of approximately five (5) multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, or matching questions that you will be able to answer correctly if you carefully read all of that day's material. Quiz dates will not be known in advance, even to me, since we will flip a coin at the beginning of class to determine whether a quiz will take place. This, of course, means that you must come to each class having read the assigned material, and read it well. Be prepared!

Since quiz dates are not known in advance, there is no possibility of making up a quiz that you miss (as you would have an advance notice that students in class did not have). If you are absent from, or late to, class on the day that a quiz is given, you are not eligible to earn credit for it. However, please note that I will drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the semester.

Exams

There will be two in-class exams in this course, a mid-term and a final (see course schedule for dates). Exams will consist of two parts: 1) multiple choice questions; 2) application items. I will announce further details as the exams approach.

Students are responsible for making arrangements with the professor to take the exam at a different time if they are excused in advance from attending class on that day, or if they miss class on that day for an unexcused reason. Make-up exams must be scheduled as soon as possible in order to be eligible for credit.

Current Events Item

Five (5) times this semester, you will submit (via the Isidore dropbox) a Current Events Item that analyzes a current event or issue relevant to our study of American politics and government. Your submission must be at least **250 words** long, and it must include each of the following components:

1. The **title** and **electronic link** for the news article;
2. A thorough **summary** of the news article's content;
3. A **citation** from one of our reading assignments (including author and page number when available);
4. A clear, detailed, and thorough **explanation** of how this news item's contents directly relates to the information (e.g., facts or terms) found in the citation provided.

The news article that you select must come from the National Public Radio (NPR) website, www.npr.org. To find an article, please follow these steps:

1. Click on the "**Programs & Podcasts**" tab at the top of the page, then select from programs listed under "**News & Conversations**" (I recommend "Morning Edition" or "All Things Considered").
2. Scroll through the list of news items from that day's program, or view news items from previous days by clicking "*older*" or "*browse past shows*."
3. Click on the title of a news item that appears to fit the criteria listed above. Once on the webpage for that news item, you have two options: for audio, click the play button next to "Listen to the Story"; or scroll down and read the transcript for that news item instead. (Note: Transcripts are usually added later in the day that a story airs. Therefore, you may not find one for a story that aired only hours before.)

Current events items are **due by 11:55 PM** on the following six dates. Note that you will submit five times, therefore you will skip submitting on one of these dates.

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|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| #1 – Sunday, February 4 | #4 – Sunday, March 18 |
| #2 – Sunday, February 18 | #5 – Friday, April 6 |
| #3 – Monday, March 5 | #6 – Sunday, April 22 |

Constitutional Amendment Project

For your final project, you will take on the role of a member of the United States Congress who is proposing an amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Your goal in doing so is to explain to the American people *what changes to the Constitution* you are proposing, and *why they should support ratification* of this amendment. You will submit this as a three-page paper that consists of the following:

1. **Page 1** - The exact wording and location of the constitutional language that you propose to amend.
 - a. First, provide a section heading (in **bold**) identifying the relevant section of the Constitution to which you are adding your amendment. For instance, if you are modifying Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, write **Article I, Section 8** at the top. If you are adding an amendment that does not change any existing content of the Constitution, your heading should be **Amendment 28**.
 - b. Second, if you are amending the wording of an existing section of the Constitution, you will indicate any changes you have made as follows: 1) Use the strikethrough function (e.g., ~~strikethrough~~) to indicate deleted language; 2) Use the highlight function (e.g., highlight) to indicate added language. If you are adding an amendment that does not change any existing content of the Constitution, simply highlight all the language of your amendment.
2. **Pages 2 & 3** – Write a two-page speech that you would deliver on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives or Senate (you pick) to persuade the American people to support ratification of this amendment. Your speech must consist of the following:
 - a. An introduction specifically explaining the amendment that you are proposing (e.g., what section of the Constitution you are modifying, if any; a summary of the language that you are deleting and/or adding to the existing Constitution);
 - b. A detailed explanation of the problem that you are seeking to address through this amendment (e.g., why the existing Constitution fails to adequately protect a right that you believe Americans must have; why you believe the existing Constitution gives the federal government too much/too little power to achieve a particular goal; why the current institutional structure or electoral procedures of the U.S. government are deficient).
 - c. A detailed explanation of why you believe your amendment will fix or at least mitigate the problem that you have identified in the existing U.S. Constitution (e.g., how it clarifies a right or power that is currently unclear; why it should be expected to encourage behaviors or practices that are currently lacking or deficient).

*Note: Your speech (pages 2 & 3) must also include at least two citations from our reading assignments for the semester, identifying the author and page number (if available) where the referenced information is found. The citation should provide evidence for a relevant point that you are making, by referencing a statistic, fact, or quote that supports the argument you are making at that point in the paper. Since your source will be a reading assignment with which I am familiar, you do not need to provide a Works Cited page; simply provide an in-text citation, e.g. (Kollman 149).

Papers must be submitted in Microsoft Word format and include each of the following:

1. a one-line heading including only your name;
2. double-spacing throughout the text;
3. twelve-point, Times New Roman font at all times;
4. one-inch margins on all sides.

Carefully proofread and edit your paper before submitting. I will subtract points for poor editing and/or failure to follow the formatting guidelines specified above.

Upload your paper to the appropriate Isidore dropbox by the end of the final exam period for this course, as noted in the course schedule.

Course Schedule

Assigned readings must be completed prior to class on the first date under which they are listed below. Readings from the required textbook are listed as “KK” (Ken Kollman). All other reading assignments can be found online by clicking the link provided or through our Isidore (<http://isidore.udayton.edu>) course page.

Introduction to American Politics

January 17 (Wed.) – Syllabus

January 19 (Fri.) – KK Chapter 1

January 22 (Mon.) – “Do Americans still believe in democracy?” ([web](#))

The U.S. Constitution

January 24 (Wed.) & January 26 (Fri.) – KK Chapter 2

January 29 (Mon.) – KK Appendix, pp. 633-655

January 31 (Wed.) – “You can print your own guns at home. Next it will be nuclear weapons. Really.” ([web](#))

Economic Policy

February 2 (Fri.), February 5 (Mon.), & February 9 (Fri.) – KK Chapter 15

*February 7 (Wed.) – *Class cancelled due to weather*

Social Policy

February 12 (Mon.), & February 14 (Wed.) – KK Chapter 16

Foreign Policy

February 16 (Fri.) & February 19 (Mon.) – KK Chapter 17

Federalism

February 21 (Wed.) & February 23 (Fri.) – KK Chapter 3

Civil Rights & Liberties

February 26 (Mon.), February 28 (Wed.), & March 7 (Wed.) – KK Chapter 4

*March 2 (Fri.) & March 5 (Mon.) – *No class meeting.*

Midterm Exam

March 9 (Fri.)

The U.S. Congress

March 12 (Mon.) & March 14 (Wed.) – KK Chapter 5

The U.S. Presidency

March 16 (Fri.) & March 19 (Mon.) – KK Chapter 6

March 21 (Wed.) - “How a ‘faithless elector’ in Georgia could cost Donald Trump an electoral college vote” ([web](#))

The U.S. Judiciary

March 23 (Fri.), March 26 (Mon.), & March 28 (Wed). – KK Chapter 8

*March 30 (Fri.) & April 2 (Mon.) – *No class meeting (Easter Break)*

Public Opinion

April 4 (Wed.) & April 9 (Mon.) – KK Chapter 9

*April 6 (Fri.) – *No class meeting.*

Political Parties

April 11 (Wed.) & April 13 (Fri.) – KK Chapter 12

April 16 (Mon.) – “Could a third-party candidate win the U.S. presidency? That’s very unlikely.” ([web](#))

*April 18 (Wed) - Bro. Joseph W. Stander Symposium – participation expectations will be forthcoming as the Stander Symposium agenda is developed.

Campaigns & Elections

April 20 (Fri.) & April 23 (Mon.) – KK Chapter 13

April 25 (Wed.) – “Should Sanders go negative on Clinton? Social science says no.” ([web](#))

Final Exam

April 27 (Fri.)

Constitutional Amendment Project

Due Tuesday, May 1 @ 2:10 PM (upload to Isidore dropbox)

*Disclaimer: This course schedule is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion, including the addition, subtraction, or replacement of reading assignments listed above. I will notify you of any changes in class and/or via e-mail, and post an updated version of the syllabus to Isidore if any such changes are made.

It is your responsibility to be familiar with the content of this course schedule, and the syllabus in its entirety, and to complete all assignments in accordance with the instructions provided.