**Political Science 201-A1**

**The American Political System**

**University of Dayton**

**Spring 2020**

*Professor:* Christopher Devine, Ph.D. *Class:* MWF 10:10-11:00 AM, SJ 025

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**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 with the political system among citizens and social or political leaders; and the effects of politics and governance on the life experience of the student as well as other persons within local, state, national, and international communities.

**Learning Outcomes**

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

* analyze and interpret the content of the U.S. Constitution, in relation to the institutions, processes, and core principles 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 and political groups;
* apply course themes and concepts to the study of current events in American government;
* 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. The maximum number of absences – excused or unexcused – allowed without penalty is ten (10). After that, I will deduct ten (10) percentage points from your final grade for each additional absence. For example, if your submitted work earns you a grade of 85% (B) for the course but you have eleven absences, your final grade will be recorded as 75% (C); for twelve absences, 65% (D); for thirteen absences, 55% (F). And so on.

Let me stress that this policy applies equally to excused and unexcused absences. There are no exceptions. Also, note that excessive tardiness may be counted toward this total, at the instructor’s discretion. Finally, students who behave in a distracting way – including sleeping or using a phone or computer when the instructor has not explicitly authorized doing so – may be asked to leave, and if so will be counted as absent.

Late Assignments: Once the deadline for a written assignment has passed, 10% of the maximum point total will be subtracted from the student’s grade; an additional 10% of that total will be subtracted for each subsequent 24 hour period in which the assignment is not submitted. If an in-class exam is not completed at the scheduled time, 25% of the maximum point total will be subtracted from the student’s exam grade. The student must – after making arrangements with the instructor to do so – complete the midterm exam within 48 hours, and the final exam within 24 hours, in order to receive any credit. 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. 2017. *The American Political System*, 3nd 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 (0%) for the assignment.

Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s words or ideas without attribution – that is, without proper citation or acknowledgement of their true source. For instance, it would be plagiarism to include in your paper several sentences, one full sentence, or even a substantial part of a sentence that was written or spoken by someone else, without including quotation marks around those words and an in-text citation at the end of the sentence, corresponding to a full bibliographic citation. Failing to provide such attribution is no different than cheating on an exam by looking at someone else’s paper and copying their words or ideas onto yours. In either case, you are presenting these words or ideas to the instructor as if they come from you, when in fact they do not and you deserve no credit for them. This is why plagiarism is such a serious academic offense, and why I will treat it as such. And it is all the more reason to simply *ask me if you have any questions* about whether something in your work would constitute plagiarism. There is no harm in asking, but great risk in not doing so. For helpful information and resources, see [here](http://catalog.udayton.edu/undergraduate/generalinformation/academicinformation/theacademichonorcode/) and [here](https://libguides.udayton.edu/avoidplagiarism).

Research, Writing & Technical Support Syllabus Statement

Roesch Library's reference services and the Write Place offer free research and writing assistance on any assignment, at any stage of the writing process. Additionally, UDit’s TechExpress offers free technical support for printing, password troubleshooting and laptops. These services are offered at Roesch Library’s first-floor Information Point. Hours are listed online at [libcal.udayton.edu/hours](https://libcal.udayton.edu/hours). No appointment is necessary, although they are available; to make an appointment with the Write Place, email [writeplace@udayton.edu](mailto:writeplace@udayton.edu); to make an appointment with Heidi Gauder, the political science librarian, see <http://libcal.udayton.edu/appointments/gauder>.

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](mailto:disability.services@udayton.edu), or stop by the OLR office in LTC 023.

**Grade Calculation**

Current Events 15%

Reading Quizzes 20%

Mid-Term Exam 25%

Final Exam 25%

Constitutional Amendment Project 15%

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. Often, this helps a student to understand the basis for his/her grade, or 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 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. Overall grades, then, derive from a *mathematical* process – not a subjective, summary judgment of you or your work, as a whole.

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. As a social scientist, I view grades as instruments of *measurement* – that is, they measure how much, and how well, you have learned what the course is designed to teach. If I add in other elements to your grade that do not measure 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 should 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 means that you must come to each class having read the assigned material – and read it well. So, be prepared!

*Make-up quizzes are not allowed, under any circumstances*. This is because students preparing for a make-up quiz would have an unfair advantage over students who were in class that day and did not know whether a quiz would take place. 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, to make room for the fact that we all have an occasional bad day or an unexpected emergency, 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 the course schedule, below, for details). Exams will consist of two parts: 1) multiple choice/fill-in-the-blank/matching questions; 2) application items. I will announce further details as the exams approach.

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 **300 words** long, and it must include each of the following components:

1. Your **name**;
2. The **title** and **web address** for the news article that you are writing about;
3. A clear, detailed, and thorough **summary** of the news article’s content (appx. 200 words);
4. A specific **citation** – identifying the author and page number, when possible – of a quote, fact, or key term from one of our current or past (*not future*) course reading assignments;
5. A clear, detailed, and thorough **explanation** of how that citation (see Step #4) from our reading assignment directly relates to the current event in question (appx. 100 words).

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

1. Click on the “**Shows & Podcasts**” tab at the top of the page, then select from the programs listed under “**Daily**” (I recommend “Morning Edition,” “Weekend Edition Saturday/Sunday,” or “All Things Considered”).
2. Scroll through the list of news items from that day’s program, or view news items from other days by clicking on one of the “Previous Shows” at the bottom of the page. (Remember, these are supposed to be *current* events; in that case, don’t choose an item that is more than two weeks old.)
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 can access its content in one of two ways. First, to listen to the audio, click on the blue play button at the top of the page. Second, to read the article, simply scroll through the page (or click on “Transcript” at the top.) However, please note that the transcripts are usually added later in the day that a story airs. For new stories, then, you may be able to access the audio, only, at first.

Current events items must be submitted to the relevant Isidore dropbox by **11:55 PM** on the following dates. Note that there are six due dates but you are required to submit only five currents events items over the course of the semester. Therefore, you will choose not to make a submission on one of the dates below.

#1 – Tuesday, January 28 #2 – Sunday, February 9 #3 – Tuesday, February 18

#4 – Tuesday, March 10 #5 – Tuesday, March 31 #6 – Tuesday, April 28

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 four-page paper that consists of the following:

**Page 1** - The exact wording and location of the constitutional language that you propose to amend.

* 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**.
* 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.
* *Note: You do not need to fill the entire page – just whatever is necessary to fulfill the requirements above. If this takes less than a full page, simply skip to the beginning of page 2 and begin your speech there.*

**Pages 2-4** – Write a three-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 (approximately one page for each):

* An introduction – addressed to fellow members of the U.S. House or Senate – 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);
* A detailed explanation of the problem that you are seeking to address through this amendment (for example: 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; or, why the current institutional structure or electoral procedures of the U.S. government are deficient).
* A detailed explanation clarifying why you believe your amendment will be successful at fixing – or at least mitigating – 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 (pp. 2-4) 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. You may also cite outside sources, in addition to – not instead of – the two citations from our reading assignments required above. Be sure to provide a Works Cited page citing Kollman and any outside sources. Also, provide relevant in-text citations identifying the source’s author, year of publication, and page number (if available) – for example, Kollman (2017, 149).*

Papers must be submitted in Microsoft Word or PDF 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 11:55 PM on Tuesday, April 21.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

Each reading assignment must be completed prior to class on the first date under which it is listed, below. Readings from “Kollman” refer to the required course textbook. All other reading assignments can be found online by clicking the associated hyperlink or through our Isidore (<http://isidore.udayton.edu>) course page.

#### **Introduction to American Politics**

January 13 (Mon.) – Syllabus

January 15 (Wed.) – Kollman, Chapter 1 (pp. 3-30)

January 17 (Fri.) – “Are young people today hostile to democracy and capitalism? Far from it.” ([web](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/12/07/are-young-people-today-hostile-to-democracy-and-capitalism-far-from-it/?utm_term=.de0c5cbd6acf))

*January 20 (Mon.) – No class (Martin Luther King, Jr. Day)*

**The U.S. Constitution**

January 22 (Wed.) & January 24 (Fri.) – Kollman, Chapter 2 (pp. 33-63)

January 27 (Mon.) & January 29 (Wed.) – U.S. Constitution ([web](https://www.usconstitution.net/const.pdf))

**The U.S. Congress**

January 31 (Fri.), February 3 (Mon.), & February 5 (Wed.) – Kollman, Chapter 5 (pp. 147-165; 175-185; 188-196)

**The U.S. Presidency**

February 7 (Fri.) & February 10 (Mon.) – Kollman, Chapter 6 (pp. 199-206; 218-240)

February 12 (Wed.) - “The movement to skip the electoral college is about to pass a major milestone” ([web](https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-movement-to-skip-the-electoral-college-just-passed-a-major-milestone/))

**The U.S. Judiciary**

February 14 (Fri.), February 17 (Mon.), & February 19 (Wed.) – Kollman, Chapter 8 (pp. 285-311; 314-324)

**Political Parties**

February 21 (Fri.) & February 24 (Mon.) – Kollman, Chapter 12 (pp. 447-464; 477-487)

February 26 (Wed.) & February 28 (Fri.) - “How much longer can the two-party system hold?” ([web](https://www.vox.com/polyarchy/2018/9/17/17870478/two-party-system-electoral-reform))

**Midterm Exam**

March 2 (Mon.)

**Campaigns & Elections**

March 4 (Wed.), March 6 (Fri.), March 9 (Mon.), March 11 (Wed.), & March 13 (Fri.) – Kollman, Chapter 13 (pp. 491-525)

*March 16 (Mon.), March 18 (Wed.), & March 20 (Fri.) – No class (Spring Break)*

**Economic Policy**

March 23 (Mon.), March 25 (Wed.), & March 27 (Fri.) – Kollman, Chapter 15 (pp. 573-608)

**Social Policy**

March 30 (Mon.) & April 1 (Wed.) – Kollman, Chapter 16 (pp. 617-650)

**Foreign Policy**

April 3 (Fri.), April 6 (Mon.), & April 8 (Wed.) – Kollman, Chapter 17 (pp. 657-666; 670-692)

*April 10 (Fri.) & April 13 (Mon.) – No class (Easter Break)*

**Federalism**

April 15 (Wed.), April 17 (Fri.), & April 20 (Mon.) – Kollman, Chapter 3 (pp. 71-85; 88-104)

Constitutional Amendment Project due on Tuesday, April 21 @ 11:55 PM (upload to Isidore dropbox)

April 22 (Wed.) – Bro. Joseph W. Stander Symposium – participation expectations will be forthcoming as the Stander Symposium agenda is developed.

**Civil Rights & Liberties**

April 24 (Fri.), April 27 (Mon.), April 29 (Wed.), & May 1 (Fri.) – Kollman, Chapter 4 (pp. 107-138)

**Final Exam**

Monday, May 4 (2:30 – 4:20 PM)

\*Disclaimer: This course schedule is subject to revision 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.