

Introduction to American Politics (Honors)
Department of Political Science
POLI 1100
TuTh 11:00 – 12:15
66 Schaeffer Hall

Instructor	Prof. Colin Case
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Office	359 Schaeffer Hall
Office Hours	Tuesday & Thursday 1:00 – 2:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to American politics at the college level that is intended to serve both majors and non-majors. In this course we will discuss the origins of the current governmental system in America and how theories of American government apply to current events and problems the government and citizens face today. We will work toward understanding our complicated and contentious political environment by exploring the system from two perspectives: political institutions, or the structure of the United States' government, and political behavior, or the actions and motivations of political actors — both politicians and the general public.

It is my hope that you leave the semester knowing more about American government and politics, able to think critically about political interactions in contemporary American politics. Furthermore, I hope that this course inspires greater engagement in public affairs by connecting political science to live questions in American politics.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Barbour, Christine and Gerald C. Wright. *Keeping The Republic Power And Citizenship In American Politics*. 11th Edition. Sage Publishing (Denoted with KTR on the reading schedule). ISBN: 9781071880937.
- Additional readings posted on ICON Course Site (Denoted with **I** on the reading schedule).

EXPECTATIONS

This course is an honors section. With that, there will be a greater emphasis on discussion and interactive class sessions than a typical POLI 1100 course. To that end, classes will contain a mix of lecture, active learning, and discussion. Students are expected to take an

active role in their learning by completing readings before class, coming to class ready to participate directly with classmates, and asking questions as they arise, either from readings or the lecture material. You will be held responsible for all material from the readings and lectures, even if you miss a class.

We will frequently engage in group discussions about course content and current events. American politics is full of “hot topics” that you and your classmates may have strong opinions about. Our aim in this course is not to discuss the merits of our beliefs. Rather, we will focus on discussing how theories and concepts apply to current events from an analytical perspective. I encourage you to engage with viewpoints that differ from your own. I require that you do so in a respectful and productive way. An open environment will allow us to approach the ideas presented in the course as analytical, critical thinkers so that we can form, challenge, and develop theories and evidence about the issues we discuss.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grades will be calculated as follows:

A+ 98.00-100
A 93.00-97.99 (exceeds expectations)
A- 90.00-92.99
B+ 87.00-89.99
B 84.00-86.99 (meets expectations)
B- 80.00-83.99
C+ 77.00-79.99
C 74.00-76.99 (below expectations)
C- 70.00-73.99
D+ 65.00-69.99
D 64.99-60.00
F 59.99-0

The following components will make up your final grade:

2 Exams (15% Each)

Exams will be taken in class and consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. The first exam will be taken in class on Tuesday, October 15th. The second exam will be taken in class on Thursday, December 5th. Neither of the exams are cumulative, and each is worth 20% of your final grade.

Current Events Presentation (10%)

You must give a short, 3-minute presentation on a current event. For the assignment, you will pick a concept we have learned about in class from the previous three weeks and a corresponding news article written after June 1st, 2024 (ideally more recent). You will be tasked with briefly summarizing the article, explaining the concept or theory we have learned in class, and relating the concept or theory to the current event article to explain what

happened. You will sign up for a time slot during the first week of classes. Presentations will start on September 17th, with a maximum of two presentations per day. This assignment will be graded on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. For details on the full assignment, please see the information posted on ICON.

2 Papers (20% Each)

For this course, you will write two papers approximately five pages long. The first paper will ask you to predict the results of the 2024 presidential election for one of the six swing states. In the paper, you must draw on theories we discuss throughout the course and information you research about the election. This paper will be due Wednesday, October 30th. For the second paper, you will propose a Constitutional Amendment. During the university-assigned final exam period, we will hold a mock Constitutional Convention where you will vote on your classmates' Amendment proposals. Your paper will be due on the date of the final exam. More details on both papers will be available later in the semester.

In-Class Participation (20%)

As this grade indicates, a successful student will be physically present during class and prepared to engage with the material. Beyond showing up, active participation in this course is vital for success – both for the class and your development as a student. Class participation can take many forms, such as speaking and listening to others during small and large group discussions, raising questions for classmates to consider, or completing occasional brief assignments before or during class. I will let you know well about these assignments well in advance. They will primarily foster discussion related to the week's readings and take less than 10 minutes. I expect both quality and quantity concerning class participation – your participation should illustrate that you are thinking critically about the topics we cover and the assigned readings.

It should go without saying if you do not regularly attend class, you cannot do well on your participation grade. You will be permitted three excused absences throughout the semester, and you do not need to justify why you are missing class. Each additional absence will result in a 10-point reduction in your participation grade. Exceptions to this policy will be made in the case of multiple absences due to prolonged illness, religious holidays, military service obligations, and University-sponsored activities. If there are legitimate reasons you anticipate missing more than three classes throughout the semester, please come discuss this with me during office hours.

COMMUNICATION

I am very happy to meet with students outside of class time. Whether it be to discuss concerns about the course, questions about the material, or to engage further with the topic, please feel free to come to office hours. I will be holding office hours in 359 Schaeffer Hall. If you cannot meet during my office hours, which are listed at the top of this syllabus, please email me to set up an alternative time. Office hours are an important resource that should be utilized to improve understanding of material or ask more personalized questions. Before writing assignment due dates, I will be available during office hours to read over paper out-

lines or talk through ideas and provide feedback. Please do not bring completed papers; be advised office hours before paper deadlines may be busy.

Outside of office hours, e-mail is the easiest way to contact me. Please include “POLI 1100” in the subject line of the e-mail. I will typically respond to email within 48 hours. If I do not respond to your email in this time frame, please send a follow-up. If you have extensive questions requiring a longer conversation, please visit my office hours or stay after class. I will frequently send emails about the course material, upcoming assignments or activities, and general reminders. I expect you to check your UI email regularly to stay on top of these updates.

ACADEMIC HONESTY AND MISCONDUCT

Academic dishonesty — including cheating, plagiarism, or any instance of taking credit for work that is not your own — will not be tolerated in this course. All students in CLAS courses are expected to abide by the college’s standards of academic honesty. Undergraduate academic misconduct must be reported by instructors to CLAS according to these procedures.

This course assumes that work submitted by students will be generated by the students themselves. This means that the following would be considered violations of academic integrity: a student has another person/entity do the writing of any substantive portion of an assignment for them, which includes hiring a person or a company to write essays and drafts and/or other assignments research-based or otherwise, and using large language models, like ChatGPT and Microsoft Co-Pilot. I will permit you to use AI tools to help you revise and edit your work (e.g., to help identify grammatical errors, spot confusing or underdeveloped paragraphs, or fix citations).

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES & STUDENT SUPPORT

Students are encouraged to be mindful of their mental health and seek help as a preventive measure or if feeling overwhelmed and/or struggling to meet course expectations. Students are encouraged to talk to their instructor for assistance with course-related concerns. For additional mental health support, please see the guidance and resources at mentalhealth.uiowa.edu, including the 24-7 UI Support and Crisis Line.

Additionally, the Office of the Dean of Students can help students navigate personal crisis situations. They can provide one-on-one support, help with identifying options, and access to basic needs resources (such as food, rent, childcare, etc.). Student Care and Assistance: 132 IMU, dos-assistance@uiowa.edu, or 319-335-1162 and more info: dos.uiowa.edu/assistance.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES (LINKS)

- **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

- Free Speech & Expression
- Absences for Religious Holidays
- Classroom Expectations
- Non-discrimination
- Sexual Harassment/Misconduct & Supportive Measures

COURSE SCHEDULE

Aug 27	<p>The State of American Politics & Course Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabus I • Levendusky, Matthew. <i>Our Common Bonds: Using What Americans Share to Help Bridge the Partisan Divide</i>. The University of Chicago Press, 2023. Pgs 1-5; 12-24 I
Aug 29	<p>Why Government? & Constitution I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 71-102 • The U.S. Constitution I
Sep 3	<p>Constitution II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 103-119 • Federalist No. 10 & 51 I
Sep 5	<p>Federalism I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 119-135
Sep 10	<p>Federalism II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blakeman, Bradley A. “States are the laboratories of democracy.” <i>The Hill</i>. May 7, 2020. I • Pocasangre, Oscar. “The Flaws of Federalism: On ‘Laboratories Against Democracy’.” <i>New America</i>. May 23, 2023. I
Sep 12	<p>Civil Rights and Liberties I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 149-200 (skim)
Sep 17	<p>Civil Rights and Liberties II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liptak, Adam. “In Narrow Decision, Supreme Court Sides With Baker Who Turned Away Gay Couple.” <i>The New York Times</i>. June 4, 2018. I • KTR 213-252

Sep 19	<p>Congress I: Overview and Elections</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 260-285 • Mayhew, David. Summary of <i>Congress: The Electoral Connection</i>. <i>The American Congress Reader I</i>
Sep 24	<p>Congress II: Redistricting and Gerrymandering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCartan, Cory, Christopher T. Kenny, Tyler Simko, George Garcia III, Kevin Wang, Melissa Wu, Shiro Kuriwaki, and Kosuke Imai. “Simulated redistricting plans for the analysis and evaluation of redistricting in the United States.” <i>Scientific Data</i> 9, no. 1 (2022): 689. I
Sep 26	<p>Congress III: The Legislative Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 286-316
Oct 1	<p>Congress IV: Productivity and Polarization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lee, Frances. <i>Insecure Majorities</i>. The University of Chicago Press, 2016. Pgs 1-17 I • Pearlstein, Steven. “Opinion: The Root Causes of Congressional Dysfunction.” <i>Politico</i>. December 30, 2024. I
Oct 3	<p>Public Opinion I: The Basics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 453-472
Oct 8	<p>Public Opinion II: Polling and Election Forecasting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 473-482 • Additional reading on 2024 forecasts to be added
Oct 10	<p>Public Opinion III: Political Attitudes & Catch-up/Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Oct 15	<p>Exam I</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Oct 17	<p>Writing Day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Oct 22	<p>Elections I: Voters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 571-591
Oct 24	<p>Elections II: Campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 592-622

Oct 29	<p>Elections III: The Electoral College & 2024 Election</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douthat, Ross. “A Case for the Electoral College” <i>The New York Times</i>. March 23, 2019. I • West, Darrell M. “It’s Time to Abolish the Electoral College.” <i>The Brookings Institute</i>. October 15, 2019. I • Paper I Due Wednesday, October 30th at 11:59 PM
Oct 31	<p>Presidency I: Presidential Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 317-341
Nov 5	<p>Presidency II: Today’s Powerful Presidency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 342-357 • Klein, Ezra. “The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency, explained.” <i>Vox</i>. May 20, 2014. I
Nov 7	<p>Bureaucracy & Election Day Recap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 367-404
Nov 12	<p>Supreme Court I: The Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 405-425 • Shao, Elena. “How the Current Supreme Court Would Look Under Biden’s Term-Limit Plan.” <i>The New York Times</i>. July 29, 2024. I
Nov 14	<p>Supreme Court II: Judicial Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 425-440
Nov 19	<p>Political Parties I: Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 491-511
Nov 21	<p>Political Parties II: Why Parties?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 512-530 • Pew Research Center. “As Partisan Hostility Grows, Signs of Frustration With the Two-Party System.” August 9, 2022.
Nov 26–28	<p>No Class (Thanksgiving)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Dec 3	<p>Mass Media & Review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KTR 623-660
Dec 5	<p>Exam II</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A

Dec 10	Iowa State Politics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A
Dec 12	Paper Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none">• N/A
Dec TBD	Constitutional Convention & Final Paper Due