

# American Government and Institutions

## Political Science 2 - Fall 2017

Meeting Times: MW 3:30 - 4:45 P.M.

Location: LAB School 134

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### Instructor

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Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 2:00 - 3:15 P.M. or by appointment

### Course Overview

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to major concepts in American government. This course will examine concepts such as political ideology, elections, voting, and public opinion. This course will give particular attention to the role of political institutions within the United States. There will be an acute focus on executive, legislative, and judicial processes as well as how these important institutions interact with one another. This is a reading intensive course.

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, students will:

1. Be able to understand and identify basic concepts and terms within political science.
2. Have a thorough understanding of key concepts within American politics.
3. Be able to identify the various American political institutions and differentiate their functions.
4. Be able to identify the types of questions explored by American political scholars.
5. Think about concepts related to politics critically, analytically, and systematically.

### General Education Outcomes

Upon completing a course in Area D2 of the GE requirements, students will be able to:

1. Explain the structure of the governments of the United States and California.
2. Recognize the major political philosophies regarding the role of government articulated in current political discourse.
3. Assess the meaning of representation in a democratic system of government and the pathways through which citizens may seek representation.

## **Required Textbook**

The textbook listed below is available at the campus bookstore:

- ★ Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser and Lynn Vavreck. 2017. *The Logic of American Politics*. 8th Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

## **Required Top Hat Account**

This class will use the Top Hat classroom response system. All students are required to purchase a subscription account to Top Hat. Through Top Hat students will be able to confirm attendance and submit answers to in-class questions using any smart phone, tablet, or laptop. Additionally, Top Hat allows students to engage in an interactive discussion and submit questions and comments to the instructor. You can register for a Top Hat account at [www.tophat.com](http://www.tophat.com). Once registered, enter the following code to join this course: 908271. You can access the course materials at [www.tophat.com/e/908271](http://www.tophat.com/e/908271).

## **Course Structure and Evaluation**

In this course, we will engage in a variety of activities, including lecture, lecture-based discussion, and critical evaluation of the readings. Over the course of the semester, students in this course will be evaluated on the following items: attendance and participation, a writing assignment, two midterm examinations, and a final exam.

## **Attendance and Participation**

Regular on-time attendance to class is expected. Attendance includes reading the assigned material for the session as well as adequately preparing for the discussion of the material in class. Following university policy, each student is allowed a maximum of three absences without penalty. Any additional absences will adversely affect the student's grade.

## **Midterm and Final Examination**

There will be three examinations in this course, two midterm exams and a final exam. The final exam is cumulative. The exams are designed to test the student's knowledge and comprehension of assigned readings and the discussion in class. Thus, it is worth reiterating the importance of completing your reading and attending class regularly. The exams will consist of a series of multiple choice, true and false, and short-answer essay questions. The class before each exam is designated as a review session. Make-up examinations are only offered when there is documented proof of a medical emergency that is excused by the professor. In the event of such a medical emergency, a student may be given an essay make-up exam or the professor may substitute a student's score on the cumulative portion of the final exam for the missed exam. This decision is at the discretion of the instructor. If a student misses an exam due to a medical emergency, the student must contact the instructor as soon as it is practical to do so. That is, the student should not simply wait to inform the instructor of the emergency when they return to class. If a student fails to appear for an exam for any other reason a grade of zero will be recorded.

## **Writing Assessment**

There is a mandatory writing assignment in this course. Students will write a 3-page letter to an organization, elected official, or an individual seeking public office about a policy position. This policy can be narrow or broad in scope, and one that affects either a local community or a national audience. The letter should demonstrate effective communication of an idea that is well supported with evidence and logic. Students may use the concepts discussed in class or issues that they research individually. All written assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the assigned due date on Blackboard via Safe Assign. All assignments should be typed on standard letter with 1" margins in size 12 font. There is an opportunity to earn extra credit for this assignment by forwarding a revised letter to the organization or public official.

## **Research Paper Alternative**

Students may opt to write a research paper in lieu of taking the final exam. The research paper can examine any aspect of American politics. The scope of the paper is purposely broad so that the student can produce a quality research paper on an aspect of political science that is interesting to the student. Early in the semester, students are encouraged to submit a short research proposal of the full paper. Students are encouraged to schedule appointments to discuss potential research topics. Early submission of rough drafts for instructor comments is also highly encouraged. Students electing to submit a research paper may still elect to take the final exam in which case the higher grade of the two will be recorded. While quality matters more than quantity, students who elect to complete a research paper are expected to submit a paper no less than 25 pages. The research paper is due on the final day of class through Safe Assign on Blackboard.

## **Technology in the Classroom**

Students are allowed to use tablets and laptops in the class to take notes and participate in class activities. Multitasking with material that does not relate to the class interferes with the learning process and can be highly distracting to other students. Cell phone use is not allowed in the class with one exception, which is to record your attendance on Top Hat.

## **General Expectations**

Each student is expected to regularly attend class, arrive on-time, and leave only after the instructor has adjourned the day's session. Students are expected to be cordial with each other and the instructor to facilitate a good learning environment. Students with any concerns relating to the class should bring them to the attention of the instructor before or after class or during office hours.

## **Special Needs**

Students with special needs should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 559-278-2811, so that appropriate accommodations can be made. In addition, students should bring any request for reasonable accommodation to the attention of the instructor.

## Academic Integrity

Students should familiarize themselves with the University's Honor Code and policy for academic integrity. All work in this course is expected to be completed by the student submitting the work. Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated. Students who engage in academic dishonesty by cheating or plagiarizing will receive a grade of zero for the work. In addition, the student may also receive a failing grade for the course. Violations of the academic code will be referred to the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Dean of Students, which may result in expulsion from the university.

## Syllabus Amendments

Over the course of the semester, amendments to the syllabus are possible or may become necessary. The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus at any point during the semester. In the event of an amendment, students will be notified during the class.

## Grade Distribution

Attendance & Participation	10%
Writing Assignment	15%
First Midterm Examination	20%
Second Midterm Examination	20%
Final Examination	35%

## Course Schedule

The schedule of courses is listed below along with the reading assignment for the session. The readings are listed by the class date prior to which they should be completed. Students should complete the reading assignments in their entirety.

	<b>Content</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	
Wed 8/23	* Course Introduction & Overview * Reading assignment: None
<b>Week 2</b>	
Mon 8/28	* Introduction to Political Science & American Government * Reading assignment: None
Wed 8/30	* The Logic of American Politics * Reading assignment: Chapter 1

<b>Week 3</b>	
Mon 9/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Labor Day (No Class)</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Wed 9/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* U.S. Constitution</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 2</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b>	
Mon 9/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* U.S. Constitution continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Wed 9/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* American Federalism</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 3</li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b>	
Mon 9/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Civil Rights</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 4</li> </ul>
Wed 9/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Civil Liberties</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 5</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b>	
Mon 9/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Marbury v. Madison</i></li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Wed 9/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Review Session</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b>	
Mon 10/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>First Midterm</b></li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Wed 10/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The U.S. Supreme Court</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 9</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8</b>	
Mon 10/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Law, Ideology, and Supreme Court Justices</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Reading on Blackboard</li> </ul>
Wed 10/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The U.S. Congress</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 6</li> </ul>

<b>Week 9</b>	
Mon 10/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ The U.S. Congress continued</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Wed 10/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ The American Presidency</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: Chapter 7</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10</b>	
Mon 10/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ The American Presidency continued</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Wed 10/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ The American Bureaucracy</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: Chapter 8</li> </ul>
<b>Week 11</b>	
Mon 10/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Review Session</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Wed 11/1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ <b>Second Midterm</b></li> <li>★ Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 12</b>	
Mon 11/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Public Opinion</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: Chapter 10</li> </ul>
Wed 11/8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Public Opinion continued</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 13</b>	
Mon 11/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Voting, Campaigns, and Elections</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: Chapter 11</li> </ul>
Wed 11/15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Voting, Campaigns, and Elections continued</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: None</li> <li>★ <b>Writing Assignment Due via Safe Assign on Blackboard</b></li> </ul>
<b>Week 14</b>	
Mon 11/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Political Parties</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: Chapter 12</li> </ul>
Wed 11/22	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>★ Thanksgiving Holiday (No Class)</li> <li>★ Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>

<b>Week 15</b>	
Mon 11/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Political Parties continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 13</li> </ul>
Wed 11/29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The News Media</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 14</li> </ul>
<b>Week 16</b>	
Mon 12/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Interest Groups</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 13</li> </ul>
Wed 12/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Course Wrap Up &amp; Review Session</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 17</b>	
Wed 12/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>Final Exam</b> (5:45 - 7:45 P.M.)</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>