

PLSC 113: Introduction to American Politics*

Fall 2019

Yale University

Instructor: Christina M. Kinane

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Office: Rosenkranz Hall, 115 Prospect St., Room 207

Tuesday & Thursday, 10:30-11:20am

Location: LUCE 101

Course website: [canvas](#)

Office Hours: Tuesday 3-4:30pm or
by appointment.

Please sign up via [Calendly](#)

Teaching Fellows (TF):

David M. Allison

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Course Description

This course's primary objective is to introduce you to the central processes and institutions of American politics. Politics plays an important role in your lives, no matter your level of civil engagement. Our political system produces policies aimed at solving larger collective problems which will, ultimately, shape your individual social and economic experiences as well. This course is designed to teach you about that system and how to approach American politics thoughtfully and critically. We will discuss the structure of government in the United States and its historical foundations, the major political institutions that link people to that government, and how people think about and participate in politics.

The majority of our readings will come from *The Logic of American Politics*. This textbook first examines why the American government is setup as it is and why politics operate as they do, and then considers how that institutional structure shapes the actions of citizens and politicians. Critically, this course is also designed to introduce you to the practice of political science. It is as much about developing different frames of references for evaluating politics as it is about learning particular facts; and, if we are successful, you will begin to see the political world through a social science lens. Throughout our discussions, we will consider how scholars conduct their study of American politics – highlighting their questions and the tools and approaches they employ to answer those questions. With each topic covered, we will supplement the textbook with relevant political science articles to introduce you to what that research says about contemporary issues.

*Thanks to Greg Huber and Ian Turner for sharing materials for similar courses.

Required Course Materials

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2019. *The Logic of American Politics*. Sage Publishing. 9th Edition. [KJKV]
- Kollman, Ken. 2019. *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*. W.W. Norton. 5th Edition.
- Additional reading material will be made available on **canvas**.

Course Requirements

Your grade will be determined by your performance on the following:

Quizzes (10%): Lectures will be taught with the expectation that students have read the assigned material for that date prior to attending class. You will get the most out of this course if you come prepared, and to further encourage your reading: on at least 8 occasions during the semester we will begin lecture with a short quiz covering the readings for that week. *You must be present at the beginning of lecture to take a quiz.* Your 2 lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

Section Participation (15%): Participation in section is key for your success in this class. There are many ways to maintain your participation grade – attendance is only one. You should be prepared to contribute meaningfully by asking questions and actively engaging in discussions. Attending class and being prepared by having read the assigned material will ensure that you are best able to fully participate in section.

Midterm Exam (25%): The midterm will consist of short answer and essay questions and take place in class on Thursday, October 10. The exam will be drawn from lecture material, reading assignments, and section discussions, and is designed to test your independent ability to apply what you have learned.

Short Paper (20%): Each student will write a short 4-5 page paper on a topic distributed in class on October 10 (after the midterm). The paper is due at the end of class on Thursday, November 7.

Final Exam or Final Paper (30%): You may choose to write a final paper or take the final exam.

Final Paper: Topics for the 10 page final paper option will be distributed in class and posted on Canvas. The paper is due **by 9am on Thursday, December 12** (the last day of reading period), submitted to Canvas. Students who choose to write the final paper must submit it *by 9am on Thursday, December 12* or they will have to take the exam.

Final Exam: The final exam will take place on Thursday, December 12 at 7pm (as scheduled by University Registrar's Office). It will consist of short answer and essay questions, and will be cumulative in the sense that questions may be posed from any portion of the course.

General Expectations

Learning is most effective when the classroom is comfortable, challenging, and fun. A key part of the academic environment is participating in the frank and civil exchange of ideas in an environment where people disagree but nonetheless treat one another with respect. As such, we – as a group – must cultivate mutual respect for ideas, freedom/ability to speak in class, and a professional tone. I will, consequently, not tolerate any form of disrespect geared towards me or another in class, cursing of any kind, dishonesty or disruptive activity. Spirited engagement and exciting disagreement, however, are encouraged.

If you wish to use an electronic device (laptop, Ipad, etc.) during lecture, please do not sit in the first 5 rows of the classroom. Research shows that students using electronic devices for note-taking do worse and also negatively affect the performance of students sitting nearby. Dividing the classroom in this way allows students who do not wish to use electronic devices to avoid being distracted.

However, the use of electronic devices will be prohibited altogether during discussion section. While technology has many benefits, it has a funny way of getting in the way of conversation. This policy creates the best opportunities to engage in the important conversations that you will have this semester.

My office, office hours and email are at the top of the syllabus. The best way to contact me is to come to office hours where we can discuss questions about the material, assignments, or your experience in class. Please sign up for time slots during office hours (or for an appointment outside of office hours) via [Calendly](#). As for email, please include “PLSC 113” in the subject line of the email. Generally, I will respond to e-mails within 48 hours. I cannot guarantee a response during the weekend; any e-mails received after 5pm on Friday will be answered by the following Monday.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is unacceptable, corrupts your personal integrity, and ultimately stunts your intellectual growth. Academic integrity is a core university value and the University expects that students will conduct themselves in an honest and ethical manner and respect the intellectual work of others. Academic dishonesty is not tolerated at Yale (see the Yale College Undergraduate Regulations [here](#)) and there are resources to help you maintain your academic honesty, including the Yale Writing Center (find more details on their [website](#)). When in doubt, cite your sources and trust your own brain - don't cheat.

Students with Disabilities

Your experience in this class is important to me. I am happy to accommodate students with disabilities and requests go through the Yale University Resource Office on Disabilities. If you have already established accommodations with the ROD, please communicate your approved accommodations to me at your earliest convenience so we can discuss your needs in this course. If you feel you need accommodation please contact the [Resource Office on Disabilities](#).

Course Schedule

August 29 - Introduction (Lecture will end at 11am to accommodate my travel to Washington D.C. for the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association.)

Week 1, 09/02 - 09/06: Building the American Democracy

- September 3: The Logic of American Politics
 - KJKV Chapter 1
- September 5: The Founding
 - KJKV Chapter 2, pp. 37-56
 - The Declaration of Independence [KJKV Appendix 2]
 - The Federalist Papers No. 10 [available at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp.]
 - Pitkin, Hanna Fenichel. Excerpt from *The Concept of Representation*. [Kollman 1.5]

Week 02, 09/09 - 09/13: The Constitution (Part I)

- September 10: The Constitution and Separation of Powers
 - KJKV Chapter 2, pp. 56-88
 - The Constitution, including the first ten amendments [KJKV Appendix 3]
 - The Federalist Papers No. 51 [available at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp.]
 - The Antifederalist No. 1 (the first essay of Brutus) [Kollman 2.1]
- September 12: The Constitution and Federalism
 - KJKV Chapter 3
 - The Federalist Papers No. 16, 17, 39, and 46 [available at https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp.]
 - Kelly, Nathan J., and Christopher Witko. "Federalism and American Inequality." *The Journal of Politics* 74.2 (2012): 414-426. [Canvas]

Week 03, 09/16 - 09/20: The Constitution (Part II)

- September 17: Civil Liberties
 - KJKV Chapter 5
 - Dahl, Robert. 2002. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Yale University Press. Chapter 2. [available at <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/yale-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3420181>.]
- September 19: Civil Rights
 - KJKV Chapter 4

Week 04, 09/23 - 09/27: American Political Institutions (Part I)

- September 24: Congress I - Representation
 - KJKV Chapter 6, pp. 231-253
 - Mayhew, David R. Excerpt from *Congress: The Electoral Connection* [Kollman 5.1]
 - Bernhard, William and Tracy Sulkin. Excerpt from *Legislative Style*. [Kollman 5.4]
- September 26: Congress II - Legislative Organization
 - KJKV Chapter 6, pp. 253-275
 - Weingast, Barry R. and William J. Marshall. 1988. "The Industrial Organization of Congress; or, Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets." *Journal of Political Economy* Vol. 96, No. 1 (Feb.), pp. 132-163
 - Cox, Gary W. and Mathew D. McCubbins. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Chapters 1 and 2. [available at <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/yale-ebooks/reader.action?docID=321239ppg=17>]
 - Lee, Frances E. Excerpt from *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* [Kollmain 5.5]

Week 05, 09/30 - 10/04: American Political Institutions (Part II)

- October 1: Congress III - Lawmaking and Oversight
 - KJKV Chapter 6, pp. 276-294
 - McCubbins, Mathew D. and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science*. [Kollman 7.2]
 - Binder, Sarah A. and Frances E. Lee. 2015. "Making Deals in Congress," in *Solutions to Polarization in America*, eds. Nathaniel Persily. Cambridge University Press. [available at <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316091906.018>]
- October 3: The Presidency
 - KJKV Chapter 7
 - Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2005. *Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public*. University of Chicago Press, Chapter 2. [available at <http://chicago.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.7208/chicago/9780226092492.001.0001/ups-9780226092805>]
 - Howell, William G. Excerpt from *Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action* [Kollman 6.4]

MIDTERM REVIEW SESSION: Friday October 4, 6-7:30pm and Location TBA

Week 06, 10/07 - 10/11: American Political Institutions (Part III) and **Midterm Exam**

- October 8: The Executive Branch I - The Bureaucracy
 - KJKV Chapter 8
 - Krause, George A. and Anne Joseph O’Connell. 2015. “Experiential Learning and Presidential Management of the U.S. Federal Bureaucracy: Logic and Evidence from Agency Leadership Appointments.” *American Journal of Political Science*. [Canvas]
- October 10: **MIDTERM EXAM in lecture**

Week 07, 10/14 - 10/18:

- October 15: Optional lecture on writing the short paper
- October 17: **October Recess (NO CLASS)**

Week 08, 10/21 - 10/25: American Political Institutions (Part IV)

- October 22: The Executive Branch II - Policy-making and Implementation under Separation of Powers
 - Clinton, Joshua, David Lewis, and Jennifer Selin. 2014. “Influencing the Bureaucracy: The Irony of Congressional Oversight” *American Journal of Political Science*. 58(April): 387-401. [Canvas]
 - Bolton, Alexander and Sharese Thrower. 2015. “Legislative Capacity and Executive Unilateralism.” *American Journal of Political Science*. [Canvas]
 - Turner, Ian R. 2016. “Working smart and hard? Agency effort, judicial review, and policy precision.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. Vol 29, Issue 1, pp. 69-96. (Focus on the argument and not the math). [Canvas]
- October 24: The Federal Judiciary
 - KJKV Chapter 9
 - Rosenberg, Gerald N. Excerpt from *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring about Social Change?* [Kollman 8.1]
 - Casillas, Christopher J., Peter K. Enns, and Patrick C. Wohlfarth. 2011 “How Public Opinion Constrains the US Supreme Court.” *American Journal of Political Science* 55.1: 74-88. [Canvas]

Week 09, 10/28 - 11/01: Political Behavior (Part I): Public Opinion

- October 29: Public Opinion I
 - KJKV Chapter 10
 - Page, Benjamin I. And Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 10 [available at <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/yale-ebooks/detail.action?docID=557556>]

- October 31: Public Opinion II
 - Bullock, John G., Alan S. Gerber, Seth J. Hill and Gregory A. Huber. 2015. "Partisan Bias in Factual Beliefs about Politics." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 10 (No. 4): 519-78. [Canvas]
 - Coppock, Alex. 2017. "Did Shy Trump Supporters Bias the 2016 Polls? Evidence from a Nationally-representative List Experiment." *Statistics, Politics and Policy*, 8(1), pp. 29-40. [Canvas]
 - Mason, Lilliana. Excerpt from *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* [Kollman 9.6]

Week 10, 11/04 - 11/08: Political Behavior (Part II): Political Participation

- November 5: CLASS CANCELLED
- November 7: Elections and Voting
 - KJKV Chapter 11, pp. 475-484
 - Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An economic theory of democracy*. New York: Harper and Row. Chapters 3 and 8.
 - Hall, Andrew. 2015. "What Happens When Extremists Win Primaries?" *American Political Science Review*, 109(1), 18-42. [Canvas]
 - Henderson, John, Brian Hamel, and Aaron Goldzimer. 2018. "Gerrymandering Incumbency: Does Nonpartisan Redistricting Increase Electoral Competition?" *The Journal of Politics* Vol. 80 (No. 3): 1011-16. [Canvas]

PAPER EXTENSION: Short Paper Due on November 8 at 11:20am

Week 11, 11/11 - 11/15: Political Participation and Connecting Political Behavior with Institutions

- November 12: Campaigns and How Voters Decide
 - KJKV Chapter 11, pp. 484-509
 - Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. "The Minimal Persuasive Effects of Campaign Contact in General Elections: Evidence from 49 Field Experiments." 2018. *American Political Science Review* 112(1): 148-166. [Canvas]
 - Lupia, Arthur and Matthew D. McCubbins. Excerpt from *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* [Kollman 9.1]
- November 14: Interest Groups
 - KJKV Chapter 13
 - Hacker, Jacob S. and Paul Pierson. 2014. "After the "Master Theory": Downs, Schattschneider, and the Rebirth of Policy-Focused Analysis." *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3): 643-662. [Canvas]

Week 12, 11/18 - 11/22: Influencing Policy and Politics

- November 19: Political Parties
 - KJKV Chapter 12
 - Aldrich, John H. Excerpt from *Why Parties?: A Second Look*. [Kollman 12.1]
 - Barber, Michael and Nolan McCarty. 2015. "The Causes and Consequences of Polarization," in *Solutions to Polarization in America*, eds. Nathaniel Persily. Cambridge University Press. [available at <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781316091906.002>]
- November 21: The Media
 - KJKV Chapter 14
 - Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. 1990. *News that Matters*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 12.
 - Grimmer, Justin. 2013. *Representational Style in Congress*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 3

Week 13, 11/25 - 11/29: November Recess (NO CLASS)**Week 14, 12/02 - 12/06:**

- December 3: Current Topics in American Politics
 - Huber, Gregory A. and Neil Malhotra. 2017. "Political Homophily in Social Relationships: Evidence from Online Dating Behavior." *The Journal of Politics*. [Canvas]
 - Guess, Andrew, Benjamin Lyons, Jacob M. Montgomery, Brendan Nyhan, and Jason Reifler. 2019. Fake news, Facebook ads, and misperceptions: Assessing information quality in the 2018 U.S. midterm election campaign. [Canvas]
 - Lowande, Kenneth, Melinda Ritchie, Erin Lauterbach. 2019. "Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries." *American Journal of Political Science*. [Canvas]
- December 5: The Limits and Logic of American Politics and Conclusion
 - KJKV Chapter 15

FINAL REVIEW SESSION: Friday, December 6, Time and Location TBA

Thursday, December 12: Final Paper Due (9am) OR Final Exam at 7pm