

Syllabus

American National Government

POS 1041 | Summer B 2019

MTWRF: 3:35 PM – 4:50 PM | Bellamy 005

First Session: May 13 | Last Session: June 21

Instructor information

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M.S. Political Science

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B.A. International Relations

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description

This course is designed to be an introduction to American government, its historical foundations, institutions and political processes. The purpose of this class is to teach you about the institutions, practices, and history of politics and government in the United States. This course will cover a great deal of ground, as we will discuss the Constitution, the three branches of the federal government, interest groups, public opinion, campaigns, elections, and parties. For each subject, we will examine some of the leading perspectives in political science, and we will incorporate current events and our personal experiences, as well.

The main textbook for this course, *The Logic of American Politics*, takes a novel approach to the study of American politics. It frames the course in terms of understanding collective action problems. A collective action problem exists when people would be better off if they cooperated, but they can't help acting in their own interests, even if that makes everyone worse off. Over time, we have developed institutions to solve some collective action problems. The book, along with the course, investigates the kinds of collective action problems we have faced in our history, the solutions we've come up with to address them, and the success we've had in resolving them.

Course Objectives

- To understand the structures and processes of American government and politics, the collective action challenges inherent in this system, and the practical implications of political structure and contestation in our lives.
- To sharpen our ability to think critically about the American political system by reading both contemporary and classic materials from a variety of sources that encompasses both objective and opinion-based points of view.
- To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contemporary political debates.

Moreover, as a Liberal Studies Social Sciences Course, students will also meet the goals of three Social Science Competencies:

- **Competency 1.** Critically examine, interpret, and explain how personal, political, cultural, economic, and social experiences and/or structures shape the past and/or the present.
- **Competency 2** Gather and analyze data using social science and/or historical methodologies to evaluate causal arguments and analyze assertions, assumptions, and explanatory evidence.
- **Competency 3.** Evaluate and employ appropriate methods and technology in the collection and analysis of data.

Course Instructional Methods

The course will be taught using multiple instructional methods. These methods will include lecture, group discussion and oral presentations with an associated critical discussion. Typically, course topics will be introduced via lecture format incorporating interpretive discussions. Literature discussions will utilize small group discussions following by classroom presentation and discussion.

Course Required Text and Materials

Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser & Lynn Vavreck, *The Logic of American Politics* (CQ Press, 9th edition, 2020).

If you wish to purchase or rent a hard copy, you can do so at the FSU Bookstore or via an on-line seller such as Amazon.

Recommended Resources for Additional Exploration

The *Logic of American Politics* student companion website:

<http://edge.sagepub.com/kernell9e>

This site is a particularly good resource for review of course materials.

Grading Policy

Your grade in this class will be based on four components: in-class participation exercises, a liberal studies (university requirement) assignment, a midterm and a final exam. The Liberal Studies assignment will be uploaded to Canvas.

- In-class participation exercises – 15%
- Assignments – 15%
- Liberal Studies Assignment – 5%
- Midterm – 30%
- Final Exam – 35%

In-class Participation Exercises: Attendance is important to success in this class. To provide extra incentive to attend, there are 5 short in-class participation exercises throughout the session. They will not be announced in advance and may occur in either the first or last 15 minutes of class time. These in-class exercises must be completed during that day's class meeting. The students' lowest participation exercise grade will be dropped.

Assignments: For some chapters, I will post 4 questions that are geared to help students think about the topics discussed in the chapter and to help facilitate discussion in class. Each student is required to answer ALL 4 questions for each of the 4 chapters they will be assigned over the

course of the semester. Each question should be answered in about one paragraph or 150 words (1/2 page), and should be typed, double spaced. Use Canvas to turn in these assignments.

Liberal Studies Assignments: As a university-designated liberal studies course, you are required to complete a series of assignments to demonstrate the competencies listed above. Further details of the assignments will be made available as the semester progresses.

Exams: There will be two exams—a midterm and a final (**May 31 & June 21**). Each will be multiple choice exam. The exams are designed to test your familiarity with the lecture material, reading assignments, and your independent ability to apply what you have learned.

Grading Scale

I adhere to the following number-to-letter grade conversion chart for all exams, papers, assignments, quizzes and final grades. Grades ending in .5 or higher are rounded up to the nearest whole percentage point: *An A is the highest grade you can earn in this class

93 or above = A*	90-92 = A-	87-89 = B+	83-86 = B	80-82 = B-	77-79 = C+
73-76 = C	70-72 = C-	67-69 = D+	63-66 = D	60-62 = D-	0-59 = F

Excused Absences Policy

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the immediate family and other documented crises, call to military duty or jury duty, religious holy days and official university activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

If for some reason you will be missing a class due to a university excused absence, you must notify me in advance, and are responsible for completing any assignments for the missed class date ahead of time.

Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

Extra Credit Policy

Extra credit will not be available for this course. If you follow instructions, and do the assignments for the course, you should not need extra credit.

Makeup and Late Work

The scheduled dates of all exams and written assignments are clearly indicated in this syllabus. No make-up exams or late papers will be accepted without my **prior approval**.

Support for Students with Disabilities

If you have, or think you may have, a disability (including an ‘invisible disability’ such as a learning disability, a chronic health problem, or a mental health condition) that interferes with your performance as a student in this class, you are encouraged to discuss your needs and arrange support services and/or accommodations through the Student Disability Resource Center. This instructor will be as flexible as possible to accommodate the needed services. Any student who has a concern or needs to make special arrangements for meeting the requirements of the course is encouraged to speak with the instructor.

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request.

For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the:

Student Disability Resource Center

874 Traditions Way 108

Student Services Building

Florida State University

Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167

(850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD)

sdrc@admin.fsu.edu | <http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu>

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Academic Honesty Policy

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University's expectations for the integrity of students' academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to "...be honest and truthful and... [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University." (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>).

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to: inappropriate citations of sources, "padding" your references, purchasing/copying a paper from the internet or friend, copying and pasting from a resource etc. Plagiarism of assignments will result in a grade of 0 and will be reported

Email Policy

Please include your first and last name and course information in the subject line of your email. When I receive your email, I will make every effort to respond in a timely manner, usually within 48 hours. Though you may receive a reply sooner than that, you should not expect an immediate response. Please treat all email correspondences with your instructor as you would treat any other professional exchange. Accordingly, I expect emails to be respectful and polite, to use correct grammar and complete sentences. I reserve the right to summarily delete rude, disrespectful, and/or poorly written emails without reply. Please note I have structured the course and office hours so as to best assist you in mastering the materials. Please utilize office hours, in-class time and your syllabus to answer any doubts you may have. Finally, I will contact you via your FSU designated email address via Canvas, so please see to it that your account is setup such that you are able to receive these communications.

Grading Grievance: Procedure for Challenging Course Grade

The Grading Grievance Policy of the university is available on the university website, <https://fda.fsu.edu/academic-resources/academic-integrity-and-grievances/grade-appeals-system>

Final (perhaps reiterative) Notes on Course Protocol

- I cannot make my lecture slides or notes available, so make friends with your neighbor today! If you must be absent from a class, please get the class notes from one of your colleagues.
- Arriving late and leaving early is disruptive to all of us who made it a priority to get to class on time and be here. Please enter and exit the classroom quietly with minimal interruptions and take a seat close to the door.
- Please keep private conversations private. Discussions with your neighbor are distracting for me as well as other students. If you have a thought on the course material or a question, speak up so we can all hear you! Please feel free to share your thoughts on the lecture topic with all of us.
- I reserve the right to dismiss individual students from the classroom for disruptive use of technologies. I also reserve the right to have everyone close or put away their laptop/tablet etc. if the use of these technologies detracts to our classroom experience, as defined by me.
- I reserve the right to dismiss disruptive individuals from the classroom and report them to the Dean of Students.
- I do not tolerate academic dishonesty in any form, and will pursue the full penalties for violations thereof. For your reference, the Florida State University Academic Honor Policy is listed above.

Course Schedule

Session & Date

Week #1	Preparation:	Buy textbook
May 13	Assignments:	—
	Topics:	Syllabus Overview and Introduction
May 14	Preparation:	Read Chapter 1

	Assignments:	
	Topics:	The Logic of American Politics
May 15	Preparation:	Read Chapter 2
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	The U.S. Constitution
May 16	Preparation:	Read Federalist 10 & 51 (find them in the Appendix or online)
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	The U.S. Constitution cont'd
May 17	Preparation:	Read Chapter 3
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Federalism
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Week #2	Preparation:	
May 20	Assignments:	Assignment #1 Due
	Topics:	Federalism cont'd
May 21	Preparation:	Read Chapter 4
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Civil Rights
May 22	Preparation:	Read Chapter 5 & The Bill of Rights (first ten amendments)
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Civil Liberties
May 23	Preparation:	Read Chapter 6
	Assignments:	Assignment #2 Due
	Topics:	Congress
May 24	Preparation:	Read Article I, V, and VII of the U.S. Constitution

Assignments:

Topics: **Congress cont'd**

Week #3

Preparation:

May 27

Assignments:

Topics: **Memorial Day, no class**

May 28

Preparation:

Assignments:

Topics: **Congress cont'd**

May 29

Preparation: Read Chapter 7

Assignments: Assignment #3 Due

Topics: **The Presidency**

May 30

Preparation: Read Article II of the U.S. Constitution

Assignments:

Topics: **The Presidency cont'd**

May 31

Preparation: Study Chapters 1-7

Assignments:

Topics: **Midterm Exam**

Week #4

Preparation: Read Chapter 9 and Article III of the U.S. Constitution

June 3

Assignments:

Topics: **The Federal Judiciary**

June 4

Preparation:

Assignments:

Topics: **Data Analysis in Social Sciences**

June 5

Preparation:

	Assignments:	Assignment #4 Due
	Topics:	Data Analysis in Social Sciences
June 6	Preparation:	Read Chapter 10
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Public Opinion
June 7	Preparation:	Read Chapter 11
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
Week #5	Preparation:	
June 10	Assignments:	Assignment #5 Due (Liberal Studies Assignment)
	Topics:	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections cont'd
June 11	Preparation:	Read Chapter 12
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Political Parties
June 12	Preparation:	
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Political Parties cont'd
June 13	Preparation:	Read Chapter 13
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Interest Groups
June 14	Preparation:	
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Interest Groups cont'd
Week #6	Preparation:	Read Chapter 14

June 17	Assignments:	Assignment #6 Due
	Topics:	Media
June 18	Preparation:	
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Media
June 19	Preparation:	Read Chapter 15
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	The Current Logic of American Politics
June 20	Preparation:	
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	Exam Review
June 21	Preparation:	
	Assignments:	
	Topics:	*FINAL EXAM*
