

POL 113-C & D – American Government and Politics

Spring 2022

Kirby Hall 109 – M/W/F 9:00 – 9:50 a.m. (Section C), 10:00 – 10:50 a.m. (Section D)

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Office Hours: T 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.; 12:00 –
3:00 p.m.; By Appointment

Course Summary

Whether we are aware of it or not, we are constantly interacting with the actions (and sometimes inactions) of the American political system. The American political system governs attempts at collective action and serves as the arena for resolving societal conflict; regulates the air we breathe, food we eat, and even the time we register; establishes and ensures our civil rights and liberties; and forms an important part of our identities. Turbulent times only accentuate those interactions. Despite its ubiquity, the American political system is shrouded in a mythos that often leads to confusion. This class will peel back the layers of this mythos to observe the American political system as it actually is and attempt to explain the difficult “how’s” and “why’s” of the system’s design and functionality.

We will approach the study of the American political system via three broad themes:

- 1) How and why was the American political system designed?
- 2) What are the main institutional pillars of the American political system, how and why were they established, and how and why have they developed/evolved over time?
- 3) How can we, as people both principal and subject to the U.S. government, best exert influence and power within and/or against the confines of the American political system?

At the end of this semester, students should have a broad understanding of how the American political system operates, have developed as writers and as advocates for their arguments, and be prepared to effectively act within our democratic system.

Course Goals and Expectations

By the end of the semester, students should...

- Understand the principles and compromises underpinning the design of the American political system.
- Be able to evaluate how the American political system matches to theories of governmental efficacy and performance and articulate feasible reforms.

- Be able to identify the core institutional pillars of the American political system, how these pillars have developed and evolved over time, and what roles each plays in governance and politics.
- Understand how the core institutional pillars work with and against each other to create politics and governance.
- Understand how the attitudes and behavior of American citizens is linked to the activities of the core institutional pillars.
- Have reflected on their own political attitudes and behavior and be better prepared to influence American politics in their self-defined interests.
- Developed a level of familiarity with the empirical study of political science.

These goals are ambitious but eminently achievable. Accomplishing these goals will require the professor and each student to buy in to a collective learning enterprise. You should expect me to come to class prepared to explain core concepts and ready to moderate a discussion of the most intellectually contentious and intriguing aspects of those concepts. Here is what I expect and need from you. I expect you to do the assigned readings before the associated class period. I expect you to keep up to date with current events related to American politics. I expect you to come to class ready to discuss the readings, the implications, and the practical applications to current events. I expect you to take the assignments seriously, give them your best effort, and turn in work you can be proud of.

I do *not* expect you to have mastered all of the materials and skills on Day 1. If it were that easy, there wouldn't be much of a point to having the class. If you find yourself struggling with a reading or assignment, please know that this is part of the educational journey. And it's a journey you do not undertake alone. Please seek out help from the resources available to you including your fellow students and the professor.

Texts

Students are required to obtain the following books:

- Kernell, Samuel H., Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, Lynn Vavreck, and Timothy R. Johnson. 2021. *The Logic of American Politics* (10th Ed. – we will not be using the interactive elements)
- Hersh, Eitan. 2020. *Politics is for Power: How to Move Beyond Political Hobbyism, Take Action, and Make Real Change.*

Physical and digital copies of both books are available through the campus bookstore. All other readings for the semester will be made available on the course site. Students are expected to complete all readings marked “required” before class. Readings marked as “recommended” are purely optional. Students are also expected to stay informed on major political news.

Laptop Policy: The policy of the Department of Politics and International Affairs is that laptop computers only be used classrooms for note taking and other academic purposes as designated by the instructor. I will permit laptops on a contingency basis. I reserve the right to ban computer use in their courses should this policy be repeatedly violated.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty constitutes attempting to pass off the work of others as your own without proper attribution. It is unacceptable in this course, just as it is unacceptable in life. If I find that you plagiarized, cheated, or were otherwise dishonest about your work on an assignment, you will automatically receive a 0. There will be no exceptions or excuses. Such situations not only go against my classroom policies but are also violations of the [Wake Forest Honor Code](#). As such, they will be referred to the Honors and Ethics Council. If you are unsure if you are providing proper attribution or have any other questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Accommodations: Wake Forest University provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact me privately as early in the term as possible. Retroactive accommodations will not be provided. Students requiring accommodations must also consult the Learning Assistance Center & Disability Services (118 Reynolda Hall, 336-758-5929, lac.wfu.edu).

Assignments and Grading

- Participation: 10%
- Response Papers: 30%
- Take-home Exams: 40%
- Book Report: 20%

Participation – Students are expected to be active participants in their learning. Participation will be holistically and subjectively assessed based on the frequency and quality of contributions to class discussion. Attendance is part of participation as if you are not there, you necessarily cannot participate.

Response Papers – Students will write a total of three response (~2-3 pages double-spaced) papers throughout the semester. The papers will be in response to prompts that are listed on the schedule. There are nine total prompts. You are free to respond to whichever three of those nine you would like. Response papers are graded based on three metrics: argument strength (does the paper advance a clear argument and is that argument made forcefully?), logical consistency (are the points of that argument connected to each other in a way that makes sense?), and writing quality (is the paper written in a clear and direct manner that is free of grammatical and spelling mistakes?). A primer with a more detailed explanation of grading procedures is posted on the course site.

- Response paper prompt 1: Would our political system work better if more power was vested in the national government? Explain why or why not. (Jan. 26)
- Response paper prompt 2: If you could compel the adoption of one amendment to the U.S. Constitution, what would it be and why? (Feb 14)
- Response paper prompt 3: What would the repercussions of ending the filibuster be? Would ending the filibuster make the Senate more functional? (Feb. 23)
- Response paper prompt 4: What makes a president a good (or bad) communicator? How important is good communication to presidential success? (Feb. 28)
- Response paper prompt 5: Pick one of the Scalia, Brennan, or Souter readings. Why you think the Justice's theory of constitutional interpretation is wrong? (March 16)
- Response paper prompt 6: What are the advantages and disadvantages to a two-party system? What changes would you prescribe to improve to address the disadvantages? (March 18)
- Response paper prompt 7: Have the changes in the media ecosystem over the past few decades helped or hurt American politics? Explain your answer. (March 30)
- Response paper prompt 8: Should America adopt a compulsory voting system (where voters must submit a ballot, although they are not required to fill out the ballot, or pay a small fine)? Why or why not? (April 11)
- Response paper prompt 9: Is Americans' commitment to democratic principles sufficient to maintain the political system? If not, what can be done to rectify the problem? (April 25)

Take-home Exams – There will be two exams in this class. The exams will be posted 72 hours before the deadline for submission. While the exams should take ~90 minutes to complete, students may use as much or as little time as they desire. Students may utilize any notes, readings, PowerPoints or other resources that are part of the assigned class materials. Students will take the exams individually, not working in groups. Students may not utilize resources outside those assigned for class (i.e., no Google).

Book Report – Students will write a personalized book report on Eitan Hersh's *Politics if for Power*. The book reports should critique the argument advanced in the book and provide self-analysis of one's own political engagement. A primer with more details on this assignment will be posted on the course site.

Extra Credit

There are two ways to earn extra credit in this class. First, we will have a weekly meme discussion board. Those interested will be randomly assigned to teams. Submissions will be due by each Friday at 11:59 p.m. Submissions must be original creations that are pertinent to the subject matter of the week's classes. We will start Monday's classes with a vote on what the

class thinks the funniest meme. The winning team will get .25 added to their participation scores. Teams may be reshuffled from time to time.

Second, students can record a teaching demonstration. Students will identify one common misconception of American politics that we discuss in class and create a short (5-7 minute) pre-recorded presentation that explains why that misconception is wrong. Imagine you are at a gathering with friends/family and someone says something about politics that you know is incorrect. Your teaching demonstration should provide the correct information in a clear and memorable manner. The use of multimedia elements within the presentation (videos, GIFs, memes, quotes, charts, etc.) is highly encouraged. Submissions will be due by the end of the semester (exact date TBA). Submissions will be worth a maximum of 1 added point to participation.

Grades: Letter grades will be assigned based on the following:

<i>Letter grade</i>	<i>Percent grade</i>
<i>A</i>	93.5 or greater
<i>A-</i>	89.5 – 93.49
<i>B+</i>	86.5 – 89.49
<i>B</i>	83.5 – 86.49
<i>B-</i>	79.5 – 83.49
<i>C+</i>	76.5 – 79.49
<i>C</i>	73.5 – 76.49
<i>C-</i>	69.5 – 73.49
<i>D+</i>	66.5 – 69.49
<i>D</i>	59.5 – 66.49
<i>F</i>	59.49 or below

Course Schedule: I reserve the right to modify the course schedule and/or readings as needed. Modifications will be announced in class and via email.

Module	Date	Topic	Themes	Required Readings	Recommended Readings	Assignments Due	
Origins and Development of the U.S. Political System	Jan. 10	Syllabus Day	*Did you read the syllabus?	1) The syllabus 2) Noel – “Ten Things Political Scientists Know”			
	Jan. 12	Politics and Government I	*What is politics? *Do we need politics?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 3-20 2) Federalist #10			
	Jan. 14	Politics and Government II	*Do we need government? *What is the difference between rules and norms?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 21-29 2) Azari & Smith – “Unwritten Rules”			
	Jan. 17	MLK Day, No Class					
	Jan. 19	Constitutional Design I	*Why a constitution?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 46-65	1) KJKVJ pgs. 33-46 2) Revolutions podcast series on the American Revolution		
	Jan. 21	Constitutional Design II	*What is the Constitution designed to do? *How does the Constitution allot power and why?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 69-83 2) Federalist #51 3) Constitution – Preambles, Articles I-III	1) Articles of Confederation		
	Jan. 24	Federalism I	*How do the national and state governments coexist?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 89-103 2) Federalist #45	1) Federalist #46		
	Jan. 26	Federalism II	*What is the relationship between U.S. national and state governments? *How is that relationship changing?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 103-128 2) Constitution – Articles IV and VI	1) Hopkins – The Increasingly United States, chapter 1	Response Paper 1 Due	
	Jan. 28	Civil Liberties I	*What is the government not allowed to do? *What are our civil liberties?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 185-211 2) Constitution – Bill of Rights, 14 th Amendment	1) Texas v. Johnson 2) DC v. Heller		
	Jan. 31	Civil Liberties II	*How ambiguous are our civil liberties?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 211-228 2) <i>Griswold v. CT</i>	1) Planned Parenthood v. Casey		
Feb. 2 and 4	Fertilizer Plant Fire – No Class						

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	Feb. 7	Civil Rights I	*What are civil rights and how are they different from civil liberties? *Why are civil rights necessary?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 135-150 2) Epperly et al. – “Rule by Violence, Rule by Law”	1) Dred Scott v. Sandford 2) Plessy v. Ferguson 3) Keele, Cubbison, & White – “Suppressing Black Votes”	
	Feb. 9	Civil Rights II	*What was the civil rights movement and how did it affect the political system?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 150-168 2) Martin Luther King Jr. – “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”	1) Malcolm X – “The Ballot or the Bullet” 2) <i>Brown v. Board of Ed.</i> 3) LBJ – “We Shall Overcome speech”	
	Feb. 11	Civil Rights III	*What is the modern state of civil rights? *What are contemporary issues of civil rights?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 169-182 2) <i>Shelby County v. Holder</i> (SKIM)	1) Bostock v. Clayton County	
	Feb. 14	Evaluating the U.S. Political System	*How democratic is the U.S. Constitution? *Could the foundations of U.S. politics be improved?	1) Dahl – How Democratic is the U.S. Constitution?, chapter 3 2) KJKVJ pgs. 84-85 3) Constitution – Article V	1) Dahl – How Democratic is the U.S. Constitution?, chapter 5 2) Pierson & Schickler – “Madison’s Constitution Under Stress?”	Response Paper 2 Due
Core Institutions of U.S. Political and Governance Systems	Feb. 16	Congress I	*How are members of Congress elected? *What are the consequences of elections on legislative behavior:	1) KJKVJ pgs. 231-249 2) Lee – Insecure Majorities, chapter 3	1) Jacobson – “It’s Nothing Personal” 2) Fenno – “U.S. House Members in their Districts”	Exam 1 Begins
	Feb. 18	Exam 1		Exam 1 Due		
	Feb. 21	Congress II	*Who are the members of Congress? *What are the motivations of members of Congress?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 249-277	1) Arnold – The Logic of Congressional Action, chapter 1	
	Feb. 23	Congress III	*How does the legislative process work? *How does the legislative process not work?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 277-293 2) Klein – “ The Definitive Case for Ending the Filibuster ”	1) Sinclair – Unorthodox Lawmaking, chapters 1 and 6 2) Koger – Filibustering, chapter 1	Response Paper 3 Due
	Feb. 25	Presidency and Bureaucracy I	*How has the presidency developed over time? *What are the powers of the president? *How do we evaluate presidential legacies?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 297-320 2) Golberg – “ The First Post-Reagan Presidency ”	1) Skowronek – Presidential Leadership in Political Time, chapter 7 2) Edwards – The Strategic President, pgs. 1-14	

Module	Date	Topic	Themes	Required Readings	Recommended Readings	Assignments Due	
	Feb. 28	Presidency and Bureaucracy II	*How do presidents interact with the rest of the political system?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 320-334 2) Scacco & Coe – The Ubiquitous Presidency, chapter 1	1) Kernell – Going Public, chapter 3	Response Paper 4 Due	
	March 2	Presidency and Bureaucracy III	*How is the executive branch structured? *How much control do presidents have over the executive branch?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 334-343, 372-384 2) Skowronek, Dearborn, & King – Phantoms of a Beleaguered Republic, chapter 1	1) Milkis & Jacobs – “I Alone Can Fix It” 2) Lipton – “Trump Issues Order Giving Him More Leeway to Hire and Fire Federal Workers” 3) Ogrysko – “Biden repeals Schedule F...”		
	March 4	Presidency and Bureaucracy IV	*How has the executive branch evolved over time? *How could we reform the executive branch?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 347-371, 385-387 2) Bearfield & Golden – “Resolved, Bring Back the Spoils Systems”	1) Rumsfeld’s War 2) McCubbins & Schwartz – “Congressional Oversight Overlooked”		
	March 7-11	Spring Break – No Class					
	March 14	Court I	*What are the powers of the judicial branch? *How does the judiciary affect politics?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 393-411 2) Rosenberg – The Hollow Hope, Introduction	1) <i>Marbury v. Madison</i> 2) McCulloch v. Maryland 3) Rosenberg – The Hollow Hope, chapter 1		
	March 16	Courts II	*How do justices decide cases?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 412-432 2) Scalia – “Originalism” 3) Brennan – “The Constitution of the United States” 4) Souter – “Harvard Commencement Address”	1) Fuller – “The Case of the Spelucean Explorers”	Response Paper 5 Due	
	March 18	Parties, Interest Groups, and Social Movements I	*Why parties? *Why only two parties?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 507-516 2) Drutman – Breaking the Two-Party Doom Loop, chapter 1	1) Schattschneider – Party Government, chapter 1 2) Drutman – Breaking the Two-Party Doom Loop, chapters 8 & 9	Response Paper 6 Due	
	March 21	Parties, Interest Groups, and Social Movements II	*Why these two parties? *Is there “a dime of difference” between these two parties?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 532-545 2) Azari – “Weak Parties and Strong Partisanship are a Bad Combination” 3) Grossman & Hopkins – Asymmetric Politics, chapter 1	1) Bawn et al. – “A Theory of Party Politics” 2) KJKVJ pgs. 516-532 (SKIM)		
	March 23	Parties, Interest Groups, and Social Movements III	*How much influence do special interests and social movements have over politics?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 549-577 2) Politics in Question – with Omar Wasow	1) Skocpol & Williamson – The Tea Party and the Remaking of Republican Conservatism, chapter 3	Exam 2 Begins	

Module	Date	Topic	Themes	Required Readings	Recommended Readings	Assignments Due	
			*How do interest groups and social movements influence politics?		2) Hall & Deardorff – “Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy”		
	March 25	Exam 2	Exam 2 Due				
Linkages between the People and the Politics	March 28	Media I	*How does the media make news? *How do you conduct social science research? *How do you read an academic paper?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 601-613 2) Scott – “Courting Coverage”	1) KJKVT pgs. 593-601 2) Bennett et al. – When the Press Fails, chapter 1 3) Weaver et al. – “American Journalist in a Digital Age” 4) Dunaway – “Markets, Ownership, and the Quality of Campaign News Coverage”		
	March 30	Media II	*How does the news we consume affect us? *What does the news we choose say about us?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 613-620 2) Taber & Lodge – “Motivated Skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs”	1) Prior – “News vs. Entertainment” 2) Iyengar & Kinder – News that Matters, chapters 7 and 8 3) Feezell – “Agenda Setting through Social Media”	Response Paper 7 Due	
	April 1	Public Opinion I	*What is public opinion and how do we measure it? *Do people have strong, consistent attitudes toward politics?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 435-447 2) Kinder & Kalmoe – Neither Liberal nor Conservative, chapter 4	1) Cramer – The Politics of Resentment, chapter 3 2) Kinder & Kalmoe – Neither Liberal nor Conservative, chapter 1		
	April 4	Public Opinion II	*How do people learn about politics and does that affect their attitudes and opinions?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 447-456 2) Zaller – The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion, chapters 1 and 3	1) Nelson et al. – “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict” 2) Page & Shapiro – The Rational Public, chapter 1		
	April 6	Public Opinion III	*What are the most salient divisions in public opinion? *How do our identities affect what we think about politics?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 456-471 2) Mason – Uncivil Agreement, chapter 1	1) Jardina – White Identity Politics, chapter 2 2) Kinder & Sanders – Divided by Color, chapter 5 3) White & Laird – Steadfast Democrats, chapter 3 4) Dawson – Black Visions, chapter 1		
	April 8	Attending a Conference – No Class					

Module	Date	Topic	Themes	Required Readings	Recommended Readings	Assignments Due	
	April 11	Voting and Campaigns I	*How has the right to vote expanded over time? *Who votes? *How do people decide whom to vote for?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 475-486 2) Achen & Bartels – Democracy for Realists, chapter 5	1) Gerber & Green – “The Effects of Canvassing, Telephone Calls, and Direct Mail” 2) Downs – An Economic Theory of Democracy, chapter 3 3) Hajnal et al. – “Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes” 4) Achen & Bartels – Democracy for Realists, chapter 1 5) Campbell et al. – The American Voter, chapters 4 and 5 6) Klar & Krupnikov – Independent Politics, chapter 5	Response Paper 8 Due	
	April 13	Voting and Campaigns II	*Who runs for office and why? *How do campaigns devise their messages?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 486-494 2) Geer – In Defense of Negativity, chapter 1 3) Fox & Lawless – “If Only They’d Ask”	1) Sides et al. – Identity Crisis, chapter 8		
	April 15	Good Friday – No Class					
	April 18	Voting and Campaigns III	*What influence does money have on campaigns?	1) KJKVJ pgs. 494-503 2) Rhodes et al. – “The Role of Dark Money Disclosures on Candidate Evaluations and Viability”	1) Ansolabehere et al. – “Why is There so Little Money in U.S. Politics?”		
	April 20	Polarization I	*Are we polarized?	1) Abramowitz & Saunders – “Is Polarization a Myth?” 2) Lee – “How Party Polarization Affects Governance”	1) Hetherington – “Putting Polarization in Perspective” 2) Fiorina et al. – Culture War?, chapter 3		
	April 22	Polarization II	*Do we hate each other?	1) Mason – Uncivil Agreement, chapter 4 2) Abramowitz & Webster – “Negative Partisanship”	1) Iyengar et al. – “The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States”		
	April 25	Americans’ Commitment to Democracy	*Do people like the American political system?	1) Hibbing & Theiss-Morse – Stealth Democracy, chapter 6	1) Hibbing & Theiss-Morse – Stealth Democracy, chapter 5	Response Paper 9 Due	
	April 27	Political Violence and Democratic Backsliding	*Is our political system in peril?	1) Bartels – “Ethnic Antagonism Erodes Republicans’ Commitment to Democracy”	1) Graham & Slovik – “Democracy in America?”		

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				2) Mason & Kalmoe – “What You Need to Know about How Many Americans Condone Political Violence” 3) Levendusky & Stecula – “Why There’s Hope”	2) Finkel et al. – “Political Sectarianism in America”	
	April 29	Political Hobbyism and Real Political Action	*How can we best achieve our individual political goals?	1) Hersh – Politics is for Power		Final paper due

