

# **POL 1: Introduction to American Politics**

## **University of California, Davis**

Fall Quarter, 2017  
Mondays and Wednesdays  
4:10-6:00pm  
Room: Kerr Hall 293

**Instructor:** Isaac Hale  
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**Office:** 666 Kerr Hall  
**Office Hours:** Wednesdays 2-4pm (and by appointment)

### **Course Description**

This course is an introduction to the study of public policy, government, and politics in the United States. Throughout the quarter, we will explore the founding of American government, the structures of our political system, the institutions that comprise government in the United States, contemporary public policy issues, and the political behavior of U.S. citizens, interest groups, and political parties.

This introduction course cannot cover every facet of the entire subfield of American Politics – that is simply too much to ask in a single quarter. If this class piques your interest, you are highly encouraged to seek out additional upper division American Politics courses which will provide more detailed explorations of specific topics in the sub-field. Instead, this class will attempt to provide a broad overview of the main concepts and research areas that dominate American Politics.

Substantively, this class seeks to address a core question: does the American political system embody the ideals of a representative democracy? Our exploration of this inquiry will lead us to investigate how **citizen behavior** and **political institutions** perform in the context of American government. We will begin the course by observing how James Madison’s “republic” provides a theoretical underpinning for democratic representation in the American political system. Next, we will focus on how individual citizens form political attitudes and make political choices. Emphasis will be placed on how these actual processes do or do not comport with the Madisonian framework. Finally, we will examine American political institutions, including political parties, electoral systems, the presidency, Congress, and the judiciary. We will consider how each of these institutions does or does not fit into Madison’s ideal democratic framework and assess the health of each institution in the context of our modern democracy.

Because we are lucky enough to have a relatively small class, there will be in-class discussion. Participation and class attendance will be a large portion of your grade, and you cannot expect to succeed without reading all the assigned material. With that being said, this is an introduction course, and there is no expectation that you have taken any previous political science courses. Do

not be shy to speak up, even if you are not certain about something. There is no penalty for engaging in debate or questioning what I am telling you – in fact both are heavily encouraged!

One final note – this course is meant to be fun! While the material in this class will take a broad perspective on American politics, our discussions should be extremely relevant to current political events. If there is something happening in the news that is relevant to our class, I will be sure to allocate time to discuss it! Major legislation, elections, scandals, news stories, and policy debates are all fair game!

## **Class Expectations**

### ***Online Access***

All readings and documents for this course (except the textbook) can be accessed through the Canvas website or via hyperlinks in the syllabus schedule.

### ***Email***

I welcome questions and comments, either by email or by Canvas message. When you email me, you should compose your email as you would any piece of professional correspondence. I will respond to your emails as quickly as possible, but please do not expect a quick response to email sent on weekends or after 5pm on any day.

### ***Lecture Slides***

Slides will be used in class on most days. Slides will be posted to Canvas following the class session.

### ***Desk Name Tag (yes, this is required)***

Though this class will be lecture-based, I also intend for discussion to feature prominently. Toward that aim, I ask that you place a “desk name tag” on the desk in front of you in class each day. Although attendance will not be taken every day, showing up to class with your desk name tag will greatly affect your participation grade. The best way to make this name tag is to take an 8½ x 11-inch piece of construction paper or lightweight cardboard, fold it in half lengthwise (so it’s now 4¼ x 11 inches), and write your name on one side so that your name is upright when you put the folded piece of paper like a tent on the desk in front of you. Please write your full name (**FIRST AND LAST**—using whatever name you prefer to be called as your first name) in **LARGE, VERY DARK, BOLD** letters.

### ***Laptops and Other Electronics***

Numerous studies confirm that students who take notes by hand retain more information over time. It is also far less distracting to others when there is not constant typing and visual distraction going on during a lecture/discussion. As such, laptops, tablets, smartphones and other electronic devices are not allowed in class.

If you have a documented learning disability that is helped by typing your notes, feel free to talk with me and I will be happy to consider an exception. Furthermore, if you would strongly prefer to take notes during lecture with a laptop, you may write me an email letting me know, and we can discuss the matter individually. If permission is granted in such a case, laptops will still not be

allowed during discussion. Any laptops approved for use in-class must be placed in airplane mode and not used for web surfing during class.

Finally, please silence and put away your phones. If I see you texting I will feel no shame about asking you to put your phone away. If there is an emergency, please step out of the classroom to deal with your phone.

## Required Text

There is one required textbook for this course. Both the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> editions of this textbook are suitable for this class.

- Kollman, Ken. 2017 *The American Political System: Core Edition*: New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company

You may access all other readings through the Canvas portal for this class or via hyperlinks in the syllabus.

## Grading

Grading for this course will be calculated as follows:

Participation	10%
Quizzes (best 6 out of 8)	30%
<u>Analytic Essays (x2)</u>	<u>60%</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

All grading items listed above are detailed in the sections that follow.

## Participation

Your participation grade will be based on the overall effort you put into the class, including the effort you put into your assignments, your attendance in class, and your participation in discussions. Come to class, participate in class discussions, earn a good participation grade, and get more out of the class. It's a win-win. You are also encouraged to bring up news stories, relevant examples, and "dank" American Politics memes.

## Quizzes

8 short answer/multiple choice quizzes will be administered over the course of the semester. You are required to complete a minimum of 6 quizzes, worth five points each. Quizzes will be administered during the first 10 minutes of class. Students who arrive late will not get additional time to complete the quiz. Since you may miss or drop two quizzes, no make-up quizzes will be offered. Quizzes will be graded out of 5 points.

**Everything is fair game!** Quizzes and exams may cover two kinds of information:

- 1) Material from the assigned readings, even if we do not discuss it in class.
- 2) Material discussed in class, even if it is not covered in the readings.

## Analytic Essays

You are required to submit two analytic essays for this class. Make sure to use 12-point font, one-inch margins, double-spacing, and proper citation format (see section below). Additionally, please number each page. Each essay should be 5-6 pages long (not including the bibliography).

Essays will be graded on content (evidence provided), analysis (claims drawn about the evidence provided), structure (clarity of thesis and logical “flow” of the essay), and mechanics (grammar, punctuation use, sentence and paragraph composition, etc.). The following elements are part of an A paper:

1. **A clear thesis** presented in the first paragraph and argued throughout. Include “In this essay I will argue that…” or something similar.
2. **Evidence to support your thesis** in the form of facts, ideas from existing research, and thoughtful, balanced analysis.
3. **A clear structure**, including an introduction, a conclusion, and reasonably sized body paragraphs. Each body paragraph should start with a topic sentence that introduces that paragraph.
4. **A bibliography** with a complete list of your sources. Include a **minimum** of six (6) sources. Use at least **three academic sources for each paper**. At least one academic source must be from outside the class. Lectures may be cited, but do not count towards your required sources.
5. **Clear writing** with few grammatical errors.

Essay prompts will be posted to Canvas following the first class of the quarter.

## Citations and Bibliographies

I am not a stickler for a particular citation format. What does matter is that you cite every source you reference and include a bibliography at the end of every paper you submit that references outside sources. You may use in-text parenthetical citations (e.g. [APSR style](#)) or footnotes (e.g. [Chicago style](#)), but you **MUST** be consistent and use citations every time you refer to an outside source rather than your own opinion.

## Late Submissions

Do not wait until the night before it is due to begin to work on an assignment. Life is complicated and full of unexpected surprises. Plan for uncertainty by managing your time efficiently. Even if your work is not complete because something unexpected interfered, submit what you have accomplished prior to the emergency. After-the-fact extensions will be granted only under extreme circumstances, and at my sole discretion.

If you know in advance that you will miss an assignment deadline, you may submit a partially completed assignment early — and then appeal for an extension.

Analytic essays submitted late will have 10% deducted from their final score for every day they are late. Late essays will not be accepted after the scheduled final exam date.

## **Grade Appeals**

If you are not satisfied with the grade you receive on an assignment or exam, please take the following steps:

- 1) Review any comments/feedback I have provided.
- 2) If you still have questions, come to my office hours or contact me by email.
- 3) If you still believe the grade you received is in error, submit a one-paragraph written request for a regrade by email. If the request is approved, your work will receive a completely new evaluation by me. Your score may increase, decrease, or stay the same.

## **Disabilities**

UC Davis encourages qualified students with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. I am strongly committed to the same policy. If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact the Student Disability Center at (530) 752-3184 as soon as possible to identify and document your specific needs. Additionally, it is your responsibility to contact me privately immediately at the beginning of the quarter (i.e., within the first week) so we can discuss how to accommodate your needs. Do not wait until just before an assignment deadline or an exam to inform me of a learning disability.

## **Academic Dishonesty**

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless otherwise specified by me. Any reference materials used to prepare an assignment must be cited. The following document contains specific guidelines for avoiding plagiarism: <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf>. Generally speaking, you must cite the person at the end of the sentence in which you use another person's idea. When you use a specific phrase, you must put that phrase in quotation marks and cite the original author at the end of the sentence in which you use the phrase. If you wish to submit a piece of writing that you have used in another class, you must receive my permission before doing so.

## Weekly Assignments and Topics

The list below indicates reading assignments, online quiz deadlines, and Midterm and Final exam dates. All journal articles and other readings (excluding the required textbook) will be available on Canvas or linked below. You should do each day's readings before that day's class. I'll generally keep us on schedule, but note that discussions may bleed over from one class to the next.

Date	Topic	Readings Due	Other Work Due
Week 1			
Wed, Sep 27	Course Introduction and the Common Good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syllabus</li> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 1: Introduction</li> </ul>	
Week 2			
Mon, Oct 2	The Destructive Politics of Self Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 2: The Constitution. Read only sections: What Do Constitutions Accomplish &amp; Origins of the American Political System</li> <li>• Madison, James. 1787. "Federalist 10." In textbook appendix.</li> </ul>	
Wed, Oct 4	Self Interest and Ambition as the Solution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 2: The Constitution. Read only section: Institutional Features of the Constitution</li> <li>• Madison, James or Alexander Hamilton. 1788. "Federalist 51." In textbook appendix.</li> <li>• Constitution of the United States. 1788. Pay special attention to Articles I and II. In textbook appendix.</li> </ul>	

Week 3			
Mon, Oct 9	Citizen Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 10: Political Participation</li> <li>• Schudson, Michael. 2000. "America's Ignorant Voters." <i>The Wilson Quarterly</i> 36(3): 16-22.</li> </ul>	
Wed, Oct 11	Citizen Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Zaller, J., &amp; Feldman, S. (1992). "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences," 36(3), 579–616.</li> <li>• Linn, Suzanna, Jonathan Nagler &amp; Marco A. Morales. 2013. "Economics, Elections, and Voting Behavior" In Jan E. Leighley eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015</li> </ul> <p><i>Note: skip the statistical analysis in the Zaller &amp; Feldman article</i></p>	
Week 4			
Mon, Oct 16	Public Opinion and Cognitive Shortcuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 9: Public Opinon.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Optional, in case you're interested:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lau, Richard R. &amp; David P. Redlawsk. 2001. "Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making." <i>American Political Science Review</i> 45(4): 951-971.</li> </ul>	
Wed, Oct 18	Elections and Voting Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 13: Elections and Campaigns. Read only section: What Do Elections Accomplish?</li> <li>• Stone, Walter J. &amp; Matthew K. Buttice. 2010. "Voters in Context: The Politics of Citizen Behavior" In Jan E. Leighley eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.</li> </ul>	

Week 5			
Mon, Oct 23	US Electoral Institutions in a Global Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 13: Elections and Campaigns</li> <li>• Weigel, David. 2016. "How do other countries elect presidents without an electoral college? Pretty easily." <i>The Washington Post</i>. <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/12/20/how-do-other-countries-elect-presidents-without-an-electoral-college-pretty-easily/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2016/12/20/how-do-other-countries-elect-presidents-without-an-electoral-college-pretty-easily/</a></li> <li>• Desilver, Drew. 2016. "Trump's victory another example of how Electoral College wins are bigger than popular vote ones." <i>Pew Research Center</i>. <a href="http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/12/20/why-electoral-college-landslides-are-easier-to-win-than-popular-vote-ones/">http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/12/20/why-electoral-college-landslides-are-easier-to-win-than-popular-vote-ones/</a></li> <li>• Liptak, Adam. 2013. "Smaller States Find Outsize Clout Growing in Senate." <i>The New York Times</i>. <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/03/11/us/politics/democracy-tested.html">http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/03/11/us/politics/democracy-tested.html</a></li> </ul>	
Wed., Oct 25	Review for Essay and Catch-Up		
Week 6			
Mon, Oct. 30	Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 11: Interest Groups &amp; Social Movements</li> </ul>	<b>Analytic Essay #1 due by start of class</b>
Wed, Nov 1	Does Pluralism Yield Just Representation?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gilens, Martin &amp; Benjamin Page. 2014. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 12(3): 564-581.</li> <li>• Schattschneider, E.E. 1960. "The Scope &amp; Bias of the Pressure System" In <i>The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America</i>. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart &amp; Winston.</li> </ul>	

Week 7			
Mon, Nov. 6	Why Parties?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 12: Political Parties</li> </ul>	
Wed, Nov. 8	Party Polarization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiorina, M. P., &amp; Abrams, S. J. (2008). "Political Polarization in the American Public." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, 563–568.</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional, in case you're interested:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bafumi, J., &amp; Shapiro, R. Y. (2009). "A New Partisan Voter." <i>The Journal of Politics</i>, 71(1), 1.</li> </ul>	
Week 8			
Mon, Nov. 13	Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 5: Congress</li> </ul>	
Wed, Nov. 15	Congressional Incentives: Committees, Representation & Reelection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mayhew, David. 1974. "The Electoral Connection and the Congress." In Terry Sullivan &amp; Matthew Sullivan eds., <i>Congress: Structure and Policy</i>. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 1987.</li> <li>• Binder, S. (2015). "The Dysfunctional Congress." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, 18(1), 85–101.</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional, in case you're interested:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evans, D. (2011). "Pork Barrel Politics." <i>The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress</i>, (September), 1–30.</li> </ul>	

Week 9			
Mon, Nov. 20	Congress and the Presidency: Are Citizens Being Represented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canes-Wrone, B. (2013). "From Mass Preferences to Policy." <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, 18(1).</li> </ul> <p><b>Optional, in case you're interested:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bafumi, J., &amp; Herron, M. C. (2010). "Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress." <i>American Political Science Review</i>, 104(3), 519–542.</li> </ul>	
Wed, Nov. 22		<b>NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING BREAK)</b>	
Week 10			
Mon, Nov. 27	Mass Representation & the Presidency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rohde, David W. &amp; John G. Greer. 2014. "The President and Congressional Parties in an Era of Polarization." In George C. Edwards III &amp; William G. Howell eds., <i>The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency</i>. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2016.</li> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 6: The Presidency</li> </ul>	
Wed, Nov. 29	The Presidency & a Comparative Perspective on Executive-Legislative Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shugart, Matthew. 2006. "Comparative Executive-Legislative Relations." <i>The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions</i>.</li> <li>• Pillalamarri, Akhilesh. 2016. "American Needs A Parliament." <i>The National Interest</i>.  <a href="http://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-needs-parliament-17220">http://nationalinterest.org/feature/america-needs-parliament-17220</a></li> </ul>	

Week 11			
Mon., Dec. 4	The Judiciary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Textbook, Chapter 8: The Judiciary</li> <li>• Podcast, <i>Radiolab Presents: More Perfect</i>. Episode: “Kittens Kick The Giggly Blue Robot All Summer.” <a href="http://www.wnyc.org/story/giggly-blue-robot/">http://www.wnyc.org/story/giggly-blue-robot/</a></li> <li>• Podcast, <i>Radiolab Presents: More Perfect</i>. Episode: “The Political Thicket” <a href="http://www.wnyc.org/story/the-political-thicket">http://www.wnyc.org/story/the-political-thicket</a></li> </ul> <p><i>Optional, in case you’re interested:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jeffrey Segal and Albert Cover. 1989. “Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Justices.” <i>APSR</i>. 557-565.</li> </ul>	
Wed, Dec. 6	<b>American Politics Jeopardy and Potluck!</b>		
Sat, Dec. 9	NO CLASS		<b>Analytic Essay #2 due by 10 AM</b>