

POL 203Y: U. S. POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

MTWR 2 - 4 pm, SS 1070

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Office Hours: Before class, TBA

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the U.S. national government and politics. We will discuss the foundations of the federal government system and its institutions. Applying the logic of politics, we will analyze the institutions of the U.S. governing system to see what function they play and why, the historic underpinnings of these institutions and the challenges they pose for policy-making and reform. We will pay special attention in this term to the role of the courts in deciding policy, the modern Presidency, and public opinion.

We will focus on:

- I. Foundations. Key concepts of political science and foundations of the U.S. government.
- II. Courts, Rights and Liberties: Historical and current interventions by the court on civil rights and individual liberties.
- III. The elected institutions of United States federal government: Congress and the executive with special attention the informal but omnipresent role of the media.
- IV. Division and conflict. The expression of public opinion, social and political divisions and the role parties and groups play in exacerbating, reconciling or resolving these differences.
- V. Forces of change and agents of stability. How formal and informal institutions provide stability, but allow opportunities for change.

We will conclude by evaluating whether America is unusual and the role played by its institutions, its unique history or the opinions held by its citizens.

Class Lectures and Tutorials

There are up to four two-hour lectures each week. In these lectures, I will raise and discuss central issues and questions, engage with (and occasionally dispute) the readings, and imbue the course with current political events. Some sessions will be devoted to special activities like a simulation, or audio-visual presentations. Some weeks there will also be tutorials led by a teaching assistant. During these tutorials, you, the students, will take center stage as you engage your peers in a discussion, game and/or simulation focusing on the week's topic(s). Your active participation in and contribution to the discussions are required.

Attendance and illness

Attendance in lecture and tutorial is required. If you are not feeling well, *or had flu-like symptoms 24 hours before class*, you should not come to class or tutorial. Email your teaching assistant. You may be asked to complete a brief assignment to make-up for your missed participation in tutorials.

Required Reading

Kernell, Sam, Gary Jacobson, and Thad Kousser *Logic of American Politics, 5th Edition*. (Sage/CQPress, 9781107621664)

There are several readings that are available on Blackboard or on-line in e-journals made available through the library.

You must also follow U.S. politics and current events on a regular, on-going basis. Any list of useful resources must include the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*. Some insightful and timely podcasts are available for free from National Public Radio (npr.org) and the New Yorker Magazine (newyorker.com) or through the iTunes store. For thoughtful commentary and criticism of current policy from the right or the left, I recommend: the *Weekly Standard*, the *National Review*, the *Nation* and *The New Republic*. There are many websites and blogs that regularly comment on U.S. Politics. Two worth mentioning that help readers through the “spin” are: <http://www.factcheck.org/> and <http://www.cjr.org/>. <http://fivethirtyeight.blogs.nytimes.com/>, Pollster.com, and Pollingreport.com have the latest polling data and commentary on the latest trends in public opinion.

To enhance your understanding of the lectures, facilitate your discussion section participation, and ensure success on the quizzes, you should complete the required reading before the lecture on the subject.

Course Blackboard Site

The Blackboard website is accessible when you log into <http://portal.utoronto.ca> using your UTORid. On Blackboard website you will find course readings, updated versions of this syllabus, details of all assignments, class discussion forums and the course gradebook.

From time to time, class announcements & material will be delivered via e-mail through Blackboard. It is the students' responsibility to maintain their e-mail addresses in good working order and to ensure that the e-mail address known to the university (and listed on Blackboard) is accurate. Failure to receive important class announcements & messages are NOT legitimate excuses for missing class work.

Grading

Final Exam (TBA) = 35%

Term Test = 20%

Supreme Court Analysis = 12%

Simulation participation and response papers = 13%

Survey data assignment = 10%

Participation + Quizzes = 10%

Tests and Exams

There will be one term test that will take place during lecture as indicated in the schedule below. The first term test will consist of brief identifications and short answers, and will require you to display your factual knowledge about the foundations of the U.S. government and an understanding of the key political science concepts. There is a final examination at the end of

the year that will be multiple choice and may include an essay or two. Prior to the final exam, I will distribute a list of essay questions that I will use to draw the final exam.

Students with special needs are encouraged to make arrangements with the university for a special administration of the tests.

If you miss a term test with an excusable absence, you must notify the instructor or your teaching assistant by phone or email before the test administration. It is your responsibility to take a make-up test as soon as you are able, so you will need to prioritize scheduling a make-up. Whenever possible, we expect that you will make up the test within five days of the original administration. If you miss a make-up test without a legitimate excuse, or the instructor does not accept your excuse, you will be given a grade of zero for the test.

Quizzes

Periodically, there may be open-book quizzes taken on the course's Blackboard site. This quiz will confirm that you have completed and understand the required reading. Each quiz will contain no more than ten questions. Students are advised to prepare for possible quizzes using resources on the textbook's website. We reserve the right to also administer closed book quizzes in lecture or in tutorials if and when we suspect that students are not properly preparing for class. No points will be awarded if the quiz is not completed before the deadline.

Assignments

Survey Data Assignment: We will ask you to analyze some U.S. opinion data using data and web-based software at: <http://sda.berkeley.edu>. First, you will use the data to describe a set of attitudes or behaviours with a short explanation accompanied by a table and/or graph of your results. You will be graded on the clarity and accuracy of your explanation and results. For extra credit (3 marks), you can repeat the results over time or in comparison to data in Canada and elsewhere found here: <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/datalib/major/sda.htm>

Simulations: There is one simulation of Presidential media relations. Every student must assume a defined role. Your grade for the simulation depends on your active participation in your assigned role, the completion of a role-specific task (like the writing of a newspaper story covering the President) and/or a response paper. Details about the simulation will be posted Blackboard.

Participation

Participation is essential to an enjoyable and productive learning experience.

All students are required to visit the discussion boards at least once a week to ask a question or posit a connection between a reading and a current event. These contributions must be made at least 90 minutes BEFORE the relevant lecture.

All students are expected to attend tutorials ready and willing to make thoughtful contributions to the discussion.

Just showing up and attending tutorials is necessary but not sufficient to get a good ('B') participation grade. Contributions to an interesting thread on the Blackboard discussion forums

are considered to be equivalent to speaking during class, so the best participation grades will reflect regular contributions during tutorials and/or on-line. Some weeks, the TA will moderate a virtual discussion on-line.

Grading Policy

Late assignments will be penalized 3% per day for the first four days of lateness. After four days of lateness, the teaching assistants and the instructor will refuse to accept the work for grading.

All matters of grading, exemptions, and discipline procedures will be handled in accordance with the Faculty of Arts and Science Academic Handbook. [Extensions and excused absences for non-health reasons may only be granted prior to the day of the deadline, exam or quiz.](#)

Any student who believes that any work has been unfairly graded may ask the instructor to re-evaluate his or her work. Grading appeals should be submitted with a cover letter explaining the basis of the appeal to the instructor or the teaching assistant. No oral or emailed appeals will be considered. Please do not seek to discuss grades with the instructor or the teaching assistants until the Monday following our return of the marks. Such re-marking may involve the entire piece of work, and may raise or lower the mark. No appeals will be considered after Monday, June 17. All other appeals and complaints will be handled in a manner consistent with the regulations described in the handbook.

See <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/main/faculty/resources/faculty/acaresources> for the complete handbook.

Plagiarism - Turnitin.com

On all work you complete for this course, all passages, ideas or information culled from other people or sources must be attributed to them. Plagiarism is a serious academic offense with a severe penalty. It is essential that you understand what plagiarism is and that you do not commit it. Please see <http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html> for more information and tips on how to avoid plagiarism.

Students agree that by taking this course all required assignments may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to **Turnitin.com** for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the **Turnitin.com** reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the **Turnitin.com** web site.

Accessibility Needs

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. The instructor of this course is determined to ensure that every student is given an opportunity to excel in this course and demonstrate their mastery of the material. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: disability.services@utoronto.ca or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

Contact

Questions and concerns

Students are encouraged to post all questions about the course material and current events on Blackboard, in the appropriate discussion forum. These forums will be moderated by teaching assistants and the instructor with the hope of ensuring that every question receives an answer within two class sessions.

The first person you should approach with questions or concerns about the course is your teaching assistant. Each teaching assistant will notify their tutorials how (and when) to best contact them. Following the return of marks, if you want to discuss your grade, your teaching assistant is the most appropriate person to contact initially even though they may not have personally graded your work. All such discussions, though, must occur no earlier than two classes following the return of the grades.

Instructor meetings and contact

You are welcome to meet with the course instructor. My office hours are before class every day. Outside of office hours, email is the best way to reach me. Via email, I am happy to arrange a phone conversation at a mutually agreeable time.

Because it is difficult to get to know many students in a large class, any group of four or five students is invited to arrange Dutch-treat lunches with me on or near campus. Dinners may be possible, especially if we meet in Mississauga near my home. I especially look forward to talking to you about topics related to the course or current political events.

Schedule

Section I: Foundations

13-May Intro: Do Institutions Matter?

14-May Prisoner's Dilemma & Tragedy of the Commons
Virtual Conversation: Will freedom to breed ruin us all? Should Western governments provide incentives for families that have one or fewer children?

Logic of American Politics ("Logic"), Ch. 1

Case Study: Jehl, Douglas. "Arkansas Rice Farmers Run Dry, and U.S. Remedy Sets Off Debate" *New York Times*. Nov. 11, 2002. p.

A1 <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/11/11/national/11RICE.html?scp=1&sq=arkansas%20rice%20farmers&st=cse>

15-May Precursors, Revolution and Nation-Building

Logic, pp 40-56.

Articles of Confederation, Logic Appendix 1

or http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/artconf.asp

Declaration of Independence, Logic, Appendix 2

or http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp

Iroquois Constitution: Great Binding Law, Rights and Powers of War, Names, duties and rights of War Chiefs, Rights of the People of the Five Nations http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Iroquois_Constitution
Roche, John P. 1961. "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action."
American Political Science Review 55(4), pp. 799-816.

16-May Constitutional Convention & Constitution

Logic, pp 57-86
Constitution of the United States (Logic, Appendix 3)
Federalist Papers 10, 45 & 51 <http://www.constitution.org/afp/afpchron.htm>
Brutus, Anti-Federalist Paper # 1,
3 <http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus01.htm> <http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus03.htm>

21-May Ratification, Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties

** Quiz (On-line, open book) **
Logic, pp. 190- 213 (Ch 5).
Bill of Rights (Amendments 1-10 of Constitution, see Appendix)
Rights of Man http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp
Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>

22-May Federalism, Civil War and Reconstruction

Logic, Ch. 3 & 4 to page 149
Dred Scott: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4p2932.html>,
Abraham Lincoln, "House Divided" speech and Gettysburg
Address: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2934.html>
http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/gettyb.asp
Listen to [partial]
dramatization: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vc5VEBPz8LE>
Recommended: "Africans in America," PBS Narrative, Part 4:
Start here: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/narrative.html>

23-May Civil Rights and Lawmaking

Logic, Ch 4 (to end) & pp. 283-297.
"How a Bill Becomes a Law" YouTube

27-May *** Term Test ***

Part II: Courts, Rights and Liberties:

28-May Judiciary and Precedence: Privacy and Sodomy
Tutorial/Virtual Conversation: Who (if anyone) should regulate family law and morality? Are there limits to a citizen's right to privacy?

Logic, pp. 214 – end of Ch. 5, Ch. 9

Supreme Court decision, Lawrence v. Texas

Summary and edited

opinion: <http://www.law.duke.edu/publiclaw/supremecourtonline/editedcases/lawvtex.html>

Recommended full text: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/02-102.ZS.html>

Liptak, Adam "A Place on the Sex-Offender Registry for a Crime That May Be Off the Books." *New York Times* January 10,

2011 <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/11/us/11bar.html? r=0>

29-May Civil Liberties today: Same Sex Marriage

Read: selected briefs

Listen: oral arguments

30-May TBA

Part III: Elected Institutions

3-June Congress

Logic, Ch. 6

TBA

4-June Presidency

Logic, Ch. 7

Lizza, Ryan "The Gatekeeper: Rahm Emanuel on the Job" *The New Yorker*

5-June Media

Logic, Ch. 14

6-June Presidential Press Briefing Simulation

Part IV: Division and Conflict

10-June Parties and Party System: Why Party? Why two parties?

Simulation Response Paper due in lecture

Logic, Ch. 12

11-June Campaigns and Elections: Do Campaigns Matter?

Film: "Taking on the Kennedy's"

Logic, Ch. 11

12-June Public Opinion

Tutorial: Are voters hopelessly ill-informed? How do they manage to make decisions in both high-visibility and low-visibility elections? Do politicians invest heavily

in persuasion because people's views are so easy to manipulate or because they are so difficult to manipulate?

Logic, Ch. 10

13-June Public opinion data analysis

Part IV: Forces of change and agents of stability

17-June Interest Groups: Venues and Strategies

Logic, Ch. 13

Wright, John. "One Thing You Need to Know... Interest Groups."

19-June Civil Controversies: Film: "School Prayer" <http://www.schoolprayer.com/>
Data assignment due

18-June God, Country, Social Capital and Social Policy

Tutorial: What is social capital? How does it help solve collective action problems? Is it always desirable? Is the U.S. facing a crisis?

Putnam, Robert. 1993. "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life." *The American Prospect*.

Dilulio, John J. "[The Lord's work](#)." *The Brookings Review*. Washington: 15(4); pp. 27-

Alan Wolfe. 1997. "[Is civil society obsolete?](#)" *The Brookings Review*. Washington: 15(4); pp. 9-13.

Galston, William A. and Peter Levine. 1997. "[America's civic condition: A glance at the evidence](#)." *The Brookings Review*. Washington: 15(4); pp. 23-27

20-June Prospects for Reform

Logic, Ch. 15

Shafer, Byron. 1998. "American Exceptionalism." *Annual Review of Political Science* 2: 445-63

Final Exam = TBA