

POL 203Y: U. S. POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

TR 2 - 4 pm

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Office Hours: 12:30-2 pm on Thursdays; after class

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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. In this class, we will evaluate how power is wielded within and between these institutions. We will critically evaluate the outputs of these institutions. By the end of the course you should have assimilated the basic concepts and information about both U.S. politics and the study of politics. Most importantly, you will have learned to think about the essential questions raised by these concepts.

In the first half of the term, we will focus on:

- I. Foundations. Key concepts of political science and foundations of the U.S. government.
- II. Institutions and national policy-making: The elected institutions of United States federal government: Congress and the executive.

In the second half of the term, we will focus on:

- III. Division and conflict. The expression of public opinion, social and political divisions and the role institutions play in exacerbating, reconciling or resolving these differences.
- IV. 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 two 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 weeks there will also be tutorials led by a teaching assistant. All students will be expected to sign up for, and attend, one of these tutorial sessions. During these sessions, 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. Students who are absent due to the H1N1 flu or who have flu-like symptoms will not be required to supply a doctor's note or medical certificate in relation to their absence. In order to receive academic

accommodation, students are required to record flu-related absences on the Student Web Service of ROSI (www.rosi.utoronto.ca). You may be asked to complete a brief assignment to make-up for your missed participation in tutorials.

Required Reading

Lowi, Theodore, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle and Stephen Ansolabehere. *American Government: Power and Purpose*, 11th edition (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009)*

Kollman, Ken, *Readings in American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010)*

* available at a discounted price if purchased together at the bookstore.

Kingdon, John W. *America the Unusual* (Thomson-Wadsworth Publishing, 1998).

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 U.S. Politics. Two worth mentioning that help readers through the “spin” are: <http://www.factcheck.org/> and <http://www.cjr.org/>. Fivethirtyeight.com, Gallup.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. You can find the course listed along with other course websites in the top-left corner. On the 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) = 25%

Term Tests (2)^s = 20%

Simulation participation and response papers = 13%

Survey data Assignment = 7%

Participation + Quizzes = 15%

Tests and Exams

There will be one term test that will take place during lecture as indicated in the schedule below, and one test that will be take-home essay format. 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 include a couple of essays. 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. If you miss fail to notify us in advance, we will dock your test grade by 10%. In this communication, you should provide reliable contact info so we can inform you of when there will be a make-up test. 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 one week of the original administration (but not less than 24 hours after the symptoms of your illness disappear). 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

There will be two types of quizzes administered in this course, one is a closed-book quiz administered by your teaching assistant in your tutorial. The second is open-book and taken at your convenience on the course's Blackboard site. Both types of quizzes will have no more than ten questions on it. Students are advised to prepare for possible quizzes using resources on the textbook's website.

Quizzes during tutorials are closed-book and will confirm that you have completed and understand the required reading for the week and are familiar with major current public affairs in the news. As a result, if you are sick, you should notify your TA in advance of the tutorial. These quizzes will be graded and returned to you at the next session of your section. Your single worst quiz result will not count towards your final grade. Missing a quiz without an acceptable reason will result in a zero. If you miss a quiz with an acceptable reason, your quiz grade will be calculated solely from the quizzes you did take.

On select weeks, there will be an announcement in class, during tutorials and/or Blackboard announcing an open-book quiz that must be completed on-line that week. This quiz will confirm that you have completed and understand the required reading. Each quiz will contain no more than ten questions. All questions will be fill-in-the-blank, true/false, matching or multiple choice. No points will be awarded if the quiz is not completed before the deadline.

Assignments

Survey Data Assignment: In the spring, 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 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. All students are encouraged to visit the discussion boards at least once a week to join conversations about the class readings and current events, or to ask or answer questions raised by other students about the readings. In some weeks, a teaching assistant will moderate a virtual conversation on a particular topic.

You are also encouraged to post any questions you have about the readings prior to class and tutorials on Blackboard.

Grading Policy

Late assignments will be penalized 3% per day for the first ten days of lateness. After ten 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. No extensions or excused absences will be granted if the student did not notify the instructor or the teaching assistant within ten days of the original deadline.

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 August 14. 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.

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. 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 before the next class.

For personal concerns, questions that do not receive an answer on Blackboard, or to discuss class material that has left you thoroughly confused, the first person you should approach with questions or concerns 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 the Monday following the return of the grades.

Instructor meetings and contact

You are welcome to meet with the course instructor. My office hours are before and after class on Thursday afternoons or by appointment through e-mail. Because I work from home most days, 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 dinners with me on or near campus immediately after class or lunches immediately prior to class. Other nights/afternoons may also be feasible in Mississauga near my home. I especially look forward to talking to you about topics related to the course or current political events.

Schedule

Part I: Foundations

11-May Intro: Do Institutions Matter?

13-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?

American Government: Power and Purpose ("Power"), Ch. 1

Readings in American Politics ("Reader"), 1.1 & 1.2

Knoke, David. 1988. "Incentives in Collective Action Organizations." *American Sociological Review* 53(3), pp. 311-329 [\[JSTOR\]](#)

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>

18-May Precursors, Revolution and Nation-Building

Power, Ch. 2.

Iroquois Constitution: Laws of Emigration, Rights of Foreign Nations, Rights and Powers of War, Treason or Secession of a Nation, Rights of the People of the Five Nations http://tuscaroras.com/pages/history/iroquois_constitution_1.html

or http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Iroquois_Constitution (Recommended: http://wiki.answers.com/Q/In_what_ways_is_the_iroquois_constitution_different_to_the_us_constitution)

Declaration of Independence (Logic, Appendix 1)

Articles of Confederation <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/artconf.htm>

Roche, John P. 1961. "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action." *American Political Science Review* 55(4), pp. 799-816.

20-May Constitutional Convention & Constitution
Tutorial: Discuss Federalist Papers, rights of individuals or "good governance"?

Federalist Papers 10, 45, 48 & 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>

Reader, 2.3, 3.4

Constitution of the United States (Logic, Appendix 2)

Borowiak, Craig. 2007. "Accountability Debates: The Federalists, the Anti-Federalists, and Democratic Deficits," *Journal of Politics* 69:4 (November): 998-1014.

25-May Ratification, Bill of Rights and Civil Liberties

Rights of Man http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp

Bill of Rights (Amendments 1-10 of Constitution, see Appendix 2)

27-May Federalism, Civil War and Reconstruction

Power, Ch. 3

Reader, 3.2, 3.3

pp. 138-153

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>

"Africans in America," PBS Narrative, Part 4:

Start here: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/narrative.html>

1-June Civil Rights and Lawmaking

Reader, 4.1, 4.4

TBA

"How a Bill Becomes a Law" YouTube

Lee, Taeku. 2008. "Race, Immigration and the Identity-to-Politics Link." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 457-478

<http://arjournals.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.051707.122615>

3-June Judiciary and Civil Liberties Today: Privacy and Sodomy
Tutorial: Who (if anyone) should regulate family law and morality? Are there limits to a citizen's right to privacy?

Power, Ch. 8
Reader, 4.3, Ch. 8
Supreme Court decision, Lawrence v. Texas
<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/02-102.ZS.html>
Summary and edited opinion:
<http://www.law.duke.edu/publiclaw/supremecourt/online/editedcases/lawvtex.html>

8-June **Term Test 1: Foundations**

Part II: Institutions and National Policy-making

10-June Congress

Power, Ch. 5
Reader, 1.3, 7.2

15-June Presidency

Power, Ch. 6
Reader, Ch. 6.1, 6.4, 6.

17-June Bureaucracy

Tutorial: Simulation planning.

Power, Ch. 7
Reader, 7.1 (James Q. Wilson), 7.3
Lizza, Ryan “The Gatekeeper: Rahm Emanuel on the Job” *The New Yorker*

22-June President and Media. Film: “The Press Secretary

Reader, 6.2, 6.3
Kernell, Samuel. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. 4th Edition.
Introduction.

24-June Media

Power, Ch. 13
Reader, Ch. 14

MID-SUMMER BREAK

6-July Foreign Policy

Power, Ch. 16
Reader, Ch. 17

8-July Lecture: Simulation gaggle time
Tutorial: Presidential Press Briefing Simulation

Part III: Division and Conflict

13-July Campaigns and Elections: Do Campaigns Matter?
Film: “Taking on the Kennedy’s”

Power, Ch. 10

- 15-July 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?
Simulation Response Paper due in tutorial

Power, Ch. 9

Reader, 9.1

Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation" *American Political Science Review*. 89: 543-564.

- 20-July Public opinion data analysis & presentation of data

- 22-July Parties and Party System: Why Party? Why two parties?

Power, Ch. 11

Reader, Ch. 11

- 27-July Congressional Election Update & Analyzing the evidence
TAKE HOME TEST DUE in lecture

Assorted end-of-chapter readings in "Power"

Part IV: Forces of change and agents of stability

- 29-July Interest Groups: Venues and Strategies

Power, Ch. 12

Reader, Ch. 11

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

Kitschelt, Herbert. 1986. "Political Opportunity Structures and Political Protest: Anti-Nuclear Movements in Four Democracies." *British Journal of Political Science* 16:57-85.

- 3-Aug Social and Economic Policy

Power, Ch. 14-15

Reader, 15.1, Ch. 16

- 5-Aug Civil Controversies: Film: "School Prayer" <http://www.schoolprayer.com/>
God, Country and Social Capital

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

Data assignment due in tutorial

PFC, Ch. 12

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

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

10-Aug TBA

12-Aug America the Unusual & Prospects for Reform
Tutorial: What makes the U.S. unusual? Is America so unusual??

Power, {End Ch. 16}

Kingdon, John W. *America the Unusual*

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

Final Exam = TBA