

Pol 1: Introduction to American Politics

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, DAVIS

Fall 2017

Seminar: Hickey Gymnasium 290: T,TR 8:00-9:20

Discussion & Term Paper Period: Hickey Gymnasium 290: T,TR 9:30-9:50

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Office Hours: Tuesday 10:00-12:00 & by appointment

Course GitPage & Resources: <https://calgara.github.io/pol1f2017.html>

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Course Objective: How do we study & assess American democracy?

This course offers an introduction to the systematic and meticulous study of American politics. Building on the scientific foundation of political science, this course is designed to provide an understanding into the behavior of *citizens* and *institutions* operating within the national framework of American government. The main question motivating the course is a simple, yet complex one: how well does the American political system live up to the ideals of a representative democracy? Recognizing that representative democracy requires engaged citizens and responsive institutions, the motivating question of the course hinges on understanding:

- How does James Madison’s “Republic” provide the fundamental theory that justifies the representative framework which underlies the American political system and what are the role of *citizens* and elites within this “ideal” framework?
- How do individual *citizens* make political decisions, such as which candidate to vote for and what policies & political positions (preferences) to hold? What are the implications of how *citizens* make decisions for Madison’s framework and the function of democracy? How do alternative models of representation differ from Madison’s framework?
- What incentives motivate how elected elites (politicians) behave within the *institution* (i.e. the Congress and the presidency) in which they serve and what are the implications of differing incentives across *institutions* for responsiveness (policymaking)? How does collective *institutional* behavior, such as gridlock, fit into Madison’s view of democracy? How do parties fit (or not fit) in Madison’s conception of institutional conflict between the Congress and Presidency?

These thematic questions may seem daunting, but this course will give you the necessary framework to perform careful political and social science analysis to gain leverage on these questions. This course will provide not only an understanding of how to think of the quality

of American democracy but also how to engage in careful social science analysis. This course emphasizes the tools you need to assess political behaviors, practices, and institutions based on theory and evidence. Welcome to the class!

Course Logistics & Requirements

This section of the syllabus serves a guide for course expectations (both for me and for you) and logistical information such as grade breakdown and course texts.

Course Texts & Announcements: There is one assigned textbook for this course and the citation can be found below:

- Kollman, Ken. 2017 *The American Political System: Core Edition*: New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company ¹

The [Course GitPage](#) contains all lectures, supplemental readings, and exam study guides in the interactive syllabus. Course announcements will be made through [Canvas](#).

Grade Breakdown & Schedule:

- ★ 30% Midterm Exam (November 2, 2017)²
- ★ 45% Final Exam (6:00PM, December 14, 2017)
- ★ 15% American Politics Model Evaluation Essay (Due: December 8, 2017 11:59PM)
- ★ 10% Seminar Participation & Research Participation

≥ 97% A+	87 - 89% B+	77 - 79% C+	67 - 69 D+	< 60% F
93 - 96% A	83 - 86% B	73 - 76% C	63 - 66% D	
90 - 92% A-	80 - 82% B-	70 - 72% C-	60 - 62% D-	

Exams: The midterm & final exam will feature three main components: short answer, analytical question, and essay. The short answer component will be both the *definition* and *significance* of a concept discussed in lecture and in the readings. The analytical question will require you to interpret data presented in a graph or table and then analyze how the presented findings relate to a question about course concepts. Lastly, the essays will require you to use the course concepts to **develop an argument** in response to stated essay question. This includes a thesis statement and supporting evidence for the thesis statement. Study guides will be provided a week before the exam along with “what constitutes an excellent”

¹Note that I have designed the course so that readings in the syllabus correspond to *both* the **Third** Edition and the **Second** Edition of the textbook.

²Midterm exam held in regular lecture. Date subject to change with advance notice.

short answer and essay. The midterm is worth 30% while the **cumulative** final exam is worth 45%.

American Politics Model Evaluation Essay: The essay assignment will ask students to choose a model discussed throughout the course of the quarter and write a critical analysis evaluating the model. The first half of the assignment will require the student to outline the model in detail, the mechanisms present in the model, and what the model predicts with respect to political behavior. The second half of the assignment will require the student to evaluate the model and how well the model predicts the political phenomena it seeks to explain. The parameters of this assignment will be outlined in detail and uploaded to the course [GitPage](#). The assignment is to be turned in via the [Canvas](#) portal under the essay assignment tab.

Make-Up Exams: I understand that throughout a quarter many exogenous, unanticipated events, may occur that would require the makeup of an exam. This course offers flexibility for administration of the *midterm exam* for whatever reason, independent of proper documentation such as a doctor's note. However, makeup examinations will consist of a robust single essay written during a ninety minute window. However, per university policy, the final exam cannot be given early and will be administered during the schedule time found on the [registrar website](#). Make-up *final exams* outside of this final exam period will *require* formal documentation and coordination at least a week in advance.

Seminar Participation & Research Participation: As stated earlier, there will be unannounced individual and group activities used to both 1) stimulate discussion during seminar and 2) assess student comprehension of a given day's concepts. These exercises will be done through an online survey hosted by the ***Canvas*** portal or in-class group exercises. These participation exercises will be incorporated into every other lecture and will be graded based on whether a student participated or not. Students may participate on a computer or on their smart phone device. Thus, **attendance** is critical to getting full points for the seminar participation. If applicable, students may also earn extra credit participating in a political science research experiment. Details will be explained in class and participation will be equivalent for *two course percentage* points in weight.

Academic Dishonesty & Ethics: This course is about developing critical thought and developing personalized skill-sets necessary to examine politics in a systematic and rigorous way. Thus, it is important to develop your own arguments and work to hone in analytical skills. Academic dishonesty is not only a serious breach of ethics in the university community, but it is also detrimental to your scholarly growth. Ethics breaches, such as cheating and plagiarism, will be referred to the [Office of Student Judicial Affairs](#). Students may refer to the [University's Code of Academic Conduct](#) for further clarification or may conduct the instructor for any specific questions.

Course Resources: If accommodations are needed for you to succeed in this course, please speak with me and we will work together to make sure you are accommodated. If you are unsure if you need accommodations, please visit the [UC Davis SDC site](#). On another

note, I highly recommend taking advantage of the great campus resources offered by the [Student Academic Success Center](#) for strategies on how to succeed not only in this course but throughout your tenure here.

Successful Strategies for the Systematic Study of Politics

This section of the syllabus provides successful strategies on *how* to succeed in this course.

Note on Reading Scholarly Articles: After the foundational section, many of the readings in subsequent sections will be academic in nature. I understand that, as an introductory seminar, these works may contain empirical analysis that may seem daunting and confusing to read (i.e. lots of equations & statistics). I will convey the article's findings at length in lecture. The *only* expectation from you is to read the article carefully before seminar, attempt to understand the article's main argument (this includes that political phenomena does the article's argument seek to explain), how the article's findings fits with the theory presented, and what the implications of the author's empirical findings are for the function of democracy/course concepts. I will provide a checklist that outlines how to read these works for content and using the content in seminar discussion.

Expectations: Students can expect me to come prepared to seminar. This entails that students can expect me to give a strong effort to convey the given seminar's course concepts and the implications these concepts have for the main questions highlighted in the course description. This seminar will be taught in a *dynamic* fashion which will require full participation from *everyone* in the seminar. As such, most lectures will incorporate activities designed to stimulate student involvement and gauge comprehension of the material. It is critical that everyone (including me) is ***prepared*** to discuss the seminar's assigned reading for that day and come ready to discuss the concepts and how what implications these concepts have for assessing the quality of American democracy.

Coming Prepared: Each seminar will introduce *new* theories that, in one way or another, **will provide different conceptions of what the ideals of democracy should be**. It is critical that you (and I) do the assigned readings before the class. Useful class discussion is conditional on both of us doing the readings, being familiar with the reading's argument/main points, and engaging the theories presented during that week. After understanding these different theories of democracy, we will evaluate whether the American political system as constructed works well or is in need of valuable reform. The better we prepare, the better we can assess our democracy.

Keeping an Open-Mind & Importance of Questions: It is critical to both challenge partisan predispositions and other biases we may hold, even if that means confronting powerful myths that can bias our perceptions and assessments. Assessing whether our democracy functions well requires **questioning everything**, both of the theories themselves and my interpretation of them. Intellectual curiosity and asking questions is both a strong and

desirable virtue. Asking questions and engaging in a conversation by sharing your ideas and thoughts help strengthen our assessments.

Course Road-Map

This section of the syllabus outlines the course schedule & readings³. The course will be divided into three distinct sections outlined in the course objective. Understanding of these three questions will help assess the behavior of *citizens* and *institutions* and the implications these behaviors have for the functioning of the American political system as a representative democracy. It is imperative that you treat each section as a part of a **framework** by which we judge the functioning of American democracy. Each section objective articulates the role of the section within the **framework**

1. Madison's Republic: Foundation of American Democracy

Section Objective: Madison's theory of representative democracy, outlined in *Federalist 10 & 51*, outlines the justification for the American constitution and our representative form of government. This section provides an understanding of the motivation underpinning a representative form of democracy, centered around Madison's argument about human nature, how representatives behave in political life, and the consequences of Madison's argument on political change. Ask yourself, is Madison's Republic democratic relative to other forms of democracy and how well does this theory explain the American system today?

1. Meeting 1: Course Overview & "First-Attempts" at American Democracy

- *Kollman Text*: Chapter 1: *Introduction*
- [The Articles of Confederation and Perpetual Union. 1777.](#)

2. Meeting 2: The Problem of Human Nature: Self-Interest, Factions, & Collective Action

- Madison, James. 1787. "Federalist 10." In [United States Congress Resources](#)
- *Kollman Text*: Chapter 2: *The Constitution*: Sections: What Do Constitutions Accomplish & Origins of the American Political System

3. Meeting 3: Madison's Theory: Self-Interest & Ambition as the Solution

- Reread: Madison, James. 1787. "Federalist 10." In [United States Congress Resources](#)
- Madison, James (or Alexander Hamilton). 1788. "Federalist 51." In [United States Congress Resources](#)
- [Constitution of the United States](#). 1788. *Particular* emphasis on Articles I, II, IV, & VI.

³Each seminar slideset and supplemental material will be uploaded before seminar on the [Course GitPage](#).

2. Citizen Political Behavior: Functioning as Critical Principals

Section Objective: It's clear that Madison's Republic posits an important role for citizens in a representative democracy. This section highlights how citizens function as *principals* of their elected representatives (i.e. agents). This section provides an understanding of which type of citizens participate in politics, what the incentives are to be "disengaged" from the political process, how well elections work, and what role parties play (if any) in helping citizens make political decisions. Pay close attention to some key questions. What are the implications of the "disengagement" incentive for the functioning of Madison's Republic? Do elections help citizens make a more "representative" form of government and how do we know when they do? How does the pluralist theory challenge Madison's republic? And, perhaps the most important question, is an informed electorate **NECESSARY** for Madison's theory to work?

1. Meeting 4: Variation in Citizen Participation: Resources and Free-Riding Incentive

- *Kollman Text*: Chapter 10: *Political Participation*
- Schudson, Michael. 2000. "America's Ignorant Voters." *The Wilson Quarterly* 36(3): 16-22.

2. Meeting 5: Developing Political Preferences: Citizen Self-Interest

- Zaller, John & Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 951-971.
- Linn, Suzanna, Jonathan Nagler & Marco A. Morales. 2013. "Economics, Elections, and Voting Behavior" In Jan E. Leighley eds., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.

3. Meeting 6: Overcoming Limited Information: How Citizens use Short-Cuts to Act

- *Kollman Text*: Chapter 9: *Public Opinion*
- Lau, Richard R. & David P. Redlawsk. 2001. "Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making." *American Political Science Review* 45(4): 951-971.

4. Electoral Dynamics: The Role of Campaign & Valence Context in Voting Choice

- Abramowitz, Alan I., Brad Alexander & Matthew Gunning. 2006. "Incumbency, Redistricting, and the Decline of Competition in U.S. House Elections." *Journal of Politics* 68(1): 75-88.
- Stone, Walter J. & Matthew K. Buttice. 2010. "Voters in Context: The Politics of Citizen Behavior" In Jan E. Leighley eds., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.
- *Kollman Text*: Chapter 13: *Elections & Campaigns*

5. Meeting 8: An Alternative to the Madisonian Model of Representation: Pluralism & By-Product Representation through Interest Groups
 - *Kollman Text*: Chapter 11: *Interest Groups & Social Movements*
 - Olson Jr., Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. **Read Chapter IV: The “By-Product” & “Special Interest” Theories (p. 132-167)**
6. Meeting 9: Does Pluralism Provide Equitable Representation? Critiques of the By-Product Model
 - Gilens, Martin & Benjamin Page. 2014. “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.” *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3): 564-581.
 - Schattschneider, E.E. 1960. “The Scope & Bias of the Pressure System” In *The Semisovereign People: A Realist’s View of Democracy in America* New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
7. Meeting 10: Review for Midterm & Catch-Up.

Meeting 11: Midterm Examination (November 2, 2017)

3: Post-Election: How Institutions Function within the Framework

Section Objective: This section turns our focus from citizens, the principals in a representative democracy, to elected representatives, the agents. This section focuses on two institutions, the Congress and the Executive, and assesses the *incentives* they have to be faithful agents for voters and *whether* they provide accurate political representation. This section begins with how **Party Theory** provides a framework of representation and policymaking. Pay close attention to how **Party Theory** differs from Madison’s conception of district-centered representation. This section wraps up with a discussion on collective **institutional** behavior. Critical questions for this section focus on comparing & contrasting Madison’s model of representation, Pluralism (By-Product Theory), and Party Theory. Speaking to institutions, think about how do the differing electoral incentives found in Congress and the Presidency inherently create a *status quo bias*? How does polarization exasperate this bias, what *types of citizens* get represented, and is the system in need of reform in light of Madison’s theory?

1. Meeting 12: Parties in the Electorate: Helping Citizens Make Political Decisions at a Trade-off (**Party Theory I**)
 - Levendusky, Matthew S. 2010. “Clearer Cues, More Consistent Voters: A Benefit of Elite Polarization.” *Political Behavior* 32(1): 111-131.
 - Bafumi, Joseph & Robert Y. Shapiro. 2009. “A New Partisan Voter.” *Journal of Politics* 71(1): 1-23.

2. Meeting 13: Parties as Organizations: Implications of the American Party System & Procedural Cartel Theory (**Party Theory II**)
 - Fiorina, Morris. 2006. "Parties as Problem Solvers" In Alan S. Gerber & Erik M. Patashnik eds., *Promoting the General Welfare : New Perspectives on Government Performance*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute. 2006.
 - Cox, Gary W. & Matthew D. McCubbins. 2005. "Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives." In Steven S. Smith et al. eds. *The American Congress Reader*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 2009.
 - **Optional:** *Kollman Text*: Chapter 12: *Political Parties* Sections: What are Parties? & In Comparison: Parties
3. Meeting 14: Congressional Incentives & "*The Textbook Congress*": Representation & Getting Re-Elected
 - Mayhew, David. 1974. "The Electoral Connection and the Congress." In Terry Sullivan & Matthew Sullivan eds., *Congress: Structure and Policy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 1987.
 - Evans, C. Lawrence. 2011. "Congressional Committees" In George C. Edwards III, Frances E. Lee, & Eric Schickler eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.
 - Evans, Diana. 2011. "Pork Barrel Politics" In George C. Edwards III, Frances E. Lee, & Eric Schickler eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the American Congress*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2015.
 - **Optional:** *Kollman Text*: Chapter 5: *Congress*: Section: Congressional Elections.
4. Meeting 15: Change in Representation: Are Citizens Represented in the System?
 - Bafumi, Joseph & Michael C. Herron. 2010. "Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 104(3): 519-542.
 - Bartels, Larry M., Joshua D. Clinton & John G. Greer. 2014. "Representation" In Richard Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, & Robert Lieberman eds., *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2016.
5. Meeting 16: The Presidency: At-Large Constituency & Presidential Representation
 - Moe. Terry M. & William G. Howell. 1999. "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29(4): 850-873.
 - Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The Presidents Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2): 313-329

6. Meeting 17: Executive-Legislative Bargaining: Inherent Status-Quo Bias

- Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. “Pivotal Politics: A Theory in U.S. Lawmaking.” In Steven S. Smith et al. eds. *The American Congress Reader*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. 2009.

7. Meeting 18: Polarization: Implications for Policymaking & Accountability

- Rohde, David W., & John G. Greer. 2014. “The President and Congressional Parties in an Era of Polarization” In George C. Edwards III & William G. Howell eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the American Presidency* New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2016.
- Jones, David R. 2010. “Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections” *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2): 323-337.
- **Optional:** Fiorina, Morris. 2014. “The (Re) Nationalization of Congressional Elections.” *A Hoover Institution Essay on Contemporary American Politics*.

8. Meeting 19: Reform Needed? Potential Reforms from Comparative Systems

- Shugart, Matthew S. 2006. “Comparative ExecutiveLegislative Relations.” In Sarah A. Binder, R. A. W. Rhodes & Bert A. Rockman eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2008.

9. Meeting 20: Review for Final & Catch-Up

Meeting 21: Final Exam (6:00PM December 14, 2017)