

Syllabus: Introduction to American Government

COURSE INFORMATION	<i>Term:</i> Spring 2021 <i>Level:</i> Introductory <i>Meet:</i> Friday 1-2:20 & asynchronously <i>Type:</i> Fully Remote (<i>hybrid option</i>) <i>Syllabus Revision:</i> January 28, 2021	<i>Instructor:</i> Jack Reilly <i>live text:</i> ncfapclass.slack.com <i>E-mail:</i> jreilly@ncf.edu <i>Office Hours:</i> Friday 9-11 <i>Appointments:</i> jackreilly.com/appointments
DESCRIPTION	<p>This course serves as an introduction to the systematic and rigorous study of American politics. We develop an understanding of the forces that influence the behavior of individuals and institutions in and around our national government. How well does the American political system live up to the ideals of a representative democracy? Answering this question means that we need to know something about how our government is supposed to work, where it fails to measure up, and why. This will put us in a position to evaluate proposals for reforming the system as well as defenses of the status quo. Topics include the Federalist papers, the Constitution, participation and voting behavior, elections and representation, political parties and factions, Congress, the Presidency, and the formation of public policy.</p> <p>Careful analysis of the political system in which we live is difficult. We must overcome partisan predispositions and other biases we may hold. The systematic study of politics is also clouded at times by powerful myths that can color our perceptions and assessments. This course gives students the tools they need to assess political behaviors, practices, and institutions based on theory and evidence.</p> <p>Welcome to the class. I hope you enjoy it.</p>	
COURSE STRUCTURE	<p>This is online remote class with partially synchronous and fully asynchronous options. (You must choose one option at the beginning of the class and stick with it.) The partially synchronous option will consist of readings, recorded lectures, structured debates, group work, remote interaction over video and text, and exams. The fully asynchronous option substitutes essays for the debates. In addition to the main class components, there is a fully optional in-person discussion session with the course TA (Angela) Tuesdays from 1-1:45 in HCL7.</p> <p>In addition to this syllabus, which outlines high-level expectations and course structures, you should also consult the course agenda, which can be found in the course google drive. The course agenda identifies, for each week, what your course responsibilities are.</p>	
PREREQUISITES	None. Recommended co-requisite: introductory writing course and/or introductory quantitative data course.	

Materials

BOOKS	Required: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ken Kollman, <i>The American Political System: Core Edition</i>. Norton. (Referred to as “text”. Any edition is OK.)• Ken Kollman, <i>Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives</i>. (Referred to as “reader”. Newest edition is useful.)• Dahl, Robert. <i>How Democratic is the American Constitution?</i> Yale.• Additional readings as assigned can be found in the course Google drive.
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COMPUTING,
TECHNOLOGY, &
SOFTWARE:

This is a remote course. As such, to successfully complete the course, you will need internet access and a device capable of running or accessing the following software: Canvas, Zoom, Google Drive, and Slack. You will also need the ability to play mp3 audio files and mp4 video files. You may find details, links, and locations for all electronic course materials on the course Canvas page.

Course Requirements

OVERVIEW

Satisfactory completion of the course requires completion of the following:

1. Weekly Preparation & Participation
 - (a) Lecture
 - (b) Reading
 - (c) Discussion Questions
2. Debates¹
 - (a) Madison's Republic
 - (b) Citizen Competence
 - (c) Pluralism/Party Theory
 - (d) American Democracy
3. Test
 - (a) Political Models and the Constitution
 - (b) Behavior
 - (c) Linkage
 - (d) Institutions

WEEKLY PREPARATION

Weekly Work Successful participation requires both viewing the lectures and doing the readings. By Friday each week, you should have completed the work for that week of class. You are not expected to have mastered the reading or concepts, but you should be familiar enough with it that you can ask and answer questions about the material.

Discussion Questions & Participation Submit discussion questions or points (broadly construed) to the course slack channel every week by Friday at 1 PM. This question (or set of questions) can be about anything from the reading: uncertainty on the analysis technique, a challenge of the author's theory, a question about the implications of a paper, etc.

Participation In addition to posting one of your own questions or comments every week, you must read through others' questions and comments, comment yourself on two other people's questions for the week (although this is, of course, not an upper limit.)²

DEBATES

The main work for the course involves participation in a series of four debates. There are two core components to each debate:

1. *Preparation*, including developing and writing opening debate essays ("constructives") as well as prep for the latter stages of the debate. (1-2 pages each.)
2. The *debate* itself, including oral presentation of the constructive, a rebuttal period, cross-examination, and a closing argument ("final focus").

¹Students taking the fully asynchronous course option will have short essays, rather than debates.

²Think of it as a "one-two" rule: ask one question yourself, comment on two others.

EXAMS

There are four exams in the class, each covering one of the four course units. Each exam is a take-home that you will have a week to complete. The course is cumulative, and each test will be comprehensive, but each exam will focus on material from the most recent unit.

Exams will be gone over in class the day that they are due, so late work will not be accepted.

Conditions for Satisfactory Evaluation

EXPECTATIONS

To satisfactorily complete the course, you must satisfactorily complete all three course requirements: preparation & participation, debates, and exams. Specifically:

1. Participation

- Students who fail to participate in two or more weeks worth of text discussion (at least one question and two comments) may not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.

2. Debates

- Students must participate in all required debates to display oral and written communication skills as well as the ability to create and support an effective argument.³

3. Test

- Students must satisfactorily complete all four test to illustrate command of the the material.

Unsatisfactory performance in any of these course components may result in an unsatisfactory evaluation.

Policies

COURSE POLICIES

Student Hours: I encourage you to chat with me at any point if you have questions about the course, the readings, school, etc. While remote classes in the pandemic make this challenging, you can either chat with me privately through the course slack or by scheduling a zoom call with me. For zoom, I maintain a list of my available times to meet on my website here: <http://jacklreilly.com/appointments> where you can sign up for a spot. Don't be bashful! Come say hi! I'd like to get the chance to get to know you.

E-mail: Students can generally expect a response to all e-mails within 24 hours, excepting weekends.

A Note on Writing: Clear writing and argumentation is a critical element to success in this class. I strongly recommend exploring the options for writing (and revising!) assistance at the Writing Resource Center. You can schedule an appointment through the writing center here: <https://ncf.mywconline.com>

³Students taking the fully asynchronous course option must submit all essays.

Class Schedule

OVERVIEW

Topics Outline

W	Main Topic	Activity
1	Models and Science	FAQ/Startup
2	Five Useful Models of Politics	Debate Tactics & Prep
3	Madison's Republic	Debate Prep
4	Critique of Madison's Republic	Debate I: Madison's Republic
5	Participation & Resource Bias	Exam I: Madison & Models
6	Public Opinion & Media	BREAK DAY
7	Four Models of Vote Choice	Debate Prep
8	Party Theory	Debate II: Citizen Competence
9	Pluralism	Exam II: Political Behavior
10	BREAK DAY	Debate Prep
11	Political Equality & Diversity	Debate III: Representation
12	Three Models of Congressional Behavior	Exam III: Linkage Mechanisms
13	BREAK DAY	Debate Prep
14	Collective Representation (Double Lecture)	Extra Debate Prep
15	Debate IV: Democracy and the Constitution	READING DAYS
F	FINALS WEEK	Exam IV: Institutions

COURSE TOPICS

Topics list is a guideline, not definitive

1. Foundations: Models of Politics and the Constitution

- Model thinking
 - collective action issues
 - principle agent problems
 - prisoner's dilemmas
- Public and Private Goods
- Madison's Republic, Factions, and Self-Interest
- The Constitution
- Federalism and Sorting Models

2. Political Behavior

- Citizen Participation
- Public Opinion
- Rational Abstention
- Elections
- Vote Choice

3. Linkage Mechanisms

- Media
- Political Parties
- Party Theory
- Pluralism
- Interest Groups

4. Political Institutions

- Micro-Representation
- Macro-Representation (Collective Representation)
- Brick and Mortar Institutions
 - Congress
 - Presidency
 - Judiciary
 - Bureaucracy

New College Campus Policies and Resources

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY	New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, you are encouraged to initiate a conversation with the office of Student Disability Services (SDS). SDS works with students with disabilities to identify reasonable accommodations and plans ways to implement these with your faculty members. Please visit their website for additional information: https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/ . You may also contact Student Disability in-person (HCL3), via phone at 941-487-4496 OR via email at disabilityservices@ncf.edu . Students are welcome to discuss privately any concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. Students with accommodations are highly encouraged to meet with their primary or partner instructor as soon as possible.
TITLE IX	New College of Florida is committed to equal access to education pursuant to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. The law protects all individuals on our campus from gender-based discrimination or exclusion or instances of sexual misconduct. All full-time faculty, full-time staff, and resident advisors are Responsible Employees required to report any known instances of sexual misconduct or gender discrimination to the Title IX Coordinator. Please contact our Title IX coordinator (titleix@ncf.edu) or see the website (https://www.ncf.edu/campus-life/title-ix/) for more information.
EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY	New College's commitment to excellence can only be realized in a learning environment that is inclusive, characterized by openness to diverse perspectives, and marked by mutual respect. Anything short of this aspiration is inconsistent with our commitment. Equal access, and the opportunity to participate fully in all of our programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, political ideology, national origin, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, is essential to that commitment and will be the standard to which we expect all members of our learning community to adhere.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY	<p>Academic integrity is essential to maintaining a vibrant, healthy, and engaging learning environment for which we all must take responsibility. The New College faculty considers academic dishonesty to be a serious violation of community standards. Students are expected to refrain from acts of academic dishonesty, which may include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. cheating and/or plagiarism (such as: presenting the intellectual work of others as one's own; failing to cite sources; improper paraphrasing via failing to use own words even if a citation is given; partial, incomplete, or inaccurate citation of work of others); 2. unauthorized multiple submissions (submission of the same work for different academic activities, without the approval of the instructor); 3. false citation (false citation of a source or knowingly attributing work to a source from which the referenced material was not obtained);

4. falsifying data (fabricating or altering data to deliberately mislead; for example, changing data to get better experiment results is academically fraudulent);
5. falsifying information, signatures, or initials on official and academic forms.

If you are in doubt about what practices are permissible in an examination, you should consult the professor prior to sitting for the exam. If you lack understanding of how, in a paper or other presentation, to distinguish your thoughts from those of others, the faculty can refer you to standard guidelines and discuss specific questions.