

POLSCI 116: Introduction to American Politics

Fall, 2023

Class: Tu/Th 11:45am - 1:00pm, Reuben-Cooke Building 127

	Jon Geen (Professor)	
Email:	jon.green@duke.edu	
Office Hours:	Gross Hall 294H, TBD	TBD, TBD

Course Description

Political scientists commonly refer to politics as the process of deciding who gets what. This course addresses questions concerning how politics works in the United States. Why does the United States have its system of government, how can we evaluate whether it is working as intended, and how might we change it? What is public opinion, and how does it bear on public policy? How do people decide whether to vote and who to vote for? In short, how does the United States decide who gets what?

As this is an introductory course, the answers it will provide to these questions (and many others) will be broader than they are deep. Students who are successful in this course will have a foundation for further study in more advanced political science courses. More importantly, they will be better equipped to understand, approach, and navigate U.S. politics in their daily lives.

This is a political science course, not a venue for practicing politics itself. This distinction is important. We will discuss topics such as how the Supreme Court works, how bills become laws, and how we administer elections; we will not debate whether recent Supreme Court cases were correctly decided, which bills should (not) become laws, or who we should vote for in the next election. That is, we will discuss our mechanisms for deciding who gets what, but we will not debate who ought to get what. You will have ample opportunities to share your views in these debates outside of class in settings ranging from informal discussions with friends and acquaintances to the pages of Duke's numerous student publications.

Office Hours

Office hours are time formally set aside for you to ask any questions about course material, assignments, or anything else you think is relevant. While I generally prefer that you use the

listed in-person office hours if possible, you are welcome to email me to set up an alternative appointment if those times do not work.

Course Text

I ask that you purchase the following textbook, which we will use throughout the course. All other course materials will be posted on Canvas.

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, Lynn Vavreck, and Timothy R. Johnson. 2021. *The Logic of American Politics, 10th Edition*. CQ Press.

Evaluation

- **Attendance and Preparation (50%):**
 - There is an **accumulating** body of **evidence** suggesting that you will learn much more if you read consistently and attend class than you will if you periodically cram for high-stakes exams, so I have designed this course to structure your incentives accordingly.
 - At 6:00am on the day of each class, I will post a short quiz on Canvas based on that day's reading. In order to receive credit for this quiz, you must turn in a *physical copy* of your answers at the beginning of class.
 - Each quiz is worth two points. The first point is for turning it in, which is how I will take attendance. The second point is the average of how many questions you get right. So for example, turning in a quiz and getting 4/5 questions right is worth $(1 + 0.8)/2$ points, or 90%.
 - Because these quizzes count as attendance for the class, they cannot be rescheduled and you cannot turn them in electronically. You are allowed two unexcused absences (that is, I will convert up to two zeroes on quizzes to NAs that will not count toward your quiz average), and I will drop everyone's two lowest remaining quiz grades from the average. Excused absences (see attendance policy below) will also be entered as NAs for the purposes of quiz grades.
- **ChatGPT Critical Reviews (30%):**
 - At three points during the semester, I will ask ChatGPT to write a 1,000 word essay relevant to the course and provide you with both the essay prompt and ChatGPT's output. As ChatGPT is not enrolled in the course, I expect it to perform poorly. You will be asked to critically evaluate ChatGPT's performance in the context of what we have covered up to that point in the course. Which points are imprecise? Which points are wrong? Is there anything important that is missing entirely? Each of these critical reviews will be worth 10% of your final grade.
- **Final Exam (20%):**
 - This exam will be held during our scheduled exam period, and will consist of a mixture of multiple choice and short response questions designed to assess your cumulative mastery of material throughout the course as a whole.

Table of due dates:

- Critical Review 1: October 26th
- Critical Review 2: November 16th
- Critical Review 3: December 7th
- Final Exam: December 15th, 2-5pm

Reading and Course Materials

With the exception of textbook, all readings and audio/visual course materials will be posted on Canvas.

I expect you to read, listen to, and/or watch a non-trivial amount of material on your own in order to prepare for class. However, being prepared to discuss the material is not the same thing as reading every page of the material in full depth. Reading strategically is an important skill that I encourage you to practice in this course.

Course Schedule

- Week 1 (August 29th/31st): Introduction
 - August 29th: No assigned reading
 - August 31st:
 - * Noel, Hans. 2010. "Ten Things Political Scientists Know that You Don't" *The Forum* 8(3), Article 12.
 - * Hersh, Eitan. "Politics is for Power, Not Consumption." *Boston Review*, November 4, 2019. ([Link](#)).
- Week 2 (September 5th/7th): Information and Collective Action
 - September 5th:
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 1
 - * Delli Carpini, Michael, and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters*, pages 1-9
 - * (WATCH) Contractarianism: Crash Course Philosophy #37 ([Link](#)).
 - September 7th:
 - * Mansbridge, Jane. 2014. "What is Political Science For?" *Perspectives on Politics* 12(1): 8-17.
 - * Matthews, Dylan. "Did a 1982 book predict America's decline?" Vox, October 2, 2022 ([Link](#)).
- Week 3 (September 12th/14th): The Constitution
 - September 12th:

- * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 2
- * *The Federalist Papers*, 10 and 51
- September 14th:
 - * Roche, John P. 1961. "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action." *American Political Science Review* 55(4): 799-816.
 - * Linz, Juan. 1990. "The Perils of Presidentialism." *Journal of Democracy* 1(1): 51-69.
 - * Trende, Sean. "It's Time to Increase the Size of the House." Sabato's Crystal Ball, March 6, 2014 ([Link](#))
- Week 4 (September 19th/21st): Federalism
 - September 19th:
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 3
 - * *The Federalist Papers*, 39 and 46
 - * Fertig, Natalie. "The Great American cannabis experiment." *Politico*, August 14, 2019 ([Link](#)).
 - September 21st:
 - * Frymer, Paul. 2014. "'A Rush and a Push and the Land Is Ours': Territorial Expansion, Land Policy, and U.S. State Formation." *Perspectives on Politics* 12(1): 119-144.
 - * Grumbach, Jacob, and Jamila Michener. 2022. "American Federalism, Political Inequality, and Democratic Erosion." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 699, 143-155.
- Week 5 (September 26th/28th): Civil Rights and Liberties
 - September 26th:
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 4
 - * (WATCH) The Vote, Part 1 ([Link](#)).
 - * : OPTIONAL:
 - Sullivan, Andrew. "Here Comes the Groom." *The New Republic*, August 28, 1989 ([Link](#)).
 - Bouie, Jamelle. "Making Voting Constitutional." *The American Prospect*, January 30, 2013 ([Link](#)).
 - September 28th: **Critical Review 1 posted**
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 5
 - * Toobin, Jeffrey. "Gawker's Demise and the Trump-Era Threat to the First Amendment." *New Yorker*, December 11, 2016. ([Link](#)).
 - * U.S. Supreme Court 21-476, 303 *Creative LLC v. Elenis*
- Week 6 (October 3rd/5th): Congress
 - October 3rd:
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 6

- * Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Introduction and Chapter 1
- * Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*, Chapter 2
- October 5th:
 - * Lee, Frances. 2016. *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign*, Chapters 2 and 3
 - * Furnas, Alexander, and Timothy LaPira. "Congressional Brain Drain: Legislative Capacity in the 21st Century." New America Foundation, September 8, 2020. ([Link](#)).
- Week 7 (October 10th/12th): The Executive Branch (Presidency)
 - October 10th:
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 7
 - * Neustadt, Richard. 1960. *Presidential Power: The Power of Leadership*, Chapters 2 and 3.
 - October 12th:
 - * Moe, Terry, and William Howell. "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29(4): 850-873.
 - * McCarty, Nolan. "Where do vetoes come from?" The Monkey Cage, February 24, 2015. (Archived PDF on Canvas).
 - * (LISTEN) "Joe Biden and the Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency." ([Link](#)).
- Week 8 (October 17th/19th): The Executive Branch (Bureaucracy)
 - October 17th: No class (Fall break)
 - October 19th:
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 8
 - * Fremstad, Shawn. "The official U.S. poverty rate is based on a hopelessly out-of-date metric." *Washington Post*, September 16, 2019. (Archived PDF on Canvas)
 - * McCrain, Joshua. "What does Donald Trump need for a successful presidency? Bureaucrats." The Monkey Cage, January 27, 2017. (Archived PDF on Canvas)
 - * Long, Colleen. "Title 42 has ended. Here's what it did, and how US immigration policy is changing." *Associated Press*, May 12, 2023. ([Link](#)).
 - * Javed, Ayesha. "Six years on, 30% of Dodd-Frank rules yet to be finalized." *Bloomberg*, July 28, 2016. ([Link](#)).
 - * (LISTEN) The scourge of the "time tax." *The Weeds*. May 17, 2022. ([Link](#)).
- Week 9 (October 24th/26th): The Judiciary
 - October 24th:
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 9
 - * Bailey, Michael. "Just how liberal (or conservative) is the Supreme Court?" *Mischiefs of Faction* (Vox), 2016. ([Link](#)).

- October 26th: **Critical Review 1 due, Critical Review 2 posted**
 - * Brennan, William. 1985. "The Constitution of the United States: Contemporary Ratification."
 - * Scalia, Antonin. 1988. "Originalism: The Lesser Evil."
 - * TerBeek, Calvin. 2021. "'Clocks Must Always be Turned Back': *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Racial Origins of Constitutional Originalism. *American Political Science Review* 115(3): 821-834.
- Week 10 (October 31st/November 2nd): Public Opinion
 - October 31st:
 - * Zaller, John, and Stanley Feldman. 1992. "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions Versus Revealing Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 36(3): 579-616.
 - * Cohn, Nate. "We Gave Four Good Pollsters the Same Raw Data. They Had Four Different Results." *New York Times*, The Upshot, September 20, 2016. (Archived pdf on Canvas)
 - * (LISTEN) "How Does the Public Move Right When Policy Moves Left?" Science of Politics podcast, February 23 2022. ([Link](#)).
 - November 2nd:
 - * Ahler, Douglas, and David Broockman. "The Delegate Paradox: Why Polarized Politicians Can Represent Citizens Best." *Journal of Politics* 80(4): 1117-1133.
 - * Groenendyk, Eric, Erik Kimbrough, and Mark Pickup. 2022. "How Norms Shape the Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." *American Journal of Political Science* 67(3): 623-638.
- Week 11 (November 7th/9th): Political Parties
 - November 7th: (Election Day)
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 12
 - * Bawn, Kathleen, et al. 2012. "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 10(3): 571-597.
 - November 9th:
 - * Ziblatt, Daniel, and Steven Levitsky. 2018. *How Democracies Die*, Chapters 2 and 3
 - * Saletan, Will. "The primaries aren't supposed to be democratic." *Slate*, April 20, 2016. ([Link](#)).
- Week 12 (November 14th/16th): Elections
 - November 14th:
 - * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 11
 - * Popkin, Samuel. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter*, pages 1-17
 - * Skelly, Geoffrey, and Nathaniel Rakich. "Why The President's Party Almost Always Has A Bad Midterm." *FiveThirtyEight*, January 3, 2022. ([Link](#)).

– November 16th: **Critical Review 2 due, Critical Review 3 posted**

- * Vavreck, Lynn. *The Message Matters: The Economy and Presidential Campaigns*, Chapters 2 and 3
- * (LISTEN) "Did Americans' Racial Attitudes Elect Trump?" Science of Politics podcast, February 23 2022. ([Link](#)).

Week of November 21st/23rd: No class (Thanksgiving Break 11/21-11/26)

• Week 13 (November 28th/30th): Interest Groups

– November 28th:

- * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 13
- * Baylor, Christopher. 2013. "First to the Party: The Group Origins of the Partisan Transformation on Civil Rights, 1940–1960." *Studies in American Political Development* 27: 111–141.

– November 30th:

- * Han, Hahrie. "Want Gun Control? Learn from the NRA." *New York Times*, October 4, 2017. (Archived PDF posted on Canvas).
- * Skocpol, Theda. "The Narrowing of Civic Life." *The American Prospect*, May 17, 2004. ([Link](#)).
- * (WATCH) "United in Anger: A History of ACT UP" ([Link](#)).

• Week 14 (December 5th/7th): The Media

– December 5th:

- * *Logic of American Politics*, Chapter 14
- * Wasow, Omar. 2020. "Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting." *American Political Science Review* 114(3): 638-659.

– December 7th: **Critical Review 3 due**

- * Prior, Markus. 2005. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 577-592.
- * Hopkins, Daniel. "All Politics is National Because All Media is National." *FiveThirtyEight*, Jun 6, 2018. ([Link](#)).
- * Darr, Joshua. "Local News Coverage Is Declining — And That Could Be Bad For American Politics." *FiveThirtyEight*, June 2, 2021. ([Link](#)).

Course Policies

Attendance

You are expected to attend class and be prepared to engage with the course material (see the Evaluation section). You are allowed two unexcused absences. Excused absences must be requested in writing with reasonable advance notice (more urgent reasons require less advance notice). Duke policies outline personal emergencies, illnesses, varsity athletic competition, and

religious observances as acceptable reasons for an excused absence, but I am willing to consider other reasons that do not neatly fall into one of these categories.

Deadlines and Late Work

Assignment due dates for this class are set where they are for a reason, and you are expected to turn assignments in on time. However, things happen, and there may be good reasons why you need to move a deadline. These reasons can range from serious unexpected circumstances to simply having a lot of other work for other classes due at the same time. Extensions must be requested in writing and, as with attendance, there is an inverse relationship between how urgent your reason is and how much advance notice I need. If you know a due date conflicts with work for another class well in advance, I'd ask that you don't wait until the day before that due date to request an extension. **Written assignments turned in after a deadline (original or extended) will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for every day they are late.** So for instance, if a deadline is 5:00pm on a Wednesday, an assignment turned in at 5:01pm on that Wednesday that would otherwise receive an A will receive an A-; if it is turned in at 5:01pm the next day, it will receive a B+; and so on.

Class Discussions

When you enroll in this class, you become colleagues with everyone else who is enrolled in it. Colleagues frequently disagree, but they do so without being disagreeable.

You are expected to engage with your classmates' views and perspectives respectfully both inside and outside of the classroom. Even (especially) when you disagree with your classmates, it is essential to approach this disagreement amicably, with an assumption of good faith, because you are colleagues and not opponents.

Of course it should go without saying, but expectations of mutual respect and assumptions of good faith are not licenses to engage in ableism, classism, homophobia, racism, sexism, transphobia, or other exclusionary language that is inherently disrespectful.

Grading

If you feel that a grade you receive on an assignment does not reflect the quality of the work you submitted, you may email me to request either a clarification or a re-grade. The email must include, either in the body or as an attachment, a rationale for why the request is warranted. This means explicitly acknowledging and engaging with any substantive feedback you received, and if requesting a regrade, making a case (with reference to any provided grading criteria, such as a rubric) why the grade you received does not align with that substantive feedback.

Writing

Written work should be proofread for spelling and grammar, arguments should be supported by scholarly or otherwise reliable evidence, and all references *must* be appropriately cited (see below). *I do not care what citation format you use as long as you pick one and use it consistently.* I

strongly encourage you to familiarize yourself with a citation management tool – my personal recommendation would be Zotero because it's free and easily integrates with Microsoft Word and Google Docs – that will make this easier when you need to compile a bibliography. You are also welcome to consult myself or the University's writing center for general writing advice.

Academic Honesty

Academic dishonesty is when you present someone else's ideas as your own. Students are strongly encouraged to learn from one another through discussions both in and outside of class, so long as individual writing assignments reflect their own intellectual labor. This means that when you submit writing with your name on it and no one else's, you did the work that produced the document. All ideas and claims included in written work that are not your own should be appropriately cited.

Using recently-developed tools that rely on large language models to predict strings of text that resemble original thought, such as ChatGPT, is prohibited in this class, and presenting model-generated text as your own writing will be considered plagiarism. Indeed, the writing assignments for this course are structured to discourage their use. There are two reasons for this. First, you are not learning how to think or communicate your ideas if you delegate these tasks to a language model. Second, because these models are not in fact intelligent, and instead generate predictions of what the text they are asked to produce might resemble, they have a tendency to *make things up* when given more complex tasks such as college-level writing assignments. You can read more about these issues here: <https://blogs.library.duke.edu/blog/2023/03/09/chatgpt-and-fake-citations/>.

Duke takes the issue of academic honesty very seriously. Any student who appears to violate the University's Academic Dishonesty Policy (<https://students.duke.edu/get-assistance/community-standard/a-z-policies/>) may be referred to the University's Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards. Academic dishonesty on any aspect of course work will result in failure of the course.

Support Services

Academic Support Services

Political Science Librarian: Ryan Denniston (ryan.denniston@duke.edu) is Duke's librarian for Public Policy and Political Science. In addition to myself, you are welcome to email Ryan with questions as you working on writing assignments for the course.

The Writing Studio: I encourage you to visit the Writing Studio where you will find a place beyond our classroom to work collaboratively with an attentive, non-evaluative reader. You can visit at any stage in your writing process, including before you have even started writing. Visit <http://twp.duke.edu/twp-writing-studio> to schedule a face-to-face or online appointment and to learn more about Studio resources.

The Academic Resource Center: The ARC provides academic support and programming for all Duke undergraduates. Their services include one-on-one consultations and peer tutoring, and they work alongside the Student Disability Access Office to serve students with diagnosed learning disabilities. Their programs include opportunities for students to study together in structured groups (“learning communities”), as well as workshops offered throughout the semester. Further information and resources are available on their website. <http://duke.edu/arc/index.php>.

Accommodation and Inclusion

Student Disability Access Office: If you have any physical, cognitive, or psychiatric needs that require accommodations for this course, please contact the Student Disability Access Office (if you haven’t already) and myself as soon as possible to discuss the appropriate steps I can take to make sure you have what you need to succeed. Duke University’s Student Disability Access Office can be reached by phone at (919) 668-1267, email at sdao@duke.edu, and in-person or remote office hours (see <https://access.duke.edu/students> for locations/times) and can assist you with managing any challenges that may affect your performance. I also encourage you to speak to me individually if you have trouble navigating this process.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS): Each of you will face some level of challenge during your time at Duke – whether it be a challenge like procrastination, or a more profound challenge that impairs your ability to function. The CAPS staff includes psychologists, clinical social workers, and psychiatrists experienced in working with college-age adults. Information about their services and workshops is available here: <http://studentaffairs.duke.edu/caps/about-us>.

The Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity: This center provides education, advocacy, support, mentoring, academic engagement, and space LGBTQIA+ students, staff, and faculty at Duke. The Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity also serves and supports Duke alumni/ae and the greater LGBTQIA+ community. Further information and resources are available on their website: <https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/csgd>.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects individuals from sex or gender-based discrimination, including discrimination based on gender-identity, in educational programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. It applies to all aspects of employment and education programs and activities at Duke University.

If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, options a complete list of confidential and non-confidential reporting options and resources both on- and off-campus can be found on the Office of Institutional Equity’s website: <https://oie.duke.edu/sexual-misconduct-title-ix>. Faculty members and instructors are considered “responsible employees” at Duke University, meaning they are required to report all allegations of sex or gender-based discrimination.

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