

POLSC 110 (W)

American Government – A Historical Introduction

Summer 2020 – Lecture & Discussion, Tuesdays & Thursdays, 6:00 – 8:20 P.M.

Location: Zoom

Professor:

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Office Hours: Tues. & Th..., 8:30 – 9:00 P.M., by appointment

1. Course Purpose and Objectives:

Welcome to Introduction to American Government. Polsc 110 is designed to introduce students to the rules and institutions that govern political action in the United States. Together, we will examine how the historical evolution of American political institutions affects the debates of today. Through the lenses of both history and social science, we will study political action, looking at the actions of (un)elected officials and of American citizens, in a systematic and empirical manner.

We have three primary goals in this class. First is the introduction of the basic ideas and concerns that define American democracy to understand how government “works.” We will learn how institutions initially developed and have subsequently constrained and shaped political action throughout the history of the United States. The idea is to develop a deep contextual knowledge of how political actors function within the governmental structure, of the role the American public plays in a representative government, and why political actors (legislators, bureaucrats, presidents, parties, etc.) behave the way they do.

Our second goal is to place contemporary political issues within a historical framework. We will build upon the basic understanding of American political institutions developed above in order to learn to think critically about the ongoing debates within society. We will consider how battles over gay rights, affirmative action, gun control, foreign affairs, and financial regulation influence representation and shape national public policy.

Our third and final goal is to introduce you to the scientific study of politics. You will begin to learn how to read and digest academic work and how to identify puzzles within American politics. You will become more proficient at public speaking through our in-class discussions and through group presentations. You will also cultivate your writing skills through two examinations and four reading responses.

2. Required Texts

1. Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck (“KJKV”). 2019. The Logic of American Politics, 9th ed. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. ISBN: 9781544322995.
 - This is available in hard copy format from the Hunter Bookstore.
 - Alternatively, you may purchase it or rent it from Amazon.com.
 - There is an e-textbook version of the book.
 - Finally, you may use older editions, with the understanding that I am not responsible for any information you miss.
2. Supplemental Readings:
 - We will use supplemental readings from time to time, as noted on the course schedule, and the links to these sources will be available in the “Supplemental Readings” folder on Blackboard or linked in this syllabus.
3. Recommended Readings:
 - As a general matter, while I cannot enforce it, I would recommend reading a newspaper daily, or at least, a political blog.

3. Assignments and Grading

<u>Item</u>	<u>Assignment Points</u>	<u>Grade Percentage</u>
Midterm	100	25%
Final Exam	100	25%
Paper	100	25%
Class Participation	100	25%
Total	400	100%

A. Exams – 50%

There will be two take-home exams given during this course, each covering half of the material. Exam # 1 will cover the first half of class, while Exam # 2 will cover the second half. The exams will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions.

The multiple choice questions will be just that – multiple choice. You will be presented with a number of these questions, given four options, and must select the best option. The short answer questions will require only a sentence or two, and focus on factual answers. Finally, the essay question(s) will require you to marshal your understanding of the course concepts and themes to answer larger questions. I may ask your opinion, I may ask you to explain something, or I may ask you to propose a change to something we have discussed in the class.

You must be prepared to take all exams at the scheduled times. Make-up exams will be offered only in exceptional circumstances. The following include but are not limited to exceptional circumstances: hospitalization, the death of a family member, observation of religious activities, or official university activities. If you must reschedule a test, you must speak with me before the regularly scheduled exam in order to discuss a make-up and receive permission to reschedule. Any make-up exam may, at my discretion, differ from the in-class exam format.

B. Class Participation – 25%

Our class will be a hybrid of real-time and asynchronous electronic methods. I will hold class during our normally scheduled time from 6:00 – 8:20 p.m., and will record these lectures. We will have a break from 7:05 to 7:15 p.m. each session. I will post the lectures onto a Google Drive folder that I will make available to you. The Zoom link is <https://zoom.us/j/6875878267>; there is a password I will post on Blackboard.

In terms of real-time participation, I will lecture, and then open the floor to questions. You should try to ask questions in the chat, and then I will get to them. In terms of asynchronous participation, I will open threads on Blackboard for each unit, and you can pose questions or write comments there. To get full participation credit for each class, you have to either attend the real-time lecture or view it on Blackboard, and either participate in real-time or post on the Blackboard threads.

I will be holding virtual office hours from 8:30 – 9:00 p.m. over e-mail, by Zoom, or telephone. If you're going to use Zoom or telephone, please contact me when you say you will – I may already be onto another student or my day job within five to ten minutes.

C. Paper – 25%

This class is a writing intensive class, and so there will be, of course, writing. There will be one six page research paper, on a topic chosen in consultation with me. A main point of this class is to help you understand the political world in which we live, and I do not want to unduly limit your options. We will discuss appropriate topics. By way of first example, I would say that writing a research paper about the Presidency – a broad topic – would be inappropriate. Writing a research paper about the proposed treaty with Iran and presidential powers would be appropriate.

Your proposed topic choice is due to me by e-mail on June 9th. I will require one draft, due by e-mail on June 27th, before a final submission. The final draft will be due via Turnitin.com on July 15th. We will discuss specific requirement during our class, but there are certain requirements I will let you know now. For example, you must use 12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and page numbers. You may use any citation and reference system that you prefer, but you must **be consistent**.

Course Schedule¹

<u>Date</u>	<u>Unit</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
			-
5/26/20	Course Introduction	-	-
5/28/20, 6/2/20	Unit 1 - Political Foundations; Crafting the Constitution; & Federalism	KJKV ch. 1-3 (SR 1) Declaration of Independence (KJKV Appendix 2) (SR 2) Articles of Confederation (KJKV Appendix 1) (SR 3) Constitution (Appendix 3 KJKV 3) (SR 4) NYTimes Magazine – Article on Norms	-
6/2/20, 6/4/20	Unit 2 – Congress	KJKV ch. 6 (SM 1) – listen to audio file	
6/4/20, 6/9/20	Unit 3 - The Presidency	KJKV ch. 7	Topic Choice due on 6/9

¹ This schedule is subject to change as needed. I will inform you of any changes by Blackboard or e-mail ASAP.

		(SR 4) Washington's Farewell Address (SM 1) listen to audio file	
6/9/20, 6/11/20	Unit 4 - The Judiciary	KJKV ch. 9 (SR 5) Excerpts from <i>Marbury v. Madison</i>	
6/11/20, 6/16/20	Unit 5 - Civil Liberties	KJKV 5 (SR 6) Excerpts from <i>Roe v. Wade</i>	
6/18/20 – 6/21/20	Midterm (take-home)	<i>No readings, no class on 6/18</i>	Exam # 1
6/23/20, 6/25/20	Unit 6 - Civil Rights	KJKV 4 (SR 7) Excerpts from <i>Obergefell v. Hodges</i>	First Draft due on 6/27
6/30/20	Unit 7 - Public Opinion	KJKV ch. 10	
7/2/20, 7/7/20, 7/9/20	Unit 8 - Political Parties, Voting, and Elections	KJKV ch. 11-12 (SR 8) Political Polarization in the American Public (SR 9) Testing Theories	
7/9/20, 7/14/20	Unit 9 - Interest Groups & News Media	KJKV ch. 13-14	
7/14/20, 7/16/20	Unit 10 – Imagining a Better Federal Government	<i>Readings to be determined</i>	Final Paper due on 7/15
7/17/20 – 7/20/20	Final Exam – Take-home		

4. Academic Honesty

This course adheres to the official statement of academic integrity adopted by the College: “Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.”

In short, dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes all forms of plagiarism and cheating. The work you submit, both on written assignments and on the course exams, must be your own. Work from other classes does not count as original work, unless you have cleared it with both instructors before submitting it. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with and understand the University policies on academic integrity, available online:

http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/senate/repository/_les/resolutions/hunter-college-policy-on-academic-integrity-policy.pdf. If you are suspected of cheating or plagiarism, it will result in a zero for that assignment. Repeated offenses will be submitted for disciplinary action to the Dean of Students.

5. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities should contact the Office of AccessABILITY to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a disability specialist, call 212.772.4857 (voice), 646.755.3129 (VRS), or visit <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/access/transitional-services-ats>. If you have any other needs (e.g., religious observances), not covered by the Office of AccessABILITY, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can make any necessary arrangements before conflict arises.

6. Use of Electronics in Class and Unauthorized Recording of Lectures

Laptops and tablets are permitted during class; phone use is not. If you must make a phone call, or receive one (we all have emergencies), please mute yourself. I do not permit the audio or video recording of lectures by students unless the Office of AccessABILITY requests it or I grant permission to do so.

7. Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or

off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

- a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).
- b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link:

<http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>

8. Other Course Policies

Assigned Readings, BlackBoard, and Email

To reiterate: Readings are typically assigned on a weekly basis and should be completed before the start of the first class for each topic. This ensures that you will more fully understand the topics that we discuss. There are also topics that I will elaborate on in greater detail on the assumption that you already have a foundational understanding of the concept or subject. The course's BlackBoard site will contain vital information for the semester: details on assignments, supplemental assigned readings, and updates to material (e.g., the syllabus) if there are any changes to the schedule. I will occasionally send announcements to the class via email. You are automatically subscribed to the class list, but it is your responsibility to check your Hunter College account daily. Email is also the best way to communicate with me outside of class.

Grading

Except in unusual circumstances, you should expect your work to be graded and returned to you by me within a week of submission. I am committed to grading work objectively and fairly. If you have questions or concerns about your exam scores and assignment grades, come speak to me. All requests for a re-grade must be made with a detailed written justification illustrating what you think I missed within one week that the assignment was returned to the class. Note that requests to re-grade an exam or assignment may result in a lower score than originally awarded.

Requests for Extensions and Penalties for Lateness

If you need an extension on an assignment, ask me in advance and I will let you know if I will grant it. I often grant extensions if you need them. The only drawback is that I then get to your assignment later in terms of grading. For each day an exam or paper is late, you incur a five point penalty per day.

Civility and Respect

By their very nature, political science courses deal with subjects that are controversial. We will grapple with questions that arise in the judiciary and engage in discussion about these issues; that is an essential part of becoming an informed citizen. You are encouraged to think critically about these topics, to evaluate your own belief system, and to voice your own opinion, especially in written assignments. However, we must all be aware that other students may hold other opinions. As adults, we should respect each other, whether we agree or not.

Recommendations

Provided that you do sufficiently well in the class,² I am more than happy to write a letter of recommendation for you. This is subject to one caveat – I am an adjunct, and so for certain purposes my word will carry less weight than tenured faculty. Conversely, given that I am a lawyer, law schools may look favorably upon my recommendation, since I have gone through the whole process and, at least in theory, can speak to a student's ability to perform well in law school and their fitness as a lawyer. Tl:dr caveat emptor.

² I do not put a hard limit on what "well" constitutes.