

POL 113B: Introduction to American Politics

Instructor: John Lovett

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Class: MWF 10 AM, Manchester 121

Office Hours: Tuesday 10-noon, Wednesday 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

Office Location: Kirby 313

Background: This course is an introduction to American politics, in terms of the institutional and outside influences that help shape and make policy and politics in America. We will start by exploring the historical background of the American founding, focusing on the Constitution and the Federalist Papers. The historical discussion will be followed by an overview of the institutional construction of American politics, looking at the inner workings and interactions between the branches of government. Finally, we will focus on factors outside of the government that have influence on the process, from political parties and interest groups to the political media.

Reading Material: The main book for this course is:

Kollman, Ken. 2017. *The American Political System, 3rd Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

The book is available at the Wake Forest bookstore, and can be bought on Amazon and other retailers as well. The 2nd edition is also fine (the first edition is different enough for me to say to avoid that, but 2nd or 3rd is fine). Some of the numbers may have changed, but as you will see, I'm not testing you on the numbers.

This will also be supplemented with readings, which I will make available on Sakai. Readings will be based on both classical sources of American thought like *The Federalist Papers* as well as more modern work.

Computer and Technology (Cell Phone) Policy: There is a lot of research related to the use of computers in the classroom, most of it noting that students are less likely to pay attention if they have their computers out versus if they are writing down their notes. I'm going to allow you to have your computers out, but make sure you are only using it for note-taking or occasional online activities that we will do during activity periods. As for cell phones, do not have your cell phone out unless you have spoken to me beforehand that there is a reason you may need to have it out.

Policy on Academic Dishonesty: Academic dishonesty is broadly defined as submitting work that is not your own without attribution, and is not acceptable in this or any other academic course. Any academic dishonesty found on an assignment results in a failing grade for that assignment and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent permissible under the Wake Forest honor code. If you have any questions or want to make sure you are citing something correctly, contact me and I'll be happy to help.

Test Policy: On examination day, you may only have a writing utensil and food/drink with you for the exam. All other things (including cell phones) must be placed in your bag and left in the bag for the duration of the exam.

Accommodations Statement: Wake Forest University provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. If you are in need of an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact me privately as early in the term as possible. Retroactive accommodations will not be provided. Students requiring accommodations must also consult the Learning Assistance Center & Disability Services (118 Reynolda Hall, 336-758-5929, lac.wfu.edu).

Grading:

Midterm Exam #1 – 15%

Midterm Exam #2 – 15%

Final Exam – 30%

Short Paper Opportunities (choose 2 of 4, can choose up to 3 and get lowest grade dropped, 1-2 pages) – 10% (5% each)

Longer Paper (6-8 pages) – 20%

Participation – 10%, comprising of:

Participation in Friday events (including discussion questions) – 5%

Quizzes (12 random quizzes, you can miss 2 without penalty) – 5%

The midterm exams will be a combination of short answer and essay questions. The two midterms will encompass only their respective parts of the course, while the final exam will encompass the entire course, but primarily be focused on the 3rd part of the course.

The prompt for the short essays is in the syllabus below just before the schedule. The longer paper prompt will be up on Sakai by the beginning of October. In both the short and long cases, you will need to do some research to complete the paper, though the short paper research will likely be entirely in readings and lecture (though feel free to go further). Each essay will require you to make an argument based on the question at hand, backing up your argument with evidence to effectively make your case. You will want to have a clear thesis statement outlining your argument and why the evidence supports your argument. I will give a lot of comments on the first papers, so you should have a better sense of what you need to do going into the longer paper. These are not opinion papers in the sense that you are stating your opinion about politics. Instead, you are analyzing politics based on evidence to determine what is going on in the world.

Papers will be due through the Sakai course website or via email by the beginning of class on the date in question. If sent via email, I will respond later in the day to let you know I received it, though I'll try to do that after class. Your paper is not considered in until you have received either an email from myself or Sakai. The short papers must be submitted by the date in question, and I will not accept late papers unless there is an extenuating circumstance that you have discussed with me before the paper's due date. On the longer paper, there will be the ability to turn in the paper late with a 10 point penalty per day the paper is not turned in.

While I will not have formal attendance in the class, there are going to be many classes that you need to be at in order to receive full credit for various parts of the course. On quizzes, I will have 12 quiz-like events throughout the semester both to ensure that students are keeping up with the material and attending class. At least one of these will result in you getting full points for having shown up to class. Others will be reading quizzes where the quiz will focus on major concepts covered in the book and readings. These will happen randomly throughout the semester, though you can miss 2 without penalty.

In addition, I will be grading on participation in the activity portion of the class. These will consist of mostly Friday activities (with the exception of the Wednesday before Fall Break, when we will have a Congress activity). These activities will vary across the semester. One common theme will be discussion days, in which I ask students at the beginning of the week to send me discussion questions throughout the week related to the topic we happen to be talking about at the moment, and I choose some/randomly pick some for discussion on that Friday.

Absences will be excused and quizzes can be made up if you are either sick, a family emergency, or if you have a university event (i.e. varsity sports or other university-sponsored events) during the time in question. The important thing is to let me know beforehand.

My general policy is to not have formal assignments that count for grades during the first week of class (as students are adding and dropping the course), so any quizzes the first week are simply for demonstration purposes and are not part of the final number.

Last, but not least, while there will be bonus questions on the exams, I do not do extra credit... other than right here. Email me at lovettj@wfu.edu with a picture of a red panda, and you will get a bonus point on the final exam. The full point expires on October 1 at midnight, but if you email me by the final exam you can still get a half bonus point.

The percentage/grade setup for this course will be as follows:

A:	93-100
A-:	90-92
B+:	87-89
B:	83-86
B-:	80-82
C+:	77-79
C:	73-76
C-:	70-72
D+:	67-69
D:	63-66
D-:	60-62
F:	0-59

Paper Opportunities

#1: The Constitution – The idea of a living constitution (and that the United States Constitution itself is a living document) is a central part of understanding both its continual usage and American politics in general. Discuss one example of how we can consider the Constitution to be living (this can be either an amendment or a reinterpretation of a part of the Constitution or Bill of Rights. How does what you choose reflect the constitution being living? **Due September 16 at 10 AM**

#2: Supreme Court – The Supreme Court’s selection method (appointment) theoretically means that it as a body should be above the pressures of American politics (including public opinion). Has the Court succeeded at staying above politics? Why or why not? Would the court work better as an elected body? (That last question is best left for a conclusion paragraph) **Due October 7 at 10 AM**

#3: Congress – There’s a terrible joke in *America: The Book* (The Daily Show’s book on American politics from around 15 years ago) that Congress is the opposite of progress. Assess this statement (you can take this in any number of directions based on our discussion in class, so be creative and think about the institutions and nature of Congress). **Due October 21 at 10 AM**

#4: Participation – The central question of the participation lecture focuses on why young people (especially those between age 18 and 25) do not participate in government. Make an argument for a way to improve youth participation, using the chapter and the lecture as your guide. **Due November 18 at 10 AM**

Schedule

Week Theme	MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
Opening and Collective Dilemmas	August 26 – Class opening, overview, syllabus, expectations. Reading: None	August 28 – Collective Dilemmas Reading: Kollman Ch. 1	August 30 – Activity: Solving collective dilemmas
The Constitution	September 2 – The Constitution in General Reading: Kollman Ch.2	September 4 – Crafting the Constitution Reading: Kollman, Ch.2; Federalist 10/51 (Sakai)	September 6 – Activity: Make Your Own Constitution

Federalism	September 9 – Federalism Part 1 Reading: Kollman, Ch. 3	September 11 – Federalism Part 2 Reading: Kollman, Ch. 3	September 13 – Discussion Day: Federalism
Rights & Liberties	September 16 – Rights & Liberties Part 1 Reading: Kollman, Ch. 4	September 18 – Rights & Liberties Part 2 Reading: Kollman, Ch 4 Literacy Tests (Sakai)	September 20 – Discussion Day: Rights & Liberties
Supreme Court	September 23 –Supreme Court Part 1 Reading: Kollman Ch. 8	September 25 – Supreme Court Part 2 Reading: Kollman Ch. 8	September 27 Discussion Day: The Supreme Court
Catchup, Exam, and Congress	September 30 – Review Session	October 2 – Exam #1	October 4 – Congress Part 1 Reading: Kollman Ch. 5
Congress and Break	October 7 – Congress Part 2 Reading: Kollman Ch. 5, “The changing face of Congress in 6 charts” (Sakai)	October 9 – Activity Congress Simulation	October 11- NO CLASS (FALL BREAK)
The Presidency	October 14 – The Presidency Part 1 Reading: Kollman Ch. 6	October 16 – The Presidency Part 2 Reading: Kollman Ch. 6, Conroy, Meredith. “Trump Hasn’t Rolled Back Obama’s Executive Orders (So Far)” (Sakai)	October 18 – Discussion Day: The Presidency
The Bureaucracy and The Budget	October 21 – The Bureaucracy Reading: Kollman Ch. 7	October 23 – The Budgetary Process Reading: “Policy Basics: Introduction	October 25 – Activity: Balancing Budgets

		to the Federal Budget Process” (Sakai)	
Public Opinion	October 28 – Public Opinion Part 1: Beliefs Reading: Kollman Ch. 9	October 30 – Public Opinion Part 2: Analysis Reading: Morris, G. Elliott. “2018 U.S. House Midterm Elections Forecast” (Sakai)	November 1 – Discussion Day: Public Opinion
Review, Exam, and Participation	November 4 – Review Session	November 6 – Exam #2	November 8 – Participation Reading: Kollman Ch. 10
Elections	November 11 – Elections Part 1 Reading: Kollman Ch. 13	November 13 – Elections Part 2 Reading: Kollman Ch. 13, Ch. 5 parts about Redistricting	November 15 – Activity: Redistricting!
Interest Groups and Political Parties	November 18 – Interest Groups Reading: Kollman Ch. 11	November 20 – Political Parties Reading: Kollman Ch. 12	November 22 – Activity TBD
Media and Thanksgiving	November 25 – Media Reading: Kollman Ch. 14	November 27 – NO CLASS	November 29 – NO CLASS
Media, Public Policy, and Review	December 2 – Media Part 2. Reading: Kollman Ch. 14, Young, Dannagal G. “Stop Covering Politics as a Game” (Sakai)	December 4 – Public Policy Reading: “The Public Policy Process” (Sakai) Longer Paper Due	December 6 – Review Session

FINAL EXAM: Monday, December 9, 9 AM in Manchester 121