

American Politics and Government
Political Science 002
Spring, 2006

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Office Hours: T/Th., 1:30-3:00
Or by appointment
Class: T/Th, 11:10-12:00 (Funger 108)

This course is designed as a broad survey of American national government and politics. We will begin by exploring the ideological and cultural foundations of the American political system. This exploration will highlight some of the criteria that we will use throughout the course to evaluate the performance of various political institutions (such as Congress) and actors (such as the electorate). Next, we will study how individuals, parties, and interest groups influence the political institutions that were established by the Constitution. Finally, we will study these institutions. You should emerge from this course with an understanding of the basic processes by which national public policy is made and the forces that have shaped national politics in recent years.

Current events provide a valuable perspective on the nature of the American political system. For this reason, current events will play a large role in this course. I will devote substantial time to news from Washington and elsewhere that is related to the subjects we are studying. Consequently, keeping up with the news will enhance the value of this course for you. A routine reading of daily newspapers (particularly the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*), watching television programs such as the *The News Hour* on the Public Broadcasting Service (channel 26), and listening to radio programs such as *Morning Edition* or *All Things Considered* on National Public Radio will put you in a position to ask informed questions and comprehend some of the classroom discussion.

Required Texts: All of the texts for this course are available in the bookstore in the Marvin Center. The first two texts come bundled as a package.

1. Samuel Kernell and Gary Jacobson, *The Logic of American Politics*, 3rd ed.
- 2 Samuel Kernell and Steven Smith, *Principles and Practice of American Government*, 2nd ed.
- 3 Morris Fiorina, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*

We will also make extensive use of material and resources that are available on the web (particularly, logic.cqpress.com that is associated with the text). A number of readings will also be placed on the class's blackboard site. These are marked in the syllabus with "BB*". Finally, additional readings (frequently news stories) will be distributed via a email. The email list will be based upon your @gwu.edu account associated with your class registration. It is your responsibility to check your own email and make sure there is room in your GW mailbox to receive new mail. All readings that are subsequently distributed should be considered assigned reading.

Course Organization: All students enrolled in this class should also be enrolled in a discussion section that will be led by one of the Political Science Department's Graduate

Teaching Fellows. The full course will meet on Tuesday and Thursday. Because of our need to cover a great deal of material in a relatively short period of time, the discussion sections will be primarily used to cover material that is not presented in the lectures. Since most of the discussion sections will focus on the material contained within the readings, a special effort should be made to read the assigned material prior to the discussion sections. Participation in discussion sections is NOT optional. Passing this course without actively participating in a discussion section will be difficult (if not impossible).

Graded Assignments: The grade in this course will be based on a midterm exam (34%), a final exam (38%), a 5-6 page essay (10%), one discussion section essay (5%), one discussion section research design (5%); leading one discussion section (3%), and general discussion section participation (5%). In addition to these assignments, we reserve the right to add additional assignments (quizzes). If we do, we will announce these in advance (and we will slightly alter the percentages associated with various assignments). You should be aware that every assignment is required. If you fail to complete any assignment, you will receive a zero for that assignment and your course grade will suffer significantly.

While a curve may be used in determining the final distribution of grades, any student who acquires at least 90% (or more) of the weighted points will not receive a grade lower than an A, 80-90% a B, 70-80% a C, and 60-70% a D. Thus, the curve will only be used to improve your grade. You should note that I do not give pluses or minuses for any grade in the D or F range. Furthermore, you should be aware that for Department of Political Science majors, grades in the D and F range do not count towards satisfying department requirements. I do not allow students to submit extra work in an attempt to raise his or her grade, unless I have specified to the entire class that such an opportunity exists.

Prior to both exams a study guide will be distributed. The exams will cover both material covered in the assigned readings and in the lecture. Since the lecture material will not necessarily be presented in the readings, missing class will put you at a disadvantage. The two discussion section activities and exercise will be discussed during the first meeting of the discussion section.

Tentative Exam/Assignment Dates:

- Two Discussion Section Papers (one prior and one after the midterm; sign-up in discussion)
- Midterm Exam, March 7 or 9 (probably the 9)
- 5-6 Page Paper, April 25
- Final Exam,

This is a tentative schedule. Any changes in the aforementioned schedule will be announced in class. You are responsible for being aware of such changes. Incompletes and make-up exams will not be given, except under extraordinary circumstances. Obviously, rescheduling a final exam for this many people is not possible. Thus, you should not make plans to leave town prior to the final exam.

There will not be class on:

Monday, February 20 (President's day)

Teaching Fellows:

Maeve Carey
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609 21st St. (2nd flr)
4-2504

Mitch Killian
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609 21st St. (2nd flr)
4-2532

Karen Ramsey
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609 21st St. (2nd flr)
4-2504

While the teaching fellows will assist you in understanding the reading assignments and the lectures, they are not a note taking service for those who miss class.

Week 1: The Logic of Politics (January 17)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, (main text), chapter 1

“Collective Action”, “Principals and Agents,” and “Transaction Costs”

Walk Through, Logic Website, Ch. 1 (<http://logic.cqpress.com/chap1/walkthroughs.asp>)

Week 2 Constitutional Framework I (January 24)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 2

Articles of Confederation (appendix 1 in Kernell)

The United States Constitution (appendix 3 in Kernell)

Roche, “The Founding Fathers...” (ch. 2-1 in *Principles*)

Burns, “Showdown, the Election of 1800 (ch. 2-4 in *Principles*)

Madison, *Federalist #10* (ch. 2-2 in *Principles*)

Madison, *Federalist #51* (ch. 2-3 in *Principles*)

“Free Rider” Walk Through, Logic Website, Ch. 1

(<http://logic.cqpress.com/chap2/walkthroughs.asp>)

Week 3 Constitutional Framework II (January 31)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 5

Lazarus, “The Most Dangerous Branch?” (ch. 9-2 in *Principles*)

Hamilton, “Federalist No. 78” (ch. 9-3 in *Principles*)

Rakove, “Chaos on Tuesday” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Ferling, “How New York...” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Appleby, “Junk the Electoral College” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Brewer & Burnham, “Disputed Elections...” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Rios, “Reforming the Electoral College...” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Spivak, “How the Electoral College...” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Bates, “What are the Arguments Made...” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Keyssar, “Why Electoral College Reform...” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Amar, “10 Arguments....” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)

Amar, “Why We Should Junk the...” (<http://hnn.us/articles/8177.html>)
Buttons and Ballots, “Who Won the 1876 Election?”
(http://www.cresswellslist.com/ballots2/1876_who.htm)
Bouchard, “Congress Plans for...” (*The Hill*, 2003—BB*)

Week 4 Federalism and Its Implications (February 7)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 3
Buchanan, “Federalism as an...” (ch. 3-1 in *Principles*)
Kettl, “Federalism: Battles...” (ch. 3-2 in *Principles*)
Wald, “Clean-Air Battlefield” (ch. 3-3 in *Principles*)
DePalma, “Nine States Plan to Cut...” (New York Times, 8/24/05—BB*)
McCluskey, “Paul Peterson Weighs ‘The Price...’”
(<http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/1997/02.13/PaulPetersonWei.html>)

Week 5 Pluralism and Interest Groups (February 14)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 13
Olson, “The Logic...” (ch. 1-1 in *Principles*)
Shepsle and Bonchek, “Analyzing Politics...” (ch. 1-2 in *Principles*)
Schattschneider, “The Scope and Bias...” (ch. 13-1 in *Principles*)
Wright, “The Evolution of...” (ch. 13-2 in *Principles*)
Goodwin, “What Corporations...” (ch. 13-3 in *Principles*)
Drew, “The Money Culture...” (except from *The Corruption of American Politics*, 1999—BB*)
Schenk, “Free Riders”
(<http://ingrimayne.saintjoe.edu/econ/RiskExclusion/FreeRiders.html>)

Weeks 6 Political Parties (February 21)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 12
Aldrich, “Why Parties...” (ch. 12-1 in *Principles*)
Bartels, “Partisanship and Voting...” (ch. 12-2 in *Principles*)
Maisel, “American Political Parties...” (ch. 12-3 in *Principles*)
Cook, “Moving On” (*Washington Post*, 2004—BB*)

Week 7 Elections (February 28)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 11
Fiorina, *Culture War?*
Popkin, “The Reasoning Voter...” (ch. 11-1 in *Principles*)
Jacobson, “Party Polarization...” (ch. 11-3 in *Principles*)
Nagourney, “Overhaul of Democratic Primaries...” (*New York Times*, 2003—BB*)

Abramowitz, “Terrorism, Gay Marriage, and Incumbency...”
(<http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol2/iss4/art3/>) [Must be entered from a computer on campus or via Aladin]

Burden, “An Alternative Account...”
(<http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol2/iss4/art2/>) [Must be entered from a computer on campus or via Aladin]

McDonald, “Up, Up and Away...”
(<http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol2/iss4/art4/>) [Must be entered from a computer on campus or via Aladin]

Week 8 Prepare for Midterm (March 7)

Spring Break March 14

[**Reading during break is optional, but these readings will be necessary for the 5-6 page essay.**]

Frank: “Lie Down for America” (Harper’s Magazine, April 2004—BB*)
Hacker and Pierson, *Off Center* (ch. 1 and 2—BB*)
Jacobs and Shapiro, *Politicians Don’t Pander* [2000] (excerpt)
(<http://www.press.uchicago.edu/Misc/Chicago/389839.html>)

Week 9 Public Opinion and the Media (March 21)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapters 10 and 14
Asher, “Analyzing and Interpreting...” (ch. 10-1 in *Principles*)
Stimson, “Dynamic Representation...” (ch. 10-2 in *Principles*)
Hibbing, “The People’s Craving...” (ch. 10-3 in *Principles*)
Brody, “The American People and President Bush”
(<http://www.bepress.com/forum/vol1/iss1/art5/>) [Must be entered from a computer on campus or via Aladin]

Week 10 Congress I (March 28)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 6
Fenno, “The Senate in Bicameral...” (ch. 6-1 in *Principles*)
Mayhew, “Congress: The Electoral...” (ch. 6-2 in *Principles*)
Smith, “Congressional Trends...” (ch. 6-3 in *Principles*)
Crabtree, “GOP Gains Strength...” (CQ Weekly Report, 11/6/04, pg 2618—Came bundled with your text).
Toobin, “The Great Election Grab”
(http://www.newyorker.com/fact/content/?031208fa_fact)

Week 11 Congress II (April 4)

Reading: Kady, “Uproar Over Intelligence Bill...” (*CQ Weekly Report*, 11/27/04, pg. 2770—Came bundled with your text).

VandeHei, "Using the Rules Committee..." (*Washington Post*, 2003-BB*)
Hulse, "Republican Feuding" (*New York Times*, 2003—BB*)
Nather, "GOP's Support for Bush" *CQ Weekly* (logic.cqpress.com; CQ news).

Week 12 The Presidency (April 11)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 7

Fedlman, "Who Can Check the President" (*New York Times*, 1/8/06—BB*)

Hulse, "Daring Veto..." (*New York Times*, 5/18/05—BB*)

Neudstadt, "Presidential Power" (ch. 7-1 in *Principles*)

Kernell, "Going Public" (ch. 7-2 in *Principles*)

Bumiller, "How 3 Weeks..." (ch. 7-3 in *Principles*)

Barber, "Presidential Character"

(<http://spot.colorado.edu/~mcguire/BARBERSC.html>)

Kornblut, "Concern about Bush's Chief..." (*New York Times*, 10/18/05—BB*)

Week 13 The Federal Bureaucracy (April 18)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapter 8

Wilson, "Bureaucracy..." (ch. 8-1 in *Principles*)

Moe, "The Politics of..." (ch. 8-2 in *Principles*)

Skrzycki, "Under Reagan..." (*Washington Post*, 2004—BB*)

Week 14 The Courts and Civil Liberties (April 25)

Reading: Kernell and Jacobson, chapters 4, 5, and 9

Rosenberg, "The Real World..." (ch. 5-1 in *Principles*)

Roe v. Wade (ch. 5-4 in *Principles*)

Epstein and Knight, "The Choices..." (ch. 9-1 in *Principles*)

Sontag, "The Power of the Fourth" (ch. 9-4 in *Principles*)

Associated Press, "House Bill would Block..." (2004—BB*)

Dinan, "Delay Threatens to Curb Court's Jurisdiction" (2003, *Washington Times*-BB*)

Mauro, "Roberts as Chief Justice..." (*Legal Times*, 2005—BB*)

Wade, "A Mathematician Crunches the Supreme Court's Numbers" (*New York Times*, 2003-BB*)

Wallsten, "Two..Want to Strip Court Funds..." (*Los Angeles Times*, 2005—BB*)

Week 15 Catch Up (May 2)