This course introduces American national government from the perspective of major political institutions and processes and the ideas, individuals, groups, and events that have shaped them. Students who successfully complete the course should achieve these learning outcomes:

- Have a basic knowledge of structures and functions of American governmental institutions, their constitutional bases, and the various political forces (e.g., public opinion and interest groups) brought to bear on the political system.

- Have the ability to understand and interpret key phenomena by understanding scholarly arguments (i.e., concepts and theories) that purport to explain those phenomena. This is not a course in history (although we will focus on American political development), current events, or civics. It is a social science course and thus reflects the goals of political science and other social sciences, such as economics, psychology, or sociology.

- Be familiar with a variety of theories, and their conceptual underpinnings, used by political science to explain American politics. This will require you to analyze and evaluate abstract information.

- Have the ability to write a critical essay that explicates basic concepts of American politics, drawing on different sources and points of view on the meaning and evolution of these concepts. This will require you to understand and analyze the scholarly literature and the nuances of opinion that separate different theoretical orientations.

- Have the ability to offer substantive policy advice appropriate to the Washington political context. This will require that you have a relevant point of view on a current matter of public policy and that you can formulate a logical policy argument based on your analysis of appropriate evidence given alternative policy options.

This course satisfies G-PAC requirements in critical thinking.
Learning Assessment
Success in achieving the aforementioned goals will be assessed via the following tools.

• **Two examinations**: The examinations will assess whether you have acquired a basic knowledge of the structures, functions, and development of American politics and government. In addition, they will assess your ability to analyze and evaluate abstract information (such as important concepts) that is the basis for studying politics in general and American politics in particular.

You will be responsible for material presented in the reading and lectures for the portion of the course immediately preceding the examination. Thus, the second exam is **not** cumulative. These exams will combine multiple choice questions, short answers, and essays.

The first exam will be held on **Thursday, February 24**. The second exam will be held on the assigned final exam date, which will be determined by the Registrar’s Office. I do not have any control over this date. You **must** take the second exam at this date and time. There are no exceptions to this rule.

• **Discussion participation**: Your ability to engage in critical reading and discussion will be assessed through weekly discussion sections led by the TAs. The sections will focus upon a supplementary reader featuring alternative points of view and conceptually and theoretically based research by a variety of political scientists.

The TAs will keep track of attendance in discussion sections. Every time that you are absent, your participation grade will be lowered by 5 points. Your participation grade also depends on the quality of your contribution to discussion. Participation is worth 10% of your overall course grade.

• **Concept paper**: The concept paper will assess your ability to think, read, and write critically about a basic concept in political science and American government. You will need to be able to engage in research, consider alternative interpretations and usages of a political concept, and communicate your own interpretation in a formally prepared essay.

• **Policy memo**: The policy memo will assess your ability to understand and analyze a current policy issue, formulate appropriate political advice to an elected or appointed official, and defend that choice against alternative points of view. It will require you to know that official’s political orientation, how that relates to the policy in question, what the varying points of view regarding that policy might be, and how then to offer clear guidance to “your boss.”

Because this is a writing-intensive course, you will turn in a first draft for each paper, receive feedback, and then turn in a revised final draft. Each draft will be graded, although the final draft will be weighted more heavily. Your overall grade on each paper will be comprised of your grades on the first draft (40%) and the final draft (60%).

This process will take place over a two-week period. For the first paper, your first draft is due in your discussion section the week of January 31. Your draft will be returned with comments from your TA in your discussion section the week of February 7. Your final draft will be due in discussion section the week of February 14. For the second paper, the same process will unfold during the weeks of March 28, April 4, and April 11.
Three required texts are available for purchase at the GW Bookstore:


It is important that you get the correct (4th) edition of each book. Other readings can be found on the Blackboard page for this course.

You should also follow current events with some diligence, preferably via a major newspaper. In addition, you may be interested in following these blogs, although you are not required to read them:

- Logic of the News, the blog associated with KJK ([http://logicofthenews.wordpress.com/](http://logicofthenews.wordpress.com/)).
- The Monkey Cage, a blog that I maintain with several other political scientists ([http://www.themonkeycage.org/](http://www.themonkeycage.org/)).

**Laptops.** In class meetings and discussion sections, you may not use a laptop, Blackberry, cell phone, or any other similar device. When people use these devices, they distract not only themselves, but also me and others around them. If you believe you have a valid reason for using a laptop for note-taking purposes, please see me and we can discuss your situation. If I see you using any of these devices in class, I will ask you to leave class for the day.

**Course grades.** Your grade in the course will be a weighted average of the components of the course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #1</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #2</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exam #1</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td>25%</td>
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I will grade on the following scale: 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 (60-69), and F (0-59). Note that there are no +/- grades in the D or F range.

Here are several important details of my policy on course grades:

- If you have questions about the grade you received on an assignment, I encourage you to talk first to your TA. If you have further questions, I am happy to help and to suggest ways that you can do better. If you are not satisfied with your performance in class, please ask for advice. Do not spend the semester disgruntled or wait until the end of the semester to complain.
- If you do not think that the grade you received reflects the quality of your work, you may ask for the assignment to be graded again. To do so, submit a formal appeal in writing, explaining why you think the grade you received is not a fair reflection of the quality of your work. A different TA will then grade the assignment. This second grade, whether higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment. If you feel that this grade does not reflect the quality of your work, you may submit a second written appeal to me. My grade, whether higher or lower, will then become your final grade on this assignment.
• If you do not complete an assignment, you will receive a 0 for the assignment.

• Late assignments will be penalized. I will lower your grade one-half of a letter grade for each day it is late. That is, if the assignment is due on Tuesday and you complete it on Wednesday, the highest grade you can make is a B+. If you complete it on Thursday, the highest grade you can make is a B-. And so forth.

• The only acceptable excuses for not completing an assignment on time are illness or family emergency. If either circumstance arises, I will give you extra time, but only if you (1) communicate with me before the assignment is due, and (2) provide documentation of the circumstance. You must do both of these things in order to avoid penalties for a late assignment. Judging from my own experiences and those of my colleagues, having a grandchild at GW is incredibly hazardous to your health. Thus, I must verify even deaths in the family. Better yet, you may communicate directly with the Dean of Students and that office can notify faculty of your absence.

• There are no opportunities to re-do assignments or to do extra-credit work in this course.

• I do not “curve” grades. At the end of the semester, I will calculate your grade as described above and then round to the nearest whole number (e.g., an 86.5 becomes an 87). That grade becomes your final grade. I will not increase any person’s grade solely to change their letter grade. So if you make an 89.4, you will make a B+, not an A-. No amount of pleading will change this outcome. Particularly common but ineffective are claims that your grade in this class will cause you to lose a scholarship, prevent you from attending the graduate or professional school of your choice, or lead to some other unfortunate, but unlikely, consequence.

**Academic dishonesty.** In the Code of Academic Integrity, the University defines academic dishonesty as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Scholastic dishonesty also includes, but is not limited to, providing false or misleading information to receive a postponement or extension on a test, quiz, or assignment, and submission of essentially the same written assignment for two different courses without the prior permission of faculty members. By accepting this syllabus and participating in the course, you have agreed to abide by this Code. Students who violate the Code are subject to disciplinary penalties, including failure on the assignment in question, failure in the course, and other penalties imposed by the University. See: [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/index.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/index.html)

As one means of preventing academic honesty, you must upload your paper drafts to Blackboard. These will then be checked using SafeAssign, which will flag papers that have copied content from other papers in this class or previous versions of this class or from other sources.

**Medical needs, illnesses, and other emergencies.** As noted above, if a medical need will result in your missing or completing assignments, please communicate with me. I am willing to be accommodating but communication and documentation is necessary.

**Special needs.** George Washington University provides appropriate academic accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. To determine if you qualify, contact the Disability Support Services at (202) 994-8250 (V/TDD). If they certify your needs, I will work with you to make arrangements.

**Religious holy day observance.** If an assignment or exam is due on a day when you are observing a religious holy day, I will work with you to find an acceptable alternative time to complete the assignment.
Course Plan

PART 1: FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

I. Introduction: A Vocabulary for Understanding Politics
   Jan. 11, 13
   • KJK, chapter 1.
   • PP, chapter 1 (Olson, Hardin).

II. The Constitutional Settlement
    Jan. 18, 20
    • The Constitution of the United States of America (in KJK, Appendix 3, pp. 594-603).
    • KJK, chapter 2.
    • PP, chapter 2 (Roche, Federalist 10 and 51).

III. Federalism
     Jan. 25, 27
     • KJK, chapter 3.
     • PP, chapter 3 (Kettl, Rauch).
       http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=fed_up_with_federalism

IV. Developments in Equality
    Feb. 1, 3
    • KJK, chapter 4.

V. Developments in Liberty
    Feb. 8, 10
    • KJK, chapter 5.
    • PP, chapter 5 (Sunstein, Roe v. Wade, Rosenberg).

PART 2: INSTITUTIONAL CONFLICT & COOPERATION

VI. The Congress
    Feb. 15, 17, 22
    • KJK, chapter 6.
    • PP, chapter 6 (Smith; Pearson and Schickler; Aldrich and Rohde).

EXAM #1
    Feb. 24 (Thursday)

VII. The Presidency
     March 1, 3
     • KJK, chapter 7.
• PP, chapter 7 (Kernell, Baum and Kernell).
• Giroux, pp. 2-12.

VIII. The Bureaucracy  
March 8, 10
• KJK, chapter 8.
• PP, chapter 8 (Moe, Singer, Lewis).

SPRING BREAK  
March 14-18

IX. The Judiciary  
March 22, 24
• KJK, chapter 9.
• PP, chapter 9 (all readings).

PART 3: INFLUENCING GOVERNMENT

X. Public Opinion  
March 29, 31
• KJK, chapter 10.
• PP, chapter 10 (Asher, Fiorina).

XI. The Media  
April 5, 7
• KJK, chapter 14.

XII. Campaigns and Elections  
April 12, 14
• KJK, chapter 11.
• PP, chapter 11 (Popkin) and chapter 12 (Bartels).
• Giroux, pp. 12-34.
XIII. Political Parties

- KJK, chapter 12.
- PP, chapter 12 (Aldrich, Fiorina).

XIV. Interest Groups

- KJK, chapter 13.
- PP, chapter 13 (Schattschneider, Wright, Hall and Wayman).

EXAM #2

TBD