

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

Department of Political Science
Vanderbilt University

PSCI 1100
Fall 2016
T/Th 2:35-3:50 PM

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Prof. OHs: W 2-4PM; Th 11-noon
TA OHs: W 10AM – noon, Commons 331

Course Description

Consider your morning: you woke up in a building regulated by state and local building codes, ensuring your safety. You brushed your teeth with clean water, a product widely available in the United States because activists fought for it in the past. You walked across a campus subsidized by federal and state funds collected through taxes and grabbed a coffee on the way with money that's value responds not only to the principles of supply and demand, but to interest rates set by the government.

Whether you pay attention or not, politics – and the policies it produces – affect your life every moment of every day. In this course, we'll examine the processes and structures that drive political outcomes in the United States. We'll use both theoretical and empirical evidence to assess major research and policy question and work to build a set of skills targeted at developing you as a more capable, confident, and (hopefully) active member of your political community.

Goals and Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to expose you to major themes in the study of American politics while training you to apply these ideas to modern policy and political debates. Upon completing this course, you will be prepared to pursue higher academic studies in political science and, even more importantly, interact effectively and knowledgeably with the political world around you. In order to meet these goals, by the end of the course you will be able to:

- *Content Acquisition.* Describe, organize, and connect key questions and concepts in American politics.
- *Analytical Growth.* Extend classic research questions and findings to current political debates; analyze the merits of an argument and build a policy claim.
- *Application.* Apply content knowledge to effectively participate in politics.

University and Course Policies

Attendance.

While I will not take attendance after the first few days of class, it will be difficult for you to be successful in this course without regularly attending. Slides will only be made available on request and much of our content will come up in discussions and be on the dry erase board.

Academic Honesty.

This course will follow Vanderbilt's high standards of academic honesty, available in detail in the University's Student Handbook.

Reading and Materials.

You are not required to buy any books for this course. All materials will be available on Blackboard. You are, however, expected to print, read, and annotate all of the assigned material before each class. This interaction with the materials is central to this course's construction and to your success. Assignments are designed to assess not only how well you know the content we discuss in class, but how well you build your own ideas from the course content. As a result, performing at an "A" level is possible only if you read the materials.

Technology in the Classroom.

Pedagogical research on teaching and learning shows that students learn and retain more when they handwrite their notes and are free from technological distractions like laptops, phones, and tablets. As a result, this is technology-free classroom. Laptops are not allowed during class and please remember to turn cell-phones off before the start of each class.

Late work.

Late work reflects a lack of foresight and preparation; it also puts an unnecessary burden on the graders of your assignments. As a result, late work is subject to a penalty. An assignment submitted one day late is subject to a 5% penalty; two days late is a 10% penalty; three days late is a 15% penalty. Work will not be accepted after three days from its due date and extenuating circumstances should be discussed with Prof. Anoll directly.

Students with Disabilities.

If you need course accommodations due to a disability, please make an appointment with Prof. Anoll. We will work together along with the University's EAD Department to meet your needs.

Assignments and Course Requirements

The assignments in this course are designed to assess your content acquisition and retention, your analytical growth, and your ability to apply the course materials to real-world political behaviors. As such, there are four categories of assignments that count towards your final grade:

Content Acquisition: Concept Maps. 30%

Near the conclusion of Unit 1, 2, and 3 you are required to develop and bring to class a concept map for the unit. These concept maps can be organized in many ways (we'll discuss examples in class) but all maps should a) highlight key ideas and questions from the unit and b) connect these concepts by highlighting where ideas challenge or complement each other. We'll spend time in class discussing these maps and working in groups to add to, change, and combine them. These maps will become increasingly valuable to your grade, reflecting the idea that I intend for you to get better at making them as the course goes on: Unit 1 map = 5%; Unit 2 map = 10%; Unit 3 map = 15%. A rubric and more details are available in the assignments folder on Blackboard.

Analytical Growth: Policy Memo. 20%

You are required to write a Policy Memo for this course. This assignment gives you an opportunity to apply the theoretical and empirical content of this course to a current policy debate. You will have an option to write a memo that draws primarily from Unit 1, 2, or 3. One week before your paper is due, you will bring an annotated outline to class for peer workshopping. More details on this assignment – including length and prompts – are available in the assignments folder on Blackboard.

Application: Participatory Act Project. 30%

For the final project of this course, you will complete a political participatory act on a current issue that interests you. Participatory acts may include writing a congressperson, volunteering for a political campaign, registering others (or yourself) to vote, attending a city council or town hall meeting, designing or supporting a petition effort, or writing an opinion editorial. Alternative participatory acts should be approved by me in office hours. To help you effectively prepare for and learn from your act, the final project is broken into three components that help you assess, plan for, engage in, and evaluate the task:

- Part 1: People, Parties, Structures, and Substance. 10%
- Part 2: Your Voice. 10%
- Part 3: Participatory Act Completion and Reflection. 10%

More details on this assignment are available in the assignments folder on Blackboard.

Content Retention: Final Exam. 20%

A final exam will be held during its scheduled time: 9 AM on December 12.

Extra Credit. +5% on final

As extra credit, you have the opportunity to participate in a study for Vanderbilt's RIPS Lab. A representative from RIPS will talk to us more in class about this opportunity.

Course Schedule and Readings

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignments
8/25	Introduction	- None	None
Unit 1: How capable is the demos? In this unit, we will explore one of the oldest, most important questions in American politics – to what extent are humans capable of fulfilling their role as citizens in a democratic government?			
8/30	Unit Intro: Citizen Knowledge	- Delli Carpini & Keeter, 22-28, 31-40	None
9/1	Crash Course Marc teaches; Anoll at APSA	- Delli Carpini & Keeter, 62-65, Table 2.2 – 2.7	OH's to discuss policy by 9/8
9/6	Heuristics	- Popkin, 17-35 - Kukliniski & Quirk, 153-173	None
9/8	Aggregate Knowledge & Issue Publics	- Krosnick, 72-74, 81-86 - Five Thirty Eight, 1-11 - Pew Research, 1-9 (skim)	Act Project, Part 1
9/13	Policy: Ballot Initiatives	- Miller, 1-11 - Tolbert & Smith, 285-292, 296-305 - Adams, 590-600	None
9/15	Unit 1 in review	- None	Concept Map

<p align="center">Unit 2: Who is represented in a representative democracy?</p> <p align="center">In this unit, we'll consider the way existing policies, institutions, and patterns of participation shape representation and resource distribution in the United States.</p>			
9/20	Unit Intro: Defining Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federalist 10, 1-6 - Anti-Federalist 3, 1-4 - Mayhew, 18-26. 	None
9/22	Representation in Am. History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Declaration of Independence 1-3 - Douglas, 1-21 	None
9/27	Policy-Participation Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Soss, 157-185 - Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 10-16 + Tables & Figures 	Watch presidential debate, 9/26, 8 PM
9/29	Descriptive Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Butler & Broockman, 463-473 - Smith, 149-152; 158-159 - Mansbridge, 629-639; 641-654 	None
10/4	Policy: Felony Disenfranchisement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mauer, 549-566. - Clegg, 159-178. - Uggen & Manza, 777-803. 	Watch presidential debate, 10/4, 8 PM.
10/6	Representing Your Voice Class meets in the library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hogan, 1-55 	None
10/11	Unit 2 in review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None 	Concept Map
10/13	NO CLASS: FALL BREAK		
<p align="center">Unit 3: Do institutions shape or are they shaped by human action?</p> <p align="center">In this unit, we'll consider the role of institutions in American politics, focusing on their power to shape human behavior and policy outcomes.</p>			
10/18	Unit Intro: Institution in Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rothstein, 145-156 - Moe, 358-361 	Participatory Act 2
10/20	Institutions in the Aggregate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Katznelson, 113-141; 163-166 - Lipsitz, 107-109 	Watch presidential debate 10/19 8 PM
	<i>The Legislature</i>		
10/25	Pivotal Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Krehbiel, 20-28; 34-39 	None
10/27	Money & Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ansolabehere & Snyder, 105-127 - Lipton & Williams, 1-17 - Stein, 1-4 	None

11/1	<i>The Judiciary</i> Rules of the Game?	- Scalia, 16-25 - Breyer, 3-12; 17-20; 37-55	None
11/3	Courts Constructing Race	- Haney López, 1-19 - Saperstein & Penner, 92-95; 103-105; 108-110	None
11/8	<i>The Executive</i> The Modern President Election Day	- Moe and Howell, 132-139; 153-161 - Press Pack, 1-19	None
11/10	The Bureaucracy	- Huber and Shipan, 18-19, 26-27, 32-35	None
11/15	Policy: Citizens United & Campaign Finance	- Ballotpedia, 1-4 (skim) - Cole, 1-3 - Levitt, 217-220; 223-234. - Udall & Simpson, 1-2 - Pilon, 1-8	None
11/17	Unit 3 Review; Writing Workshop	- None	Concept Map
11/22	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING		
11/24	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING		
<p>Unit 4: How does modern political science help us understand modern politics? This unit includes a collection of special topics that examine how approaches and themes in political science today help us understand the existing political landscape.</p>			
11/29	Writing Peer-Workshop	- None	Annotated Outline
12/1	Data and Experiments	- Anoll	None
12/6	Guest Lecture: Marc Trussler	- Readings TBD	Policy Memo
12/8	So? Exam Review	- None	None
12/12	Final Exam: 9 AM		Participatory Act 3