

PSCI 2200 A
Introduction to U.S. Politics

Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:35 a.m. - 2:25 p.m.
Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Tyler Attwood
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
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Course description

This course is designed to give students an institutional overview of the U.S. system of federal government, as well as historical and current insight into the broader political, economic and cultural landscape in the U.S. Of central concern is the institutional framework of the three separate and co-equal federal branches (legislative, executive and judicial – Congress, the Presidency, and the Courts). Only by understanding the origins and interaction dynamics of the three branches can the ongoing complexities of U.S. politics be fully understood.

The course is structured around a distinction between the concepts of **government** (the specific elements and institutions of the state) and **politics** (the broader social, political and economic actions within the state and civil society that determine who gets what, how and why). Thus, we focus partly on the “how questions”, or the central institutions within the three branches of American **government**, the U.S. Constitution, the electoral process, political parties and the details of creating and implementing laws and rules. Complementing this will be an analysis of American **politics** whereby we will address important “why questions.” To this end, we will explore key themes such as race, class, the activity of money and corporations, parties, elections, rights, and liberties. The combination of these two approaches will give students a more complete understanding of the political, economic, and cultural landscapes in the U.S.

Learning Objectives

By taking this course, you will:

- Build a fundamental understanding of the three separate, co-equal branches of the federal government
- Develop a stronger sense of how institutions shape political outcomes in the US
- Explore the history of civil rights and civil liberties
- Study the US Constitution and learn how it is at the center of so much of US politics
- Follow the federal election cycle and understand its institutional context
- Reflect on current social, economic, cultural, and political issues in the US today

Course Reading Material

- There are four small books **REQUIRED** for the course. These are part of Oxford University Press's Very Short Introductions. They are listed at \$12 each and run about 170 pages each. These four books have been ordered at the campus bookstore. You can also order them directly from the publisher (see links below) or from various online booksellers. The books are also available as ebooks (see the links below).
 - **American Political Parties and Elections** (2nd edition), Sandy L. Maisel ([link](#))
 - **The US Congress** (2nd edition), Donald A. Ritchie ([link](#))
 - **The American Presidency** (2nd edition), Charles O. Jones ([link](#))
 - **The US Constitution**, David J. Bodenhamer ([link](#))
- I will also occasionally provide some required readings in PDF format on CU Learn.
- In addition to these insightful little texts, there are some optional **recommended** purchases for the course, based on how much you want to get out of the course. If you want to learn *as much* about US politics as is possible through this course, you are advised to purchase all the following books. If you want to get a basic grounding in US politics then consider purchasing only the American Government 101 and/or American Politics: A Very Short Introduction.
 - **American Government 101: From the Continental Congress to the Iowa Caucus, everything you need to know about US politics**, Kathleen Sears, Adams Media, 2016, <http://www.simonandschuster.ca/books/American-Government-101/Kathleen-Sears/Adams-101/9781440598456>
 - **American Politics: A Very Short Introduction**, Richard M. Valelly, Oxford University Press, 2013, <http://www.oupcanada.com/catalog/9780195373851.html>
- For those who want to delve more deeply into US Politics in a way that provides more historical background, more institutional analysis, and current events analysis, there are several good introductory textbooks out there. Here are two that are recommended (both come in e-format as well as paperback):
 - **By The People: Debating American Government (Brief 3rd Edition)**, James A. Morone & Rogan Kersh, Oxford University Press, 2016, ISBN: 9780190216733, <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/by-the-people-9780190298890>
 - **We the People (11th Essentials Edition)**, Benjamin Ginsberg, et al., W. W. Norton, 2016, <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294993242>
- I suggest this introductory textbook for those interested in a more critical perspective focused on the tensions between capitalism and democracy:
 - **The Politics of Power: A Critical Introduction to American Government (3rd edition)**, Ira Katznelson, et al., W. W. Norton, 2013, <http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294978112>

Evaluation

- **Midterm Exam 32.5% (in class on May 28th)**
- **Final Exam 32.5% (during official exam period, date/time TBA)**
- **Essay 35% (due by June 18th, 11:59 pm on CU Learn in PDF format)**

All components of the course must be completed in order to pass. For instance, if you don't submit the essay, you will receive a failing mark (FND: "Failure with no deferred final examination allowed. The grade *FND* is assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the Course Outline. *FND* is assigned 0.0 grade points.")

Details regarding Term Work and Final Exam

The essay should be submitted on CU Learn in PDF format. **DO NOT EMAIL YOUR PAPERS OR HAND IN PAPER COPIES.**

Assignments submitted late will be penalized **5% of the value of the assignment per day late, to a maximum of 10 days after which the assignment will receive a grade of zero.**

You must provide appropriate documentation for requests of an extension on medical grounds. See "Academic Accommodations" below for additional exceptions.

NOTE: Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, case studies, assignments & exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

- **Midterm exam (32.5%):** An in-class midterm exam will be given on **Tuesday, May 28th**. The exam will take place in our regular classroom and you will have the full three hours of class time to write it. No lecture will be given that day. **No make-up exam will be allowed except under serious circumstances and upon the presentation of documented evidence.** I may change the format and content of a make-up exam. I will provide a study guide to help you review for the exam. The exam format will be multiple choice and written answers (some short and some longer).
- **Final exam (32.5%):** The final exam is **NOT** cumulative. It will take place during the official exam period (June 21-27) and will cover course material since the midterm exam. You will have three hours to complete it. No make-up exam will be allowed except under serious circumstances and upon the presentation of documented evidence. I may change the format and content of a make-up exam. I will provide a study guide to help you review for the exam. The format will be the same as the midterm exam.
- **Essay (35%):** This paper, which is due no later than **June 18th, 11:59pm on CU Learn**, revolves around the three branches of federal government and their interaction. You will choose an issue or event (in either foreign or domestic politics) that is ongoing or very recent (last 5 years or so) and use it to analyze how the three branches work together (or perhaps fail to work together). Your goal will be to use the case to illustrate how the US system of government is designed to be

one of 'separated institutions sharing power'. Of course, a part of your paper will be spent describing the issue or event itself, but you will also evaluate how well the system works to deal with the issue or problem and what should be done to make it work better. So, there is a normative element here in terms of arguing for or against something (e.g., arguing against the current way of dealing with the problem). However, you are primarily illustrating how the system works today vs. how it was designed to work by the Founders. The paper should be 4-5 single spaced pages. Additional information about the paper is posted on CU Learn.

Course Topics and Class Schedule

May 7: The History and Ideas of US Politics + The Constitution

May 9: The Constitution

May 14: The Constitution

May 16: Congress

May 21: Congress

May 23: Congress

May 28: Midterm exam in class today (no lecture)

May 30: Presidency

June 4: Presidency

June 6: Presidency

June 11: Parties & Elections

June 13: Parties & Elections

June 18: Parties & Elections

Academic Accommodations

The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your **Letter of Accommodation** at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

For Religious Observance: Students requesting accommodation for religious observances should apply in writing to their instructor for alternate dates and/or means of satisfying academic requirements. Such requests should be made during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist, but no later than two weeks before the compulsory academic event. Accommodation is to be worked out directly and on an individual basis between the student and the instructor(s) involved. Instructors will make accommodations in a way that avoids academic disadvantage to the student. Instructors and students may contact an Equity Services Advisor for assistance (www.carleton.ca/equity).

For Pregnancy: Pregnant students requiring academic accommodations are encouraged to contact an Equity Advisor in Equity Services to complete a *letter of accommodation*. Then, make an appointment to discuss your needs with the instructor at least two weeks prior to the first academic event in which it is anticipated the accommodation will be required.

Plagiarism: The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They may include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

Submission and Return of Term Work: Papers must be submitted directly to the instructor according to the instructions in the course outline and will not be date-stamped in the departmental office. Late assignments may be submitted to the drop box in the corridor outside B640 Loeb. Assignments will be retrieved every business day at **4 p.m.**, stamped with that day's date, and then distributed to the instructor. For essays not returned in class please attach a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** if you wish to have your assignment returned by mail. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

Grading: Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

| Percentage | Letter grade | 12-point scale | Percentage | Letter grade | 12-point scale |
|------------|--------------|----------------|------------|--------------|----------------|
| 90-100 | A+ | 12 | 67-69 | C+ | 6 |
| 85-89 | A | 11 | 63-66 | C | 5 |
| 80-84 | A- | 10 | 60-62 | C- | 4 |

| | | | | | |
|-------|----|---|-------|----|---|
| 77-79 | B+ | 9 | 57-59 | D+ | 3 |
| 73-76 | B | 8 | 53-56 | D | 2 |
| 70-72 | B- | 7 | 50-52 | D- | 1 |

Approval of final grades: Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

Carleton E-mail Accounts: All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or cuLearn. As important course and University information is distributed this way, it is the student’s responsibility to monitor their Carleton and cuLearn accounts.

Carleton Political Science Society: The Carleton Political Science Society (CPSS) has made its mission to provide a social environment for politically inclined students and faculty. Holding social events, debates, and panel discussions, CPSS aims to involve all political science students at Carleton University. Our mandate is to arrange social and academic activities in order to instill a sense of belonging within the Department and the larger University community. Members can benefit through numerous opportunities which will complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, visit <https://www.facebook.com/groups/politicalsciencesociety/> or come to our office in Loeb D688.

Official Course Outline: The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.
