

Introduction to Government in the United States

POLI 100, Section 002, Spring 2008

MWF 9:00-9:50, 112 Murphey Hall

Instructor: Jamie Monogan
Office: 312 Hamilton Hall
Phone: 962-0430

Website: <http://www.unc.edu/~monogan/teaching>
E-mail: monogan@email.unc.edu

Office hours:
312 Hamilton Hall
Mon. 10:00-11:30
Wed. 10:00-11:30
or by appointment

Odum Lab statistical consulting:
02 Manning Hall
Tues. 5:00-9:00
Thur. 1:00-5:00
Sun. 1:00-9:00

Course Description and Goals

This course provides a broad overview of the political system in the United States, thereby providing a foundation for future courses you may take regarding American politics. This course will accomplish this by looking at American politics through the lens of political science. In other words, we will try to develop an understanding of cause-and-effect relationships in politics. This theoretical understanding of cause-and-effect should inform your understanding of political interaction even as political personalities and issues change in future years. Since these goals require you not only to know and understand information, but also think for yourself, I will design lectures, discussion, & writing in a way that encourages active thought.

This course asks, “how does American politics work?” By the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Argue how fundamental principles of American politics can best be implemented.
- Explain the basic procedures, rules, and structure of major American political institutions and argue how institutions shape strategic behavior.
- Discuss what influences the principal forms of mass political behavior.

In learning skills of political science, you should be able to:

- Apply principles of rational choice theory to understand real political situations.
- Critically analyze political events and arguments from the newspaper.
- Write a logical and coherent cause-and-effect argument.
- Use evidence and statistical data to evaluate theoretical arguments.

Reading

There is one required text for this course: Kernell, Samuel and Gary C. Jacobson. 2006. *The Logic of American Politics*. 3rd ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Additional readings will be posted on the course webpage, <http://www.unc.edu/~monogan/teaching/>. You must download and print all newspaper readings prior to the meeting for which they are assigned.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

To achieve the goals of this class, you will be asked to write regularly. I value good writing not only in the two paper assignments, but also in daily homework and tests. Exams will ask short-answer, problem-solving, and essay questions. All tests are cumulative and will focus on course goals and unit objectives listed in this syllabus.

Nearly every class will require you to read, solve problems, or write ahead of time to prepare. I will distribute these homework assignments one class ahead of time. These assignments will be graded pass/fail, and are due in person at the start of class. I will also provide feedback on request to anyone who writes “please comment” at the top of a homework assignment. In-class group participation will also be evaluated.

Your final grade will be based on the sum of points earned from each of the following assignments:

First cumulative midterm	10 pts.
Second cumulative midterm	15 pts.
Cumulative final exam	20 pts.
First paper	15 pts.
Second paper	20 pts.
Homework, in-class assignments, & participation	20 pts.

Grades are constructed to reflect the university standards posted at <http://regweb.unc.edu/resources/rpm24.php>, which are summarized below. Grades will be based on how many points you earn according to the following distribution:

A	“highest level of attainment”	90-100 pts.
B	“high level of attainment”	80-89 pts.
C	“adequate level of attainment”	70-79 pts.
D	“minimal passing level of attainment”	60-69 pts.
F	“failed—unacceptable performance”	fewer than 60 pts.

Other Policies and Missed Work

Your regular attendance is necessary for success in this class because missing class disrupts your ability to participate and turn-in homework. It also detracts from other students' opportunities to benefit from your insights during discussions. Since homework is designed for class preparation, turning-in a hard copy at the start of class is the only guaranteed way to earn credit.

Missed exams can be made up in cases of extreme circumstances (prolonged illness or death in the family) or travel related to university activities. If you know you will miss an exam, arrangements can be made at least one week in advance, and the exam will be taken prior to when the other students take the exam.

Code of Student Conduct

You are expected to adhere to the Honor Code at the University of North Carolina. It is posted at <http://instrument.unc.edu/>. To qualify its application in this course: tests and papers should be your own work; studying and class preparation can (and should) be done with others.

Student Resources

You can increase your chance of success in this course by using UNC's academic services. The learning center has online tutorials and an office in the Phillips Annex designed to help students develop study skills, its website is <http://www.unc.edu/depts/lcweb/>. The writing center can help you refine written work. You can set an appointment at <http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/>.

How to Succeed in this Course

- Be respectful of your own and others' ideas.
- Attend class consistently.
- Keep up with the readings.
- If something is not clear, ask a question.
- Clarify expectations with the instructor.
- Bring the syllabus for each meeting.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Unit I: Tools of Political Science & Fundamentals of American Government

Week 1: The Logic of American Politics

- Interpret the arguments advanced in *The Federalist*.
- Explain the components of games.
- Argue whether a strategy profile is a Nash equilibrium.
- Explain the premise behind several common games: the coordination game, the prisoner's dilemma, the free-rider problem, & the tragedy of the commons.

Jan. 9: Introduction to the class

Jan. 11: The framers' view of human nature

Reading: Madison's "Federalist 51," pp. 608-610

Jan. 14: Principles of rational choice theory & collective action problems

Reading: from chapter 1 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 3-18

Jan. 16: Collective action problems & institutions; FIRST PAPER ASSIGNED

Reading: from chapter 1 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 18-31

Week 2: The Constitution

- Interpret the arguments advanced in *The Federalist*.
- Explain the purpose behind the institutions the framers crafted.

Jan. 18: Principles behind the Constitution

Reading: Madison's "Federalist 10," pp. 604-607

Jan. 21: NO CLASS, UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

Jan. 23: Concerns of the framers

Reading: from chapter 2 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 37-50

Jan. 25: Crafting the Constitution; in-class activity for first paper

Reading: from chapter 2 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 50-73

Week 3: Federalism

- Explain how a federal system works.
- Identify causes of increasing nationalization over time.
- Explain the premises of the spatial model of politics.
- Interpret a cross-tabulation.

Jan. 28: The spatial model of politics

Reading: from chapter 3 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 77-89

Jan. 30: Nationalization versus devolution

Reading: from chapter 3 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 90-109

Week 4: Civil Rights

- Distinguish civil rights from civil liberties.
- Identify major civil rights policies the president, the courts, & Congress adopted.
- Critically analyze current debates on civil rights.

Feb. 1: Case study on students with disabilities; FIRST PAPER DUE

Reading: “School Achievement Reports Often Exclude the Disabled” (course website) and from chapter 4 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 143-151

Feb. 4: Defining civil rights & civil rights policy; paper feedback

Reading: from chapter 4 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 113-143

Week 5: Civil Liberties

- Identify the civil liberties protected explicitly & implicitly by the Bill of Rights.
- Explain the process of incorporation.
- Break-down trade-offs when civil liberties compete with other political principles.

Feb. 6: Defining civil liberties

Reading: from chapter 5 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 155-182

Feb. 8: Case study on freedom of religion

Reading: “Supreme Court Rules on Religion in Prison” (course website)

Feb. 11: Criminal rights

Reading: from chapter 5 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 182-200

Feb. 13: Exam Review

Feb. 15: FIRST CUMULATIVE MIDTERM

Feb. 18: Exam debrief

Unit II: The Institutions of Government

Week 6: Congress

- Identify voting rules and organizational structure of Congress.
- Explain the basic process of turning a bill into law.
- Debate how members of Congress can best represent constituents.

Feb. 20: Congressional structure & processes; early instructor feedback
Reading: from chapter 6 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 205-224

Feb. 22: Guest speaker
Reading: from chapter 6 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 224-256

Feb. 25: Representation
Reading: “Battle for Control of Congress Plays Out in a Redrawn Texas” (course website)

Week 7: The Presidency

- Outline the president’s major duties.
- Explain Black’s median voter theorem.
- Demonstrate with the spatial model why gridlock may occur.

Feb. 27: Presidential duties
Reading: from chapter 7 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 261-276

Feb. 29: Gridlock
Reading: from chapter 7 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 276-298

Week 8: The Bureaucracy

- Explain how historical events influenced the bureaucracy’s independence and professionalism.
- Describe the principal-agent problem.
- Explain mechanisms elected officials use to control the bureaucracy.

Mar. 3: Descriptive features of the bureaucracy
Reading: Chapter 8 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 303-322

Mar. 5: The principal-agent problem
Reading: from chapter 8 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 322-340

Mar. 7: Case study on bureaucratic control
Reading: “FDA Was Aware of Dangers to Food” (course website)

Mar. 10-14: NO CLASS, UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

Week 9: The Federal Judiciary

- Describe the structure of the federal judiciary and the appointment process.
- Describe the appeals process, including the Supreme Court's process of hearing an appeal.
- Argue whether the Supreme Court should rule by ideology or precedent.
- Interpret a cross-tabulation.

Mar. 17: Structure of the judiciary and decision-making

Reading: "The Fragile Kennedy Court" (course website) and from chapter 9 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 345-366

Mar. 19: The judicial appointment process

Reading: from chapter 9 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 366-377

Mar. 21: NO CLASS, UNIVERSITY HOLIDAY

Mar. 24: Exam review

Mar. 26: SECOND CUMULATIVE MIDTERM

Mar. 28: Exam debrief; SECOND PAPER ASSIGNED

Unit III: Political Behavior & Public Influence

Week 10: Public Opinion

- Explain the sources of considerations that shape individuals' attitudes.
- Interpret shifts and differences in the content of public opinion on issues and politicians.
- Evaluate opinion poll presentations for trustworthiness and content.
- Interpret a cross-tabulation.

Mar. 31: Background effects & considerations

Reading: from chapter 10 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 381-402

Apr. 2: How opinions aggregate

Reading: "Who Accounts for Change in American Politics?" (course website)

Apr. 4: NO CLASS, INSTRUCTOR AT CONFERENCE

Apr. 7: CLASS IN THE ODUM LAB (MANNING HALL 01), statistics with Stata

Apr. 9: Interpreting real opinion polls

Reading: from chapter 10 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 402-418

Apr. 11: Case study on framing effects; SECOND PAPER DUE

Reading: "Many Don't Realize It's Clinton's Plan They Like" (course website)

Week 11: Voting, Campaigns, & Elections

- Identify the causes of turnout and vote choice.
- Explain the competing forces politicians consider when choosing whether to take moderate or an extreme positions.
- Identify the effective and ineffective components of campaigns.

Apr. 14: Causes of turnout and vote choice; paper feedback

Reading: from chapter 11 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 421-435

Apr. 16: Case study on party primaries

Reading: “Orphan No More, California Enjoys Electoral Muscle” (course website)

Apr. 18: Election campaigns

Reading: from chapter 11 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 435-455

Weeks 12: Political Parties

- Explain how historical events influenced party institutions.
- Explain why there are only two major parties.

Apr. 21: Party systems

Reading: from chapter 12 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 461-492

Apr. 23: Why are there two parties?

Reading: from chapter 12 in *The Logic of American Politics*, pp. 492-501

Apr. 25: Exam review & course evaluations

May 5: FINAL EXAM 8:00am-11:00am, 112 Murphey Hall