

Introduction to United States Politics- GOVT 101

Lafayette College, Spring 2014

Professor: Brittany Perry

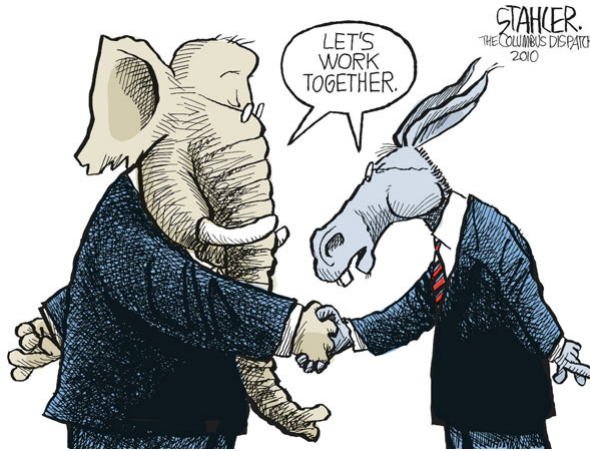
Email: perryb@lafayette.edu

Time: MWF; 10:00-10:50am

Location: Kirby Hall of Civil Rights, 204

Office Hours: MW: 2:15-3:30pm or by appointment

Office Location: Kirby Hall of Civil Rights, 110



Course Description

This course investigates the institutional structure of the American political system and the goals and preferences of political actors who operate within it. We will examine the effects of the original constitutional structure and the nature of institutional change overtime. Using textbook readings, scientific studies, and real world examples, we will answer questions such as: "How was the American political system constructed?" And "What consequences does our constitutional system have for politics today?"

The course will devote significant attention to the evolution of civil rights and liberties in American society and students will engage in current debates regarding these issues. In addition, the class will analyze the relationship between various branches of government (Executive, Legislative, and Judicial), and how the public, political parties, and the media influence the activities of each. Special attention will be paid to the upcoming midterm elections and how numerous political actors are behaving in the lead-up to November.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course students should be able to:

- Identify the institutional features of the American political system and their historical foundations
- Explain how American political institutions interact with one another
- Examine how the American public engages in politics and whether/how the public affects elite behavior
- Apply theoretical arguments to explain current events in American politics
- Critically assess an existing debate within the American politics literature

Expectations and Assignments

- **Exams**
 - Exams may consist of multiple choice, short-answer/identification style questions, and longer essay length questions. All exams will be completed in class.
 - Midterm 1: March 3rd
 - Midterm 2: April 4th
 - CUMULATIVE Final: TBA
 - **Note: Please do not schedule flights for Summer Break prior to the release of the final exam schedule!**
- **Quizzes**
 - In addition to exams, I will give a number of pop quizzes throughout the semester to gauge whether students are completing the assigned readings and understanding key concepts. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz score.
- **Short Analytic Paper**
 - (3-5 pages (excluding bibliography), double-spaced, one-inch margins) will address a major topic/debate in the American politics literature. A detailed description of the assignment will be posted on Moodle and discussed in class.
 - Paper due: May 2nd at 11:55 pm to Moodle (MS Word Doc)
 - Note: You are required to meet with me during my office hours at least one week prior to this due date to discuss your paper progress.
- **Participation**
 - You will be graded on participation in this class. Your grade will be based on the **quality** of your contribution to in-class discussions, debates, and assignments (this may include paper assignments, small group activities, and discussion of current events). You will be expected to keep up with current happenings in American politics on a *daily basis* by following national newspapers (*New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, etc.)
 - To receive an “A” for participation, you must be active in class, asking challenging questions and going the EXTRA mile to understand and analyze material
 - *Note on Attendance: You may have **one** unexcused absence without penalty. Beyond this, each unexcused absence will result in a 5-point deduction from your final participation grade. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to get notes from your classmates, as I will not post lecture slides.*
 - In addition to activities in class, students are expected to attend and engage in a number of out-of-classroom activities. These will include two campus/local events related to the material discussed in this course, out-of-class film viewings, and required office hour visits. These activities contribute to the four credit hour requirement for this course.
 - If you have an excused absence for a scheduled out-of-class activity, you must meet with me to discuss a make-up assignment.

Required Texts

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, and Thad Kousser. 2013. *The Logic of American Politics*, 6th edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Kernell, Samuel and Steven S. Smith. 2012. *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. 5th edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Any additional articles/chapters will be posted on the Moodle site for this course found at: <http://moodle.lafayette.edu/>. I will also post relevant news articles, data, etc. as they come up in class. **You will also be responsible for this material.**

Grading

- **Final Grade**

Participation	15%
Quizzes	15%
Analytical Paper	15%
Midterm Exams	30% (15% each)
Cumulative Final Exam	25%

- **Notes on Grading**

- Any student who is not satisfied with a grade on a given assignment must submit a description of the issue in dispute in writing (i.e. what is allegedly mis-graded and why you believe your work is correct). If necessary, I will set up a meeting with the student to discuss the issue. I will then decide whether to raise, lower, or leave the grade unchanged.
- **VERY IMPORTANT!!!! All late assignments will be docked one full letter grade for every day they are late. I will not accept any papers that are more than 4 days late.** Make sure you turn in everything on time.

Grading Scale

A+ 100-98	B+ 89-88	C+ 79-78	D 69-60
A 97-93	B 87-83	C 77-73	F <60
A- 92-90	B- 82-80	C- 72-70	

Other Requirements/Course Information

- **The Academic Honesty policy is taken seriously in this class.** Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism or cheating, is a violation of College policy and may result in a failing grade and/or other disciplinary measures. Please review the guidelines on “Principles of Intellectual Honesty” (available in the Student Handbook at: http://studentlife.lafayette.edu/files/2011/08/studenthandbook_1112.pdf), which elaborate College policy on plagiarism and academic integrity.
- **You may NOT use your cell phone to email or text message in class.** Before you come to class, make sure that your cell phone is turned off and put away.
- You may use laptops in this class, however, if I see you emailing, surfing the Internet or checking Facebook, I will ask you to put it away and take notes by hand.
- I also expect everyone in this class to be **RESPECTFUL OF THE OPINIONS OF OTHERS**. During class discussions, I ask that you be courteous of other students and the instructor at all times.
- **Accommodations for Students with Disability:** In accordance with Lafayette College policy, reasonable academic accommodations and support services will be available to students who have a documented disability. Students with disabilities should review the information available at: <http://attic.lafayette.edu/disability-services/>.

Federal Credit Hour Statement

- The student work in this course is in full compliance with the federal definition of a four credit hour course. Please see the Registrar’s Office web site (<http://registrar.lafayette.edu/additional-resources/cep-course-proposal/>) for the full policy and practice statement.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:
This schedule is subject to slight modification
KJK= The Logic of American Politics;
K&S= Principles and Practice; M=Moodle

Week of January 27: Theoretical Foundations

- *KJK Chapter 1*
- *K&S 1-1*

Week of February 3: America’s Founding, The Constitution

- *KJK Chapter 2*
- *The U.S. Constitution*
- *K&S 2-3, 2-4*
- *Sanford Levinson. 2006. “It Is Time to Repair the Constitution’s Flaws” Chronicle of Higher Education (M)*

Week of February 10: Federalism

- *KJK Chapter 3*
- *K&S 3-2, 3-3*
- *Guest Speaker: State Representative Robert Freeman*

Week of February 17: Civil Rights

- *KJK Chapter 4*
- *Martin Luther King, Jr. 1963. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (M)*
- *Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the Voting Rights Act (M)*

Required Presentation: "Suppressing Citizen Voices? The Impact of Felon Disenfranchisement and Voter ID Laws" Professor Mitchell, February 20, 7:30pm, Kirby 104

Week of February 24: Civil Liberties

- *KJK Chapter 5*
- *One of the following (to be assigned in-class)*
 - o *Schenck v. US (1917)*
 - o *Texas v. Johnson (1989)*
 - o *Employment Division of Oregon v. Smith (1990)*
 - o *District of Columbia v. Heller (2008)*
 - o *Miranda v. Arizona (1966)*
 - o *Furman v. Georgia (1972)*
 - o *Griswold v. Connecticut (1965)*
- *K&S 5-3, 5-4*

Required Film: Walkout (2006) or Chicano! Taking Back the Schools (1996), February 24, 7pm

Required Reading for Film: Chicano Civil Rights Movement TBA (M)

Week of March 3: EXAM and Start Congress

- *EXAM MONDAY MARCH 3!!*
- *KJK Chapter 6*
- *K&S 6-1, 6-3*

Week of March 10: Finish Congress

- *Oleszek and Oleszek. 2012. "Legislative Sausage-Making: Health Care Reform in the 111th Congress" (M)*

Week of March 17: *Spring Break!!*

Week of March 24: The Presidency and Bureaucracy

- *KJK Chapter 7*
- *K&S 7-1, 7-3*
- *KJK Chapter 8*

Required Film: West Wing: On the Day Before or Alternative

Optional Event:

- *"The Faiths of Postwar U.S. Presidents" March 24, 7:30pm, Kirby Rm 104*

Week of March 31: Judiciary and EXAM!

- *KJK Chapter 9*
- *K&S 9-3*
- *EXAM FRIDAY APRIL 4th*

Week of April 7: Public Opinion

- *KJK Chapter 10*
- *K&S 10-3, 10-4*

Week of April 14: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

- *KJK Chapter 11*
- *K&S 11-2, 11-5*

Week of April 21: Parties

- *KJK Chapter 12*
- *K&S 12-1*

Week of April 28: Interest Groups and Media

- *KJK Chapters 13*
- *K&S 13-3*
- *KJK Chapter 14*
- *K&S 14-3*
- *PAPER DUE May 2nd*

Week of May 5: Class Choice of Topic

- *No Class May 9th*