

The American Political System
POLSCI 91-01: Summer Session II
Lecture: M-F 11:00am-12:15pm
Social Sciences 124

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Course Description:

This course will investigate the institutional structure of the American political system, the goals of the political actors who operate within it, and the contexts that affect political action. We will examine the effects of the original constitutional structure and assess the nature of institutional change overtime. Using textbook readings, scientific studies and real world examples, we will attempt to answer questions such as: “How was the American political system constructed?” And “What consequences does our constitutional system have for politics today?” In addition, we will analyze the relationship between the preferences of the public and the decisions of government actors (including the President, members of Congress, and members of the Judiciary), the nature of campaigns and elections and the role of the American political parties.

Learning Objectives:

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 (both state and federal) interact with one another
- Analyze the relationship between the public and governmental actors
- Assess how beliefs, attitudes and values have shaped and continue to shape the American political system

Required Texts:

It is expected that all students complete the required readings for the day in advance of the class. The followed are required purchases:

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson & Thad Kousser. 2009. *The Logic of American Politics*, 4th edition.
- Kernell, Samuel and Steven S. Smith. 2010. *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings* 4th edition.

Additional required readings and class information will be posted on the course website:
<http://blackboard.duke.edu>.

Course Requirements (The RULES!):

Attendance is required. Approximately once a week there will be an unannounced quiz based on the assigned reading. You will also receive a participation grade for the class and any unexcused absences will be reflected in this grade. Any absence that does not comply with the university's short-term or long-term illness procedures or with the guidelines governing travel for university-sanctioned events will NOT be excused. This means that absences from the midterm or final exam **must** be excused or you will receive a zero on the exam. If your absence is excused, we will make arrangements for you to take the exam at a later date.

I prefer that you NOT use a laptop in class. Laptops and wireless Internet connections increase the potential for distraction in the classroom. If you believe that you have a valid reason for using a laptop for note-taking purposes, please see me and we can discuss your situation.

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.

The University Code of Academic Integrity (The Honor Code) is taken seriously in this class. Violations or suspected violations will be reported to the proper authorities. Academic dishonesty includes signing someone else's name on attendance sheets, signing the attendance sheet and not attending class, and both the giving and the receiving of improper assistance on examinations and other graded work. Please familiarize yourself with what constitutes plagiarism.

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.

Grading:

- One 75-minute midterm (in-class) 20%
- In-class quizzes 20%
- Participation 10%
- In-class presentation 10%
- Comprehensive Final Exam 40%

Exams may consist of essay, short-answer, and multiple-choice questions. The final exam will be comprehensive and thus will call on you to integrate knowledge and information gleaned from the entire course. Exam dates are noted in the schedule below.

In-class quizzes will consist of short-answer and multiple-choice questions and, as mentioned above, they will often be unannounced.

Any student who is not satisfied with the grade received on an exam or quiz must submit ***in writing*** a description of the issue in dispute (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 supposed grading mistake. I will then decide whether to raise, lower, or leave the grade unchanged.

Participation will be graded on attendance and involvement in class discussion. As mentioned above, attendance is required and points will be taken off of your participation grade if you do not attend lecture.

An in-class presentation will also count for 10% of your grade. The details of this assignment will be announced in the first week of class and will be posted on Blackboard.

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		

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

Assignments from Kernell, Jacobson & Kousser, *The Logic of American Politics*, 4th edition are cited as KJK, while assignments from Kernell and Smith, *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings* 4th edition are cited as K&S.

Note: This schedule is subject to change

Week 1:

July 5: **Introduction**

July 6 : **Theoretical Foundations**

KJK Chap. 1

K&S Chap. 1-1, 1-2

July 7: **The Constitution and Its Consequences**

KJK Chap. 2, and Appendices 1 & 3

July 8: **Federalists and Anti-Federalists**

K&S Chap. 2-2, 2-3, 2-4

Week 2:

July 11: **Federalism**

KJK Chap. 3

July 12: **Civil Rights and Race**

KJK Chap. 4

July 13: KJK- Finish Chap. 4

July 14: **Civil Liberties**

KJK Chap. 5 (up to pg. 232)

July 15: **PRESENTATIONS**

KJK- Finish Chap. 5 and K&S 5-4

Week 3:

July 18: **Congress: Guest Lecturers: Frank Orlando and Aaron King**
KJK Chap. 6

July 19: **Congress cont.: Conditional Party Government**
KJK Finish Chap. 6 and K&S Chap. 6-3

July 20: **Congress and the Public: Guest Lecturer: Melanie Freeze**
Hibbing and Smith (2001) "What the American Public Wants Congress to Be"
(On Blackboard)

July 21: **The Presidency**
KJK: Chap 7: up to page 344 (stop right before "Mobilizing Public Opinion")

July 22: **Class Canceled**

Week 4:

July 25: **PRESENTATIONS**
KJK Chap. 7 (pages 344-350) and K&S Chap. 7-3

July 26: **The Federal Judiciary**
KJK Chap. 9

July 27: KJK Finish Chap. 9 and K&S 9-1, 9-2

July 28: **Catch-up and MIDTERM REVIEW**

July 29: **MIDTERM**

Week 5:

August 1: **Public Opinion**
KJK Chap. 10

August 2: K&S Chap. 10-1

August 3: K&S Chap. 10-4

August 4: **Voting, Campaigns, and Elections**
KJK Chap. 11

August 5: **PRESENTATIONS**
KJK Finish Chap. 11 and K&S 11-4

Week 6:

August 8: **Political Parties**
KJK Chap. 12

August 9: **Political Parties**
KJK Finish Chap. 12

August 10: **The News Media**
KJK Chap. 14

August 11: **PRESENTATIONS and Final Exam Review**

*******The final exam will be held Saturday August 13th at 9:00 AM*******