

*Introduction to American Politics*  
POL 101 - Section 8  
Spring 2020  
MWF 8:00 AM-8:50 AM  
Location: Carrier Room 211 (all lectures online)

Prof. Jonathan Klingler  
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Office Hours  
Wednesdays 10-11 AM on Zoom  
Via Skype by Appointment

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Office Hours  
By Appointment  
In-person office hours are canceled.

## Course Description

The currents of American political life are defined by the constraints that enduring political institutions apply to channel evolving public opinion. Much of the tumult in American politics we see today can be understood through consideration of the foundations of American government, major political institutions, and mechanisms that link citizens and government. This course will examine how the government of the United States is organized, the rationale behind its organization, and the ways citizens, political actors, and political institutions interact to achieve political goals. This course is appropriate for political science majors who wish to gain a foundation in American politics as well as for non-majors who simply wish to gain a better understanding of American government and processes.

## Objectives

- To acquaint students with the fundamentals of American government
- To introduce students to key political science concepts and research
- To familiarize students with perspectives on American politics informed by research on the eras of the American founding and the African-American civil rights movement
- To develop students' critical thinking and analytical skills through class discussion

## Required Course Materials

Barbour, Christine, and Gerald C. Wright, ed. 2017. (8th Edition) *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*. (available online via Blackboard)

## *Supplemental Readings*

Readings may be assigned to supplement the required text from online sources or excerpted from other books. Assigned readings excerpted from books are available on three hour reserve at the

library. Additionally, these readings are available in scanned PDF form within the course content folders on the class Blackboard page. These excerpts are denoted (Reserve-BB) on the syllabus. Assigned readings derived from online sources are accessible through links within the course content folders on the class Blackboard page. Those readings which are open-access are denoted (Online-BB) on the syllabus. Other readings are accessible via a link to JSTOR in the course content folders. You may log in to JSTOR using your WebID to read these political science articles, which are denoted (JSTOR-BB) on the syllabus. If you have difficulty accessing JSTOR via the Blackboard links, you may log in at <https://www.olemiss.edu/cgi-bin/library/jstor.pl> and use your WebID to gain access and search for the article manually.

## Lecture Format

There will be no in-person lectures on campus for the remainder of the class. As a replacement, lectures will be posted on Blackboard before 8 AM on every scheduled class day. These lectures will be accessible in the Content folder in a folder labeled Lectures and labeled by the date on which they will be given. Lectures will be made available either as videos or recorded voiceovers on the slides. They will take 50 minutes and you should be able to watch/listen to the lectures during our scheduled class time.

There are currently no plans to use interactive lecture technology. The beginning portion of the lectures will be used to answer questions you have from the prior class, so please send any questions which arise during the lectures to Dr. Klingler and they will be answered in the next class, to the extent that we have time.

The participation sheets have been replaced by online participation questions on Blackboard, which will be graded in a similar way as the sheets. More info is available below, and it is strongly suggested that you answer the questions shortly after watching the lecture each day.

## Grading

Participation 5%; Daily Quizzes 5%; 3 Exams 30% each.

*Class participation* counts for 5% of your final grade. Participation will be assessed using written reflection questions which should capture your opinion and critical thinking about the material and would generally form the basis of discussions in class. **These written reflection questions will be available on the Blackboard Content folder within the Participation subfolder. You will have from midnight until 11:59 PM the day of class to complete the participation questions.** Written participation reflection questions will be graded as a fail (0 points), a pass (1 point) or high pass (2 points) based on the thoughtfulness of the response.

*Daily quizzes* count for 5% of your final grade. For every class day with a lecture, an open book quiz with 2-3 multiple choice questions on the readings and lecture material will be available on Blackboard. The quizzes are within the Content folder inside the Daily Quizzes subfolder. You will have from midnight until 11:59 PM the day of class to complete the daily quiz.

*Exams* constitute 90% of your final grade. Three non-cumulative exams are each worth 30% and will take place on March 4 and April 17, and during finals week at 8 AM on May 4. Make up

exams will be administered only with prior approval. **The exams on April 17 and May 4 will be administered on Blackboard. On April 17 and May 4, an exam will be made available on Blackboard at 8 AM, and you will have 50 minutes to complete the exam before it will no longer be accessible.**

Completing *midsemester course evaluations* on Blackboard can provide up to an extra 2% of the final grade. If at least 90% of the class completes a midsemester course evaluation, everyone in the class will receive one extra percentage point on his or her final grade. For each additional percentage point of the class that completes a midsemester evaluation, everyone in the class will receive 1/10 of an additional bonus point. For example, if 95% of the class completes the midsemester course evaluation, then everyone will receive 1.5 bonus points from this pot. The total amount of extra credit students may receive from midsemester course evaluations is two bonus points. Note that I can see who answers the survey at any time as well as the content, but not who wrote what comment. I can see, however, the proportion of the class which completes evaluations.

Participation in *simulation activities* can also provide extra credit, which will vary on the basis of the work involved. While participation activities were planned for the Designing Institutions, Federalism, The Judiciary, and Public Opinion and Political Communications sections of the class, **unfortunately all simulations planned for the remainder of the semester are canceled.**

### Grade Scale

Below is how your final percentage grade will be mapped into a letter grade. There are opportunities for extra credit in this class so there will be no rounding. If you get an 87.9999999%, (for example) when the semester is over your final grade will be a B+. **No exceptions.**

Percentage Point Range	Letter Grade
92-100	A
88-91.99...	A-
85-87.99...	B+
81-84.99...	B
78-80.99...	B-
75-77.99...	C+
71-75.99...	C
68-70.99...	C-
65-67.99...	D+
62-64.99...	D
60-61.99...	D-
0-59.99...	F

### Class Policies

Changes to the syllabus may be made in order to correct errors, adjust the schedule, fine tune course details, or address unforeseen issues. Changes will be discussed and announced in class. It is the student's responsibility to attend class to be aware of any syllabus changes. The official syllabus will always be available on Blackboard.

### *Policy on Readings and Assignment Expectations*

Reading and any additional assignments should be completed before the official start time for class on the day assigned. This means that email copies of assignments must be in the instructor/TA's possession at the official start time for class or the assignment is late. **Paper copies of assignments will not be accepted in light of the pandemic.** Pay careful attention to the syllabus and to any adjustments that may occur. Material in the readings is fair game for exams even if not discussed in class.

### *Policy on Missed Classes and Assignments*

The University requires that all students have a verified attendance at least once during the first two weeks of the semester for each course. If attendance is not verified, then a student will be dropped from the course and any financial aid is adjusted accordingly by the University.

Late and makeup assignments will be allowed only with a doctor's note or other equally serious documented reason for the absence. **Excused absences will only be given for dates listed in the documentation provided. Keep this in mind when requesting doctors notes or obtaining other documentation such as memorial programs in the event of a funeral.** Excused absences from mental health conditions such as depression, bereavement, or anxiety require a note from a doctor mentioning specific dates under which attendance was prevented as a result of the mental health condition. If no date is provided in the documentation, there will be no excused absence given.

You are responsible for material presented in lectures and discussed in class regardless of your attendance. Notes will not be supplied for students who have missed class, so plan to make other arrangements. Athletes and other students who will miss class due to extra- or co-curricular travel should inform me of the relevant dates early in the semester.

### *Policy on Grade Appeals*

All grade appeals must be made in writing to the instructor. No grade appeals will be considered within the first 24 hours of a grade being posted or an assignment/exam being returned; those that come in within the first 24 hours will be discarded. All grade appeals must be received within ten calendar days of the grade being posted or the assignment/exam being returned; those that come in after this deadline will be discarded. All appeals must contain the following information:

The name of the assignment in question

The reason why you believe your grade should be higher. Be specific and discuss this in the context of the requirements of the assignment.

Determine whether you believe it is an error of calculation (the instructor/TA incorrectly tabulated points), judgment (the grade received does not reflect the quality of the work), or both.

If the instructor/TA determines that an error of calculation is present, then the correct grade will be calculated and the correct grade will be allocated. If it is argued by the student that an error of judgment is present, then the student has the option to have the assignment graded *de novo* by the instructor. As this will be a regrade from scratch, there is the possibility that the grade given to the regraded assignment will be lower than the initial grade given. All decisions by the instructor are final.

### *Policy on Disabilities*

Students facing disabilities or mental health concerns who are not registered should apply for accommodation with Student Disability Services (SDS). Any student who has a documented disability and has received recommendations for accommodations from SDS should speak with the instructor as soon as possible regarding accommodations.

### *Policy on Email*

Email communication must be used to make requests to the instructor/TA (*e.g.* for meetings outside of office hours) so that everyone has a record of the request and decision. For emails sent between Monday and Thursday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 48 hours to respond. For those sent between Friday and Sunday, inclusive, please allow the instructor/TA up to 96 hours to respond.

It is the student's responsibility to check his/her Ole Miss email daily, since Blackboard works through Ole Miss email addresses and this is how I am able to communicate with you. If you prefer another email address, set up forwarding from your Ole Miss address.

Writing a professional email is an important skill one should master before graduation. All emails to the instructor/TA should include the following: a subject line briefly explaining the topic of the email and that it pertains to POL 101; a greeting more professional than "Yo" or "Hey" (I prefer "Professor Klingler" or "Dr. Klingler."); a clear question or request; and should identify the sender by name. Emails lacking any of these criteria will not be returned. Before sending an email, please make sure you cannot easily get the answer from another source, such as the syllabus or other class documents.

### *Policy on Technology*

This course relies heavily on access to computers and the Internet. At some point during the semester you will have a problem with technology. Your laptop will die, a file will become corrupted, a server will go down, or something else will occur. These are facts of life, not emergencies. Technology problems will not normally be accepted as excuses for unfinished work. Expect that "stuff" will happen and protect yourself by doing the following:

- Plan ahead - start early, particularly if you'll need something hard to get.

- Save work often at multiple stages - at least every ten minutes.

- Make regular backups of files in a different location from the originals - there are several free cloud services that you can use to do this automatically.

- When editing an image, set aside the original and work with a copy.

- On your personal computer, install and use software to control viruses and malware.

When submitting any assignment electronically in this course, you are responsible for any technological problems (*e.g.* Internet connection difficulties, corrupted files, misspelled email addresses, delayed email delivery, etc.). To prevent problems along with the associated penalties for late assignments, you should submit assignments well before the deadline and take proactive steps to make sure that files were not corrupted and that assignments were received. Again, please do not trust your computer to function as expected at the last minute.

### *Policy on Respect and Civility*

The exchange of ideas is an essential part of learning, and you are encouraged to frequently ask questions and share your thoughts during regular class. *Disagree without being disagreeable*. We will be discussing some polarizing issues in class, and conversation should remain civil and conducted in a good faith exchange. In order to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning, students should use professional language in class discussions and written work and behave professionally. No offensive slang or profanity is permitted and unwanted physical contact of another student is a serious offense which will be reported for disciplinary action.

### *Policy on Academic Discipline*

Academic honesty is expected, and academic misconduct will not be tolerated. Examples of academic misconduct are explored in the M Book and include plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation), using someone else's work as your own, allowing someone else to represent your work as their own, gaining or attempting to gain an unfair advantages, giving false information or altering documents, harming academic support facilities, and any act that violates the principles of honesty or fairness that does not fall into these categories.

Turn in material that you have completed yourself and respect the learning environment. Acts of academic misconduct are serious offenses that will be reported for disciplinary action and appropriate sanction after discussion with the student. Please see the University's Student Academic Conduct and Discipline Policy, the University's Academic Regulations in the M Book and/or speak with Prof. Klingler if you have questions in this area.

## Course Outline

### *Political Foundations*

January 22

*Introduction and Course Overview*

January 24 and 27

*Designing Institutions*

What makes decision-making "political?" What is rationality? What are institutions and why do they matter? What factors influence the likelihood of cooperation and compromise in decision-making?

(Reserve-BB) Bianco, "Introduction." pp. 3-13.

(Reserve-BB) Bianco, "Cooperation in Politics." pp. 36-66.

January 29, 31, and February 3

(Reserve-BB) Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, pp. 1-16.

(Online-BB) Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*.

(Online-BB) Putnam, "The Prosperous Community: Social Capital and Public Life," *The American Prospect*.

February 5 and 7

*The Constitution*

What were the primary debates during the constitutional convention? In what ways did the Constitution provide for a just and fair government?

(JSTOR-BB) Roche, John P. "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action." *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (December 1961) pp. 799-816

February 10 and 12

(KTR) Ch. 3, "Politics of the American Founding."

February 14 and 17

*Federalism*

(KTR) Ch. 4, "Federalism and the U.S. Constitution."

(JSTOR-BB) Buchanan, James M. "Federalism and an Ideal Political Order and an Objective for Constitutional Reform." *Publius*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Spring 1995) pp. 19-27.

February 19 and 21

*Civil Rights*

(Online-BB) Film: *Eyes on the Prize: No Easy Walk*

(Online-BB) Engler and Engler, "How did Gandhi win?" *Waging Nonviolence*.

(Online-BB) Engler and Engler, "Gandhi's strategy for success - use more than one strategy," *Waging Nonviolence*.

February 24 and 26

(Reserve-BB) Lawson, "Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Nation."

(Reserve-BB) Payne, "Debating the Civil Rights Movement: The View from the Trenches."

February 28 and March 2

*Civil Liberties*

(KTR) Ch. 5, "Fundamental American Liberties."

March 4

**Exam I**

March 6

NO CLASS

March 9, 11, and 13

Spring Break

March 16, 18, and 20

Extended Spring Break

*American Political Institutions*

March 23 and 25

*The Congress*

How is Congress organized and why? What motivates the legislative behavior of members of Congress?

(KTR) Ch. 7, "Congress."

March 27 and 30

How does Congress decide? What are prospects for reform to end partisanship and polarization? (JSTOR-BB) Smith, "Positive Theories of Congressional Parties."

(Online-BB) Aldrich and Rohde, "Measuring Conditional Party Government."

(JSTOR-BB) Binder, "The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-1996."

April 1, 3 and 6

*The Presidency*

How might we understand presidential power? How does the personality of the president shape what the presidency is at any given time?

(KTR) Ch. 8, "The Presidency."

(KTR) Ch. 9, "The Bureaucracy."

April 8 and 13

*The Judiciary*

Is the judiciary the "least dangerous branch?" Can the Supreme Court insulate itself from the major political controversies of modern American life? What are some consequences of "politicizing" the courts?

(KTR) Ch. 10, "The American Legal System and the Courts."

April 15

(Reserve-BB) Scalia, *A Matter of Interpretation*, pp. 3-18, 23-25, and 37-47.

(Reserve-BB) Breyer, *Active Liberty*, pp. 17-19, 32-34, 85-88, and 95-101.

April 17

*Exam II*

*Linking Citizens and Institutions*

April 20 and 22

*Public Opinion and Political Communication*

Can public opinion polls be trusted as a source of information? What makes a good poll and how should they be interpreted?

(KTR) Ch. 11, "Public Opinion."

(Reserve-BB) Asher, *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know. "Analyzing and Interpreting Polls,"* pp. 205-236.

April 24 and 27

How do citizens receive information about political institutions? How do motivated reasoning and social identity alter citizens' perceptions of reality?

(KTR) Ch. 15, "Media, Power, and Political Communication."

April 29, and May 1

*Voting, Campaigns, and Elections*

(KTR) Ch. 14, "Voting, Campaigns, and Elections."

May 4 (8 AM)

**Exam III**