

Power and Politics in America

POL-UA 300

Spring 2017

Professor Christopher Dawes

Course Description

This course is an introduction to American political institutions and behavior. The course is made up of four primary components. First, we will discuss the American Constitution, political culture, civil liberties, and civil rights. Second, we will focus on parties, interest groups, campaigns and elections at the national level. In this section we will devote attention to which citizens participate in politics and how they make political choices. Third, we will cover the institutions of American national governance including the Congress, Presidency, judiciary, and bureaucracy. Finally, we will wrap up the course with discussions of political inequality and reform of the political system.

As part of the course, students will be exposed to analytical and empirical tools that political scientists utilize in the study of politics. In addition, we will compare the United States to other countries around the world to highlight how American politics is similar and different.

Course Logistics

Lecture

Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30-1:45pm

Global Center for Academic and Spiritual Life (238 Thompson Street)

Room C95

Contact Information

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Office Hours

19 West 4th Street, Room 325

Monday, 2:30-4:30pm

Teaching Assistants

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Required Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore:

The Logic of America Politics (Seventh Edition) by Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck [Logic]

Principles and Practice of American Politics (Sixth Edition) by Samuel Kernell and Steven Smith (editors) [Principles]

Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives (Third Edition) by Ken Coleman (editor) [Readings]

I encourage all students to use the website set up for Logic (logic.cqpress.com). The website has useful links to chapter study guides, quizzes, flash cards, and vocabulary crossword puzzles. The site also links to the Logic of the News (<http://logicofthenews.wordpress.com>), which relates the course material to current events.

Additional assigned readings will be made available on NYU Classes [Classes].

Course Grading

Midterm Exams (20% each): There will be two in-class written midterm exams comprised of short answer and essay questions. The first exam will be Monday, February 27 (covering the first third of the class) and the second will be held Monday, April 3 (covering the second third of the class).

Research Assignment (15%): A short research exercise is due in lecture on Monday, April 24. The topic will be distributed in class.

Final Exam (30%): The in-class final exam will cover the entire semester with an emphasis on material presented after the second midterm. The exam is currently scheduled for Wednesday, May 10 from 12-1:50pm.

Recitation Participation (10%): The goal of recitation is to help you better understand the topics presented in lecture. Attendance is required and the schedule of required readings for recitation is included at the end of the syllabus.

Pop Quizzes (5%): Throughout the semester you will be given a brief quiz to answer at the beginning of class. You must be present to take and receive credit for the quiz and there

are no makeups.

Missing Exams

Students missing either of the two midterm exams or the final exam will be assigned a zero unless a justified excuse is provided (illness or family/personal emergency). Travel plans are not an acceptable excuse. If you know that you must miss an exam (and have a justified excuse), please contact your teaching assistant ahead of time in order to schedule a make-up.

Late Assignments

The research assignment is due at the beginning of lecture on Monday, April 24. A penalty of 1/3 a grade (e.g. B+ to B) will be imposed for each day it is late.

Academic Integrity

All of the work you do in this course must be your own and the penalties for academic dishonesty are severe. I will follow university academic policy for any incident of cheating or plagiarism. For details, see cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity.

Lecture Schedule and Assigned Readings

The best way to prepare for lecture and recitation is to have the readings completed before each lecture.

Introduction and Tools

Course Introduction (Monday 1/23)

Analytical Tools (Wednesday 1/25)

Logic, Chapter 1

Principles, 1-2 (Hardin)

The Nationalization of Politics

The Constitution: Drafting a New Constitution (Monday 1/30)

Logic, Chapter 2

The United States excerpts [Classes]

The Articles of Confederation (Logic, Appendix 1)

The Constitution of the United States (Logic, Appendix 3)

The Constitution: Underlying Theory (Wednesday 2/1)

Principles, 2-1 (Anti-Federalist #3)

Principles, 2-2 and 2-3 (Federalist #10 and Federalist #51)

Federalist #15, 23, 47-49 [Classes]

Federalism (Monday 2/6)

Logic, Chapter 3

The Price of Federalism excerpts [Classes]

Principles, 3-1 (Kettl)

Principles, 3-3 (Kousser)

American Political Culture (Wednesday 2/8)

Logic, Chapter 10 Section “The Content of Public Opinion”

The American Anomaly excerpts [Classes]

Views of a Changing World pages 103 - 117 [Classes]

Trends in American Values: 1987-2012 “Overview” and “Section 1” [Classes]

Civil Liberties & Civil Rights (Monday 2/13)

Logic, Chapter 4

Logic, Chapter 5

The Public’s Influence on National Policy

Public Opinion (Wednesday 2/15)

Logic, Chapter 10

Readings, 9-1 (Lupia and McCubbins)

Readings, 9-2 (Zaller)

*****President’s Day – No Class (Monday 2/20)*****

Who Votes? (Wednesday 2/22)

Logic, Chapter 11 Section “Who Uses the Right to Vote?”

Readings, 10-1 (Rosenstone and Hansen)

Who Votes Now? excerpts [Classes]

*****First Midterm (Monday 2/27)*****

Spatial Model of Voting / Economic Voting (Wednesday 3/1)

Principles, 12-1 (Aldrich)

The Gamble excerpts [Classes]

Campaigns (Monday 3/6)

Logic, Chapter 11 Section “Election Campaigns”

The Gamble excerpts [Classes]

The Message Matters excerpts [Classes]

Party Identification (Wednesday 3/8)

Readings, 12-2 (Campbell, Converse, Miller, & Stokes)

Partisan Hearts and Partisan Minds excerpts [Classes]

Principles, 12-2 (Bartels)

Principles, 10-4 (Abramowitz)

****Spring Break (Monday 3/13 and Wednesday 3/15)****

Political Parties as Institutions (Monday 3/20)

Logic, Chapter 12

Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996 excerpts [Classes]

Interest Groups and Lobbying (Wednesday 3/22)

Logic, Chapter 13

Principles, 1-1 (Olson)

Readings, 11-2 (Kollman)

The Role of the Media (Monday 3/27)

Logic, Chapter 14

Principles, 14-2 (Iyengar and Hahn)

As Local News Goes, So Goes Citizen Engagement [Classes]

Formal Institutions of National Government

Institutional Design of Congress (Wednesday 3/29)

Logic, Chapter 6

Readings, 5-1 (Mayhew)

Readings, 5-3 (Harbridge and Malhotra)

****Second Midterm (Monday 4/3)****

Legislative Strategy (Wednesday 4/5)

Analyzing Politics excerpts [Classes]

Readings, 5-4 (Cox and McCubbins)

The Presidency (Monday 4/10)

Logic, Chapter 7

Principles, 7-1 (Neustadt)

Readings, 6-4 (Howell)

The Politics Presidents Make excerpts [Classes]

The President and Congress (Wednesday 4/12)

Principles, 7-2 (Kernell)

Pivotal Politics excerpts [Classes]

TBA (Monday 4/17)

The Bureaucracy (Wednesday 4/19)

Logic, Chapter 8

Principles, 8-1 (Moe)

The Judiciary (Monday 4/24)

Logic, Chapter 9

Principles, 5-3 (Rosenberg)

Gay Rights [Classes]

Impose Your Friendly Hand [Classes]

Political Inequality, Reform, and Wrap Up

Political Inequality (Wednesday 4/26)

Unequal Democracy excerpts [Classes]

Affluence & Influence excerpts [Classes]

Winner-Take-All Politics excerpts [Classes]

Prospects for Reform (Monday 5/1)

Logic, Chapter 15

The Politics of Reforming Social Security [Classes]

How America Can Rise Again [Classes]

Biology and Politics? (Wednesday 5/3)

Predisposed excerpts [Classes]

Wrap Up and Review for Final Exam (Monday 5/8)

*****Final Exam (Wednesday 5/10 12-1:50pm)*****

Recitation Schedule and Assigned Readings

(**PRELIMINARY**)

No Recitation (Week of 1/23)

Models of Cooperation and Defection (Week of 1/30)

Martin Osbourne, *An Introduction to Game Theory* [Classes]

Federalism and Separation of Powers in a Comparative Context (Week of 2/6)

The American Anomaly excerpts [Classes]

Analyzing Survey Data (Week of 2/13)

Principles, 10-1 (Asher)

PollingReport.com (<http://www.pollingreport.com/index.html>) reports

Review For First Midterm (Week of 2/20)

Spatial Model of Voting / Economic Voting (Week of 2/27)

Handout and Exercise [Classes]

Extensions to the Economic Voting Model [Classes]

The Power of Partisanship (Week of 3/6)

Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines [Classes]

The Politics of Beauty [Classes]

Spring Break (Week of 3/13)

Polarization in Congress (Week of 3/20)

Principles, 6-1 (Smith)

Principles, 6-2 (Binder)

Monkey Cage Series on Polarization selections [Classes]

Review For Second Midterm (Week of 3/27)

Help with Research Assignment (Week of 4/3)

Pivotal Politics & Who Controls the Bureaucracy? (Week of 4/10)

Pivotal Politics excerpts [Classes]

Principles, 8-2 (Lewis)

Readings, 7-2 (McCubbins and Schwartz)

Prospects for Reform: The Next Four Years (Week of 4/17)

TBA

Political Inequality in a Comparative Context (Week of 4/24)

TBA

Review for Final Exam (Week of 5/1)
