

PSC 1002: American Politics and Government

Michael Hankinson
Assistant Professor
Department of Political Science
hankinson@gwu.edu

Lecture: T/Th, 2:20-3:10 pm via Zoom
Office Hours: Th, 3:30-5:30 pm or by appointment

Semester Spring 2021

Bosco Yeung
ytyeung@gwu.edu
Sections 30 and 31

Daniel Ziebarth
dziebarth@gwu.edu
Sections 32 and 33

Luke Basham
lukebasham@gwu.edu
Sections 34 and 35

Course Description

This course is designed as a broad survey of American government and political processes. It is supposed to convey fundamental concepts and information for understanding politics. The goal is to help you understand key concepts and then to employ these concepts to understand a variety of current political events.

We will begin by exploring the ideological and cultural foundations of the American political system. This exploration will highlight some of the criteria that we will use throughout the course to evaluate the performance of various political institutions (such as Congress) and actors (such as the electorate). Next, we will study how individuals, parties, and interest groups influence the political institutions that were established by the Constitution. Finally, we will study these institutions.

Learning Goals

The goal of this course is to improve your ability to:

1. Explain the American political system and the outcomes it produces.
2. Apply basic political science theories to explain American politics.
3. Become a better analyst of politics and a thoughtful consumer of political news.

Organization

Lectures will be conducted via Zoom on Tuesday and Thursday from 2:00 to 3:10 pm. This lecture will be audio/video recorded. The recording will be made available to students in this class. As part of your participation in this course, you will be recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, please contact the GW Privacy Office (privacy@gwu.edu)

There is also a discussion section. All students enrolled in this class should also be enrolled in a discussion section that will be led by one of the Political Science Department's Graduate Teaching Fellows. Each section lasts 50 minutes. You must attend the section in which you are registered. Participation in discussion sections is NOT optional. When you are participating in a lecture or discussion, you should have your video on if at all possible.

Learning Assessment

Grades will be composed of the following:

- 65% Weekly quizzes
- 25% Final exam
- 10% Discussion section participation and attendance

Quizzes

Short quizzes will be used at the start of each class to incentivize active reading. The quizzes consist of 5 multiple choice, content-based questions. The quizzes will cover material from that day's assigned reading. Showing up to take the quiz earns you 25 points. Each question is worth 15 points. If you answer four questions correctly, for instance, you would receive an 85. The quizzes will not be particularly difficult, but you will do well only if you keep up with the reading assignments. There will be 25 quizzes over the course of the semester. I will drop your lowest 5 scores and average the rest. Your quiz average will constitute 65% of your grade.

Why have frequent quizzes instead of a few exams? Good question. There is evidence that frequent quizzes improve students' learning significantly. For example, in one recent study in a large introductory psychology class, instituting on-line quizzes appeared to improve students' performance.¹ Students taking that class also did better in their other courses that semester, and in the classes they took the next semester. This suggests that regular assessment helps students develop study habits that are beneficial in other courses, not just the course that assigns quizzes. Frequent quizzes also help me ascertain how well certain concepts are understood, so that I can adjust the content of lectures accordingly.

Because I am dropping the 5 lowest quiz grades, there will be no makeups other than for religious observances (see policy below) or GW athletic or other events that you are required to participate in.

Final Exam

At the end of the semester, we will assess whether you have acquired basic knowledge of the structures, functions, and development of American politics and government. This is an overly complicated way of saying we're going to give you a final exam. The final will consist of essay questions and short answers. It will be cumulative — that is, you will be asked to demonstrate your understanding of material from the entire semester. We will hand out a study guide before the final. The exam will be worth 25% of your grade. In accordance with university policy, the final exam will be given during the final exam period and not the last week of the semester. For details and complete policy, see <https://provost.gwu.edu/administration-final-examinations-during-examination-period>.

Discussion Participation

The discussion section is a critical part of this course. You must attend the discussion section that you are enrolled in and you are expected to participate every class. This attendance and participation is a component of your final grade. Because most discussion sections occur before lecture on Tuesday, discussion will focus on the reading from the prior week.

Extra Credit

You are eligible for 1 additional percentage point of extra credit. To receive this percentage point, you must make a meme citing one of the lessons or readings from this class. Your meme will be anonymously displayed in front of the class and subject to a vote. If more than 50% of the class agrees that your meme is "high quality/not low effort," you will receive the extra credit. If your meme falls short of the 50% threshold, you may submit a new meme and try again. Each student is only eligible to receive 1 point of extra credit.

¹Pennebaker, James W., Samuel D. Gosling, and Jason D. Ferrell. 2013. "Daily online testing in large classes: Boosting college performance while reducing achievement gaps." *PloS one* 8 (11) : e79774.

At the end of the semester, your grade will be assigned based on the following scale: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62), and F (0-59). Scores within one-half point of the next letter grade will be rounded up. While a curve may be used in determining the final distribution of grades, the curve will only be used to improve your grade. Finally, I do not allow students to submit extra work in an attempt to raise his or her grade, unless I have specified to the entire class that such an opportunity exists.

Readings

There are two required textbooks for this course:

- Samuel Kernell, Gary Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. *The Logic of American Politics*, 9th ed.
- Samuel Kernell & Steven Smith. *Principles and Practice of American Politics*, 7th ed.

Both texts for this course are available via the bookstore in the Marvin Center. They are also available to rent at Amazon. I urge you to shop around to find the best price. Frequently used and rental books are less expensive. The bookstore also offers a rental option. You must acquire the listed editions of both books.

In non-COVID times, you could find a copy of the required books on reserve at Gelman Library, through a program called Top Textbooks. Unfortunately, the libraries have suspended the Top Textbooks program for the 2020-21 academic year.

A number of readings will also be placed on the class's Blackboard site. These are marked in the syllabus with "BB" and will appear with the materials for each week of the course. Finally, additional readings (frequently news stories) will be distributed via Blackboard. It is your responsibility to log on a regular basis the Blackboard website. All readings that are subsequently distributed should be considered assigned reading.

You are also expected to keep up with the news, since our discussions during lecture frequently will touch on current events. Reading a major newspaper is perhaps the best way to do this, although there are of course many other news sources with ample political coverage. In addition, you may be interested in The Monkey Cage , a Washington Post politics and political science blog,

Course Prerequisites

There are no prerequisites for this course.

Expected Time Commitment

You will spend 2.5 hours per week in direct instruction (lecture and discussion) or guided interaction. The average minimum amount of out-class learning expected per week is 8 hours (<https://cte.rice.edu/workload>) for a total of 120 hours per semester.

Important Dates

- 1/18 - No discussion section, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- 1/19 - No discussion
- 1/20 - No discussion section, Inauguration Day
- 2/15 - No discussion section, President's Day
- 3/16 - No class, Spring Break
- 3/18 - No class, Spring Break
- 4/29 - Designated Monday (open make-up section)

Course Calendar

University Policies

Observance of Religious Holidays

In accordance with University policy, students should notify faculty during the first week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. For details and policy, see: provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines.

Academic Integrity Code

Academic Integrity is an integral part of the educational process, and GW takes these matters very seriously. Violations of academic integrity occur when students fail to cite research sources properly, engage in unauthorized collaboration, falsify data, and in other ways outlined in the Code of Academic Integrity. Students accused of academic integrity violations should contact the Office of Academic Integrity to learn more about their rights and options in the process. Outcomes can range from failure of assignment to expulsion from the University, including a transcript notation. The Office of Academic Integrity maintains a permanent record of the violation.

More information is available from the Office of Academic Integrity at studentconduct.gwu.edu/academic-integrity. The University's "Guide of Academic Integrity in Online Learning Environments" is available at studentconduct.gwu.edu/guide-academic-integrity-online-learning-environments. Contact information: rights@gwu.edu or 202-994-6757.

Virtual academic support

A full range of academic support is offered virtually in fall 2020. See coronavirus.gwu.edu/top-faqs for updates. Tutoring and course review sessions are offered through Academic Commons in an online format. See academiccommons.gwu.edu/tutoring. Writing and research consultations are available online. See academiccommons.gwu.edu/writing-research-help. Coaching, offered through the Office of Student Success, is available in a virtual format. See studentsuccess.gwu.edu/academic-program-support. Academic Commons offers several short videos addressing different virtual learning strategies for the unique circumstances of the fall 2020 semester. See academiccommons.gwu.edu/study-skills. They also offer a variety of live virtual workshops to equip students with the tools they need to succeed in a virtual environment. See tinyurl.com/gw-virtual-learning.

Writing Center

GW's Writing Center cultivates confident writers in the University community by facilitating collaborative, critical, and inclusive conversations at all stages of the writing process. Working alongside peer mentors, writers develop strategies to write independently in academic and public settings. Appointments can be booked online. See gwu.mywconline.

Academic Commons

Academic Commons provides tutoring and other academic support resources to students in many courses. Students can schedule virtual one-on-one appointments or attend virtual drop-in sessions. Students may schedule an appointment, review the tutoring schedule, or access other academic support resources at academiccommons.gwu.edu. For assistance contact academiccommons@gwu.edu.

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations: disabilitysupport.gwu.edu or 202-994-8250.

*L=*Logic of American Politics, 9th Ed*; P=*Principles and Practice of American Politics, 7th Ed*

Date	Topic	Reading	Quiz
1/12	Introduction	None	No quiz
1/14	Why Government?	L: Ch. 1 P: Olson (1-1)	No quiz
1/19	The Founding and the Constitution I	L: Ch. 2 (pp. 37-52) L: The Constitution (pp. 681-692)	Practice quiz
1/21	The Founding and the Constitution II	L: Ch. 2 (pp. 52-90) P: Madison (2-1 and 2-2)	Quiz 1
1/26	Federalism I	L: Ch. 3	Quiz 2
1/28	Federalism II	P: Kettl (3-1) Read Somin, "Federalism, the Constitution, and Sanctuary Cities" and Yee, "Judge Blocks Trump Effort to Withhold Money from Sanctuary Cities"	Quiz 3
2/2	Civil Liberties I	L: Ch. 5 [<i>note that we're reading Ch. 5 before Ch. 4</i>]	Quiz 4
2/4	Civil Liberties II	P: Supreme Court (5-2) Listen to Radiolab, "Eye in the Sky"	Quiz 5
2/9	Civil Rights I	L: Ch. 4	Quiz 6
2/11	Civil Rights II	P: Levitt (4-2) Read Menand, "The Color of Law"	Quiz 7
2/16	Congress I	L: Ch. 6	Quiz 8
2/18	Congress II	P: Jacobson (11-2)	Quiz 9
2/23	Congress III	P: Binder (6-2)	Quiz 10
2/25	The Presidency I	L: Ch. 7 (stop at "The Veto Game")	Quiz 11
3/2	The Presidency II	L: Ch. 7 (remainder) P: Neustadt (7-1) Watch an interview with political scientist Frances E. Lee	Quiz 12
3/4	The Judiciary	L: Ch. 9 P: Hamilton (9-3)	Quiz 13
3/9	The Bureaucracy I	L: Ch. 8 (stop at "Who Controls...")	Quiz 14
3/11	The Bureaucracy II	L: Ch. 8 (remainder) Read Flavelle and Bain, "Washington Bureaucrats Are Quietly Working to Undermine Trump's Agenda"	Quiz 15
SPRING BREAK!			
3/23	Political Parties I	L: Ch. 12 (stop at "Revival...") Read Masket, "Why Political Parties Never Die"	Quiz 16
3/25	Political Parties II	L: Ch. 12 (remainder) P: Drutman (12-2)	Quiz 17
3/30	Interest Groups I	L: Ch. 13 (stop at "Why Spend Millions...")	Quiz 18
4/1	Interest Groups II	L: Ch. 13 (remainder) P: Schattschneider (13-1) Read Burns, "K Street and the Status Quo"	Quiz 19
4/6	The Media	L: Ch. 14 Read Hayes, "When the Senate Gun Control Bill Died, So Did the Story"	Quiz 20
4/8	Public Opinion I	L: Ch. 10 (stop at "Public Opinion and Welfare...")	Quiz 21
4/13	Public Opinion II	L: Ch. 10 (remainder) Watch Pew Research Center videos on random sampling and question wording in polling Read Cassidy, "Is America an Oligarchy?"	Quiz 22
4/15	Campaigns and Elections I	L: Ch. 11 (stop at "Election Campaigns")	Quiz 23
4/20	Campaigns and Elections II	L: Ch. 11 (remainder) P: Popkin (11-1)	Quiz 24
4/22	Campaigns and Elections III	Read Edsall, "Donald Trump's Identity Politics"	Quiz 25
TBD	Final Exam		

Counseling and Psychological Services

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success: healthcenter.gwu.edu/counseling-and-psychological-services or 202-994-5300.

Safety and Security

- In an emergency: call GWPD 202-994-6111 or 911
- For situation-specific actions: review the Emergency Response Handbook at safety.gwu.edu/emergency-response-handbook
- In an active violence situation: Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out. See seego.gwu.edu/shooterprep
- Stay informed: safety.gwu.edu/stay-informed