

Introduction to American Government

GVPT 170 | Fall 2016

Lectures: Mondays, Wednesdays 10:00am- 10:50am | 0204 Architecture Building

Discussion Sections: *Refer to your schedule

Professor:

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Course description

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of American government and politics. We will focus mainly on the constitutional origins of the American political system, the structure and function of institutions, the political actors involved in government, and the crucial links between government and citizens. The course is intended to help students analyze the decision making processes of the government and help them comprehend how and why the government operates the way it does. Students will be strongly encouraged to apply the basic ideas of politics to current events as well as to how government affects their own lives.

Course objectives

- To understand the structures and processes of American government and politics, the collective action challenges inherent in this system, and the practical implications of political structure and contestation in our lives.
- To develop critical reading skills, especially the ability to integrate both theoretical arguments and empirical evidence.
- To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contemporary political debates.

Course required text and materials

1. Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser & Lynn Vavreck, *The Logic of American Politics* (CQ Press, 7th edition, 2016); ISBN: 9781483319841

This textbook frames the course in terms of understanding collective action problems. A collective action problem exists when people would be better off if they cooperated, but they can't help acting in their own interests, even if that makes everyone worse off. Over time, we have developed institutions to solve some collective action problems. We will investigate the kinds of collective action problems we have faced in our history, the solutions we've come up with to address them, and the success we've had in resolving them.

2. Samuel Kernell and Steven S. Smith (Eds.), *Principals and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (CQ Press 6th edition, 2016); ISBN: 9781483319872
 - A package including the 2 textbooks and a **FREE** access code to an eBook version of The Logic of American Politics, 7e is available at the campus bookstore. The bookstore will also stock individual copies of The Principles and Practice of American Politics, 6e for those who choose to purchase an electronic copy of The Logic of American Politics, 7e.
 - Various eBooks versions of The Logic of American Politics, 7e can be purchased directly from Sage Publications at: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/the-logic-of-american-politics/book243478#resources> (Please note, because of copyright, an eBook is not available for The Principles and Practice of American Politics, 6e).
 - *Textbook (The Logic of American Politics, 7e) and the reader (Principals and Practice, 6e) are also on reserve at the UMD Library's "Top Textbook on Reserve" program. The books can be checked out for **4 hours at a time**. More information about the program can be found here: <http://www.lib.umd.edu/access/top-textbooks>
3. Top Hat (classroom response system) www.tophat.com

We will be using the Top Hat classroom response system in class. You will be able to submit answers to in-class questions using Apple or Android smartphones and tablets, laptops, or through text message.

An email invitation will be sent to you (or has been sent to you) by email, but if you don't receive this email, you can register by simply visiting our course website: <https://app.tophat.com/e/396980>
Note: our Course Join Code is 396980

Top Hat will **require a paid subscription**, and a full breakdown of all subscription options available can be found here: www.tophat.com/pricing. Top Hat strongly suggest you purchase the **1 year or 5 year license** since there are no upgrade options for the single semester.

You can visit the Top Hat Overview (<https://success.tophat.com/s/article/Student-Top-Hat-Overview-and-Getting-Started-Guide>) within the Top Hat Success Center which outlines how you will register for a Top Hat account, as well as providing a brief overview to get you up and running on the system.

Top Hat support: Should you require assistance with Top Hat at any time, due to the fact that they require specific user information to troubleshoot these issues, please contact their Support Team directly by way of email (support@tophat.com), the in app support button, or by calling 1-888-663-5491.

- Additional course readings throughout the semester, provided as website links and/or articles, will be used to complement the textbooks and the lectures.

- Current events make up an important component of this course. As such, students will be required to stay informed about the major events making news (via web, tv/radio, newspaper, etc.)

Recommended resources for additional exploration-

The *Logic of American Politics* student companion website:

<http://edge.sagepub.com/kernell7e>

This site is a particularly good resource for review of course materials.

GRADED ASSIGNMENTS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Quizzes (top 4 of 5) – 15%

Assignments (top 5 of 6) – 15%

Attendance (3 will be dropped) – 10%

Midterm – 25% (**Wednesday, October 19th**)

Final Exam (**Tuesday, December 20th, 8:00am-10:00pm**) – 35%

Total = 100%

ASSIGNMENTS: Students will be required to submit six assignments during the semester. The assignment needs to be about one to two pages in length and follow the format that will be discussed in class. Further details about the rules of this assignment will be given in class.

QUIZZES: Students will be given five unannounced quizzes throughout the course relating to chapter content. These quizzes will be administered during discussion sections.

EXAMS: There will be two exams – a midterm and a final. Each will be a combination of multiple choice/identification, matching and/or short answer questions. The exams are designed to test your familiarity with the lecture material, reading assignments, and your independent ability to apply what you have learned. The final exam will not be explicitly cumulative, but inevitably, concepts covered throughout the course will be applicable.

The T.A.'s have primary responsibility for the grading of exams, assignments, and quizzes. If you have questions or concerns about your grade, please discuss it first with your T.A. during his office hours. Any grade disputes must be made in writing (with original document) to your T.A. no less than 24 hours and no more than 1 week after assignment is returned. Please note that in considering a dispute, the entire assignment, quiz, or exam in question is open to re-grading. In the rare circumstance where a dispute is not resolved by the T.A., Dr. Rouse will make a final decision.

Letter grades will be determined as follows:

A+	100 to 97	C+	79 to 77
A	96 to 93	C	76 to 74
A-	92 to 90	C-	73 to 70
B+	89 to 88	D+	69 to 67
B	87 to 85	D	66 to 64
B-	84 to 80	D-	63 to 60
		F	59 or below

****Grades will be rounded to the first decimal with .5 being the cutoff to round up to the next letter grade (exp. 79.4 is a C+ and 79.5 is a B-). Please do not email me or your TAs requesting an exception to this rule.***

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION

Students are expected and required to attend class and their discussion section on a regular basis, in a timely manner, and without disruption to other students. Attendance will be taken at a random point during class. If you come in late to class or leave early and you miss the attendance check, you will not be allowed to log-in your attendance for that day. You are allowed 3 unexcused absences in this course.

PROFESSIONALISM

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner conducive to learning. Our classroom will be a place where people can feel comfortable expressing diverse opinions without fear of ridicule or intimidation. It is expected that students will remain respectful of others, regardless of whether or not they share similar opinions and beliefs. Please refrain from talking on the phone, texting, or using web-enabled devices to do things that are not class related (e.g., checking Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.). Repeat offenders will be asked to leave the lecture.

MAKEUP AND LATE WORK

Please read the University's policy on attendance here-

<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>

I will only consider exam and assignment make-ups under specific and compelling documented emergencies (serious illness, accident, family crises, etc.) or university-authorized absences.

No quiz make-ups will be allowed. Students who will be **absent due to religious holidays** must notify your TA, in writing, prior to the end of the second week of the semester. Please refer to the Online Undergraduate Catalog Policy on Religious Observance. Unless it is unavoidable, you must notify your TA of an excused absence **prior to the assignment or exam due date.** Note that having other assignments or exams due on the same day or having computer problems are not considered emergency situations. Make-up exams or assignments may differ in format from the original ones given.

Late penalty for unexcused assignments are as follows: a deduction of a full letter grade (or 10 points) if assignment is completed by end of due date; a deduction of an additional letter grade (or 10 points) for every day late after due date (including weekends). Please note that the university attendance/absence policy does not apply to days when exams or assignments are due.

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Every effort will be made to accommodate students who are registered with the Disability Support Services (DSS) Office and who provide a University of Maryland DSS Accommodation form. This form must be presented to your TA **no later than September 16, 2016.** I am not able to accommodate students who are not registered with DSS or who fail to provide the necessary documentation. I will not allow make-ups to DSS students if the information is provided **after** exams are taken.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The work done in this course is expected to be solely the effort of each individual student. Cheating and plagiarism (representing the words or ideas of others as one's own or copying the work of another without giving proper credit) will not be tolerated. Any form of academic dishonesty will result in a zero for the course (regardless of prior class achievement) and will be reported to the Office of the Dean of Students. If you are unsure about what constitutes academic dishonesty, please refer to the Student Honor Council's "Code of Academic Integrity," available at: <http://shc.umd.edu/SHC/AICodeAndCaseProcess.aspx>

CANVAS (ELMS)

Important communication regarding the class is conducted via Canvas. This includes posting of syllabus, announcements, and grades. Students are required to be proficient users of Canvas and to ensure that their emails are registered with Canvas and that they are receiving Canvas communication for this course. **Lack of communication through Canvas is not an excuse for not being aware of important class information or changes to the syllabus that result in late/missed assignments.**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT COURSE SYLLABUS AND CLASS SCHEDULE

The syllabus is designed as a tentative calendar for how the class will be structured. It is not meant as a strict schedule. It is very likely that throughout the semester the class schedule will be revised at the discretion of the instructor. We may spend more/less time on a particular topic. It is your responsibility to attend class and to be informed of any revisions to the syllabus.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE AND IMPORTANT DATES

SESSION & DATES	
Week #1	PREPARATION: Buy books, subscribe to Top Hat, access Blackboard/ELMS, Read Chapter 1 (Kernell, et al.)
Mon. Aug. 29	TOPICS: Introduction to Course
Wed. Aug. 31	TOPICS: The Logic of American Politics
Week #2	PREPARATION: Read Chapters 1 and 2 (Kernell et al.)
Mon. Sept. 5	TOPICS: No Class (Labor Day Holiday)
Wed. Sept. 7	TOPICS: The Logic of American Politics (continued)
Week #3	PREPARATION: Read Chapters 2 and 3 (Kernell et al.); assignment #1 (due 9/16)
Mon. Sept. 12	TOPICS: The Constitution
Wed. Sept. 14	TOPICS: The Constitution (continued) / Federalism
Week #4	PREPARATION: Read Chapters 3 and 4 (Kernell et al.)
Mon. Sept. 19	TOPICS: Federalism
Wed. Sept. 21	TOPICS: Federalism (continued) / Civil Rights
Week #5	PREPARATION: Read Chapters 4 and 5 (Kernell et al.); assignment #2 (due 9/30)
Mon. Sept. 26	TOPICS: Civil Rights
Wed. Sept. 28	TOPICS: Career Center Presentation
Week #6	PREPARATION: Read Chapter 5 and 6 (Kernell et al.)

Mon. Oct. 3	TOPICS:	Civil Liberties
Wed. Oct. 5	TOPICS:	Civil Liberties (continued) / Congress
Week #7	PREPARATION:	Read Chapter 6 and 7 (Kernell et al.); assignment #3 (due 10/14)
Mon. Oct. 10	TOPICS:	Congress
Wed. Oct. 12	TOPICS:	Congress (continued) / The Presidency
Week #8	PREPARATION:	Study Chapters 1-7
Mon. Oct. 17	TOPICS:	The Presidency / Lecture catch-up and Exam Review
Wed. Oct. 19	TOPICS:	*MIDTERM EXAM*
Week #9	PREPARATION:	Read Chapters 8 and 9 (Kernell et al.)
Mon. Oct. 24	TOPICS:	The Bureaucracy
Wed. Oct. 26	TOPICS:	The Bureaucracy (continued) / The Federal Judiciary
Week #10	PREPARATION:	Read Chapters 9 and 10 (Kernell et al.); assignment #4 (due 11/4)
Mon. Oct. 31	TOPICS:	The Federal Judiciary
Wed. Nov. 2	TOPICS:	The Federal Judiciary / Public Opinion
Week #11	PREPARATION:	Read Chapters 10 and 11 (Kernell et al.)
Mon. Nov. 7	TOPICS:	Public Opinion
Wed. Nov. 9	TOPICS:	Public Opinion / Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
Week #12	PREPARATION:	Read Chapters 11 and 12 (Kernell et al.); assignment #5 (due 11/18)
Mon. Nov. 14	TOPICS:	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
Wed. Nov. 16	TOPICS:	Voting, Campaigns, and Elections / Political Parties
Week #13	PREPARATION:	Read Chapters 12 and 13 (Kernell et al.)
Mon. Nov. 21	TOPICS:	Political Parties
Wed. Nov. 23	TOPICS:	No Class- Thanksgiving Holiday
Week #14	PREPARATION:	Read Chapters 13 and 14 (Kernell et al.); assignment #6 (due 12/2)
Mon. Nov. 28	TOPICS:	Political Parties / Interest Groups
Wed. Nov. 30	TOPICS:	Interest Groups / The News Media
Week #15	PREPARATION:	Read Chapter 14
Mon. Dec. 5	TOPICS:	Interest Groups / The News Media
Wed. Dec. 7	TOPICS:	The News Media
Week #16	PREPARATION:	Study Chapters 8-14/Questions for Review
Mon. Dec. 12	TOPICS:	Exam Review
Tues. Dec. 20		*FINAL EXAM*