

PSC 111: Introduction to American Government & Politics

Spring 2019

Baxter Hall 114

MWF 1:10-2.00

Professor: Dr. Theodore J. Masthay

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“Politics is conflictual, political process matters, and politics is everywhere.” In this course, the goal is to consider these premises from a number of angles to help you conclude why politics matter. This is an introductory course that will have a descriptive element, but I want you to think critically about what in American politics is good, what is flawed, and the ways that life in America could be improved through the political process. Topics we will cover include the founding, constitutional rights, political institutions, political behavior, and public policy. By the conclusion of the semester, you should be able to explain how these different concepts interact, how they involve you, how you can affect them, and be able to critically develop opinions about how to solve our country’s most important problems.

NOTE: This syllabus is subject to change at any time throughout the semester. You will be informed of all changes and a revised copy of the syllabus will be available on Canvas.

**Textbooks**

Bianco, William T. and David T. Canon. 2017. *American Politics Today, 5<sup>th</sup> Essentials Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

**Grading**

The semester will consist of three exams, weekly quizzes, one in-class simulation and attendance.

Exam 1	20% of final grade
Exam 2	20% of final grade
Exam 3	20% of final grade
Quizzes	20% of final grade
Electoral Systems Simulation	15% of final grade
Attendance	5% of final grade

A: 93-100    B: 83-87.99    C: 73-77.99    F: 0-59.99  
A-: 90-92.99    B-: 80-82.99    C-: 70-72.99  
B+: 88-89.99    C+: 78-79.99    D: 60-69.99

## **Attendance**

Attendance is required in this course. You are allowed four unexcused absences throughout the semester. Each absence after that will result in a 1% point deduction in your final course grade up to 5 percentage points (the full value of the attendance grade).

## **Exams**

There will be three exams throughout the semester. They will consist of multiple choice questions and identifications. The first two exams be administered in Baxter 114, during our regularly scheduled class time. The third and final exam will still be administered in Baxter 114, but will occur during the university assigned time. Please bring your own blue books to all three exams.

You may challenge the grade of your exams. However, you may not contact me until 24 hours after the exam has been handed back. While I will review your grade with the potential for it to increase, I reserve the right to lower your grade as well.

## **Makeup Exams**

There will be no makeup exams administered without ample cause and notice. Valid excuses include significant illness, death in the family, or required attendance at a college sponsored event (including athletics). I must receive notice of these issues *before* the scheduled date of the exam. Documentation for your absence must be given to me within one week after the exam is administered. If you miss an exam without fulfilling these duties, you will receive a 0.

## **Quizzes**

Weekly quizzes will be administered throughout the semester at the end of class on Fridays unless otherwise noted. Missed quizzes will be assigned a grade of 0 (unless there is a valid excuse). I will drop your two lowest quiz grades at the end of the semester. The quizzes will focus on the previous week's readings and lectures.

## **Electoral Systems Simulation**

There will be an experiential portion of this course in the form of an in-class simulation. It will consist of presentations by a limited number of students and a ~5 page paper to be turned in by every member of the class. Further details of this class project will be given closer to the date it will occur.

## **Classroom Rules**

No electronic devices are to be used during class time. This includes laptops, tablets, cell phones, etc. I impose these restrictions because, not only does it lead to better academic outcomes (Fried 2008), it actually leads to higher satisfaction among students (Wurst et al. 2008). Use of electronics is not only distracting to the user, but also those around him/her.

Fried, Carrie B. 2008. "In-class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning." *Computers & Education* 50 (3): 906-914.

Wurst, Christian, Claudia Smarkola and Mary Anne Gaffney. 2008. "Ubiquitous Laptop Usage in Higher Education: Effects on Student Achievement, Student Satisfaction, and Constructivist Measures in Honors and Traditional Classrooms." *Computers & Education* 51 (4): 1766-1783.

Be courteous of your peers. University is a place where ideas should and do flow freely, but all discussions should remain respectful.

Class ends at 2:00, not 1:59...or 1:58...or 1:57, etc. Please do not begin packing your things until I have indicated that class has ended. I will do everything in my power to make sure that class does not extend past 9:50.

A note about emails: Do not expect to receive any correspondence from me between the hours of 6 pm and 8 am on any day, including the night before an exam. Do not email me to ask about grades, I am not allowed to discuss those over email per FERPA regulations. If you have questions, come to my office hours or set up an appointment. You must email me from your @wabash.edu account; I will not respond to any other addresses. **Do not email me any questions about the course without first consulting the syllabus.**

### **The Gentleman's Rule**

As with all other facets of Wabash life, the Gentleman's Rule applies to your interactions with me and your colleagues inside and outside the classroom, as well as to the completion of all academic requirements of the course. Except for leading an article discussion and data collection for the minilabs, all assignments and exams are to be completed independently, with no assistance from other people or other students' work. Remember the Wabash mission statement: "Wabash College educates men to think critically, act responsibly, lead effectively, and live humanely." Acting responsibly includes not cheating. *If there are any questions about how the standards of academic integrity apply to a specific assignment or test, please do not hesitate to talk with me for clarification before handing in the assignment.* Uncertainty about the application of these principles will not excuse a violation. Remember that you can be expelled for academic dishonesty!

The general principle is that you should **always submit work that is entirely your own**. Here are some specific examples of academic dishonesty:

- Copying another student's exam or assignment – either a current or past student.
- Copying any text from the internet (or other resource) on an assignment.
- Paraphrasing any text from any resource without providing a reference.
- Extensive paraphrasing of text from any resource even when providing a reference.
- Turning in the same assignment to multiple courses, in the same or different semesters, without prior consent from both professors.
- Taking another student's graded assignment without his permission.
- This is not an exhaustive list of violations. If you have a question, ask before you turn in the assignment.

If I find out that you have cheated on an assignment, you will receive ZERO points for that assignment, and I will turn you into the Dean for an academic dishonesty strike.

### **Writing Center**

Do you have questions about how to start a paper? Are you struggling to get all of your ideas to fit? Do you have a draft but want someone to review it? Did you get a lower grade than expected on your last paper and want to do better? Then you need to visit the Writing Center!

No matter what your writing questions or needs, the Wabash Writing Center Consultants are eager and able to help you! Located on the second floor of the Lilly Library, the Wabash Writing Center is open to all students, faculty, and staff.

To make an appointment, go to <https://www.wabash.edu/ace/writing>, select the button labeled “Click HERE to make an appointment,” and register in the scheduling system.

If you have any questions, please email the director, Prof. Koppelman, at [koppelmz@wabash.edu](mailto:koppelmz@wabash.edu).

### **The Office of Student Enrichment**

Succeeding at Wabash College takes a great deal of effort and planning. Life is complex, assignments are time consuming, and staying involved keeps you running. When you have questions about how to make everything fit into your schedule, how to study more efficiently, how to take better notes, or any other question about developing your college skill, visit the Office of Student Enrichment (OSE).

Got to <https://koppelman.youcanbook.me> to arrange a one-on-one, personalized meeting with Prof. Koppelman. No matter your questions, Prof. Koppelman will work with you to find a solution that helps you achieve your goals.

### **ADA Statement**

Students with disabilities (apparent or invisible) are invited to confidentially discuss their situation with the disability coordinator, Heather Thrush, Director of Student Engagement and Success. If a student wishes to receive an academic accommodation, it is required that his documentation of the disability be on file with Heather Thrush, who can, in confidence, provide information and guidance. Early notification helps us all work together in the most effective ways. Heather Thrush can be reached at her office (Center Hall 112A), by phone (x6347), or by email ([thrushh@wabash.edu](mailto:thrushh@wabash.edu)).

### **Counseling Center**

Garden Level of Chapel, Kevin Swaim ([swaimk@wabash.edu](mailto:swaimk@wabash.edu), x6252) & Jamie Douglas ([douglasj@wabash.edu](mailto:douglasj@wabash.edu), x6252). It's free! It's confidential, and this guarantee is taken seriously. Your contact with the counseling center is confidential between you and the counselor to the fullest extent of the law (confidentiality may be breached in cases such as when there is imminent danger to someone or a report of current abuse of a child or elder). Reasons Wabash students go to the counseling service include personal and academic questions, advice for family problems, stress, anger, grief and loss, conflicts with family or friends or guys in their living units, alcohol and other drugs, feeling edgy and anxious, relationships, motivation problems,

sexuality, concerns about friends, just wanting someone neutral to talk to. Walk-ins 11-1 M-Th (knock if they are in session during those hours) or by appointment.

### **Baxter Hall Emergency Procedures**

In case of a fire, we are to proceed from the classroom, out the nearest exit, and move at least 50 yards away from the building, on the mall side. You should join the professor and class outside to make sure that everyone got out of the building. Then move as a group into the Chapel to report to the emergency personnel in charge. In the event of a severe weather storm, we are to proceed to the basement via the SOUTH stairwell and shelter in the basement hallway near the elevator.

### **Course Calendar**

#### Week 1 (Jan 14, 16, 18): Introduction; The Founding and the Constitution

- Course Overview
- Bianco and Canon, Chapter 2
- Reed, *First Things First*

#### Week 2 (Jan 21, 23): Federalism

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 3
- Jonsson, *Battle over Legal Marijuana*

#### Week 3 (Jan 28, 30, Feb 1): Civil Liberties

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 4
- Hopkins, *Cross Burning Revisited*

#### Week 4 (Feb 4, 6, 8): Civil Rights

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 5
- *Shelby County v. Holder*, Oral Arguments and Opinion Announcement, <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2012/12-96>
- **EXAM 1 on Friday, February 8**

#### Week 5 (Feb 11, 13, 15): Congress

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 10
- Sinclair, Chapter 2, “The Legislative Process in the House of Representatives” in *Unorthodox Lawmaking: New Legislative Processes in the U.S. Congress*

#### Week 6 (Feb 18, 20, 22): The Presidency

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 11
- Canes-Wrone et al., *Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power*

#### Week 7 (Feb 25, 27, Mar 1): The Federal Judiciary

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 13
- Breyer, *Judicial Independence in the United States*

**No Class from March 2-10: Enjoy Spring Break**

Week 8 ( Mar 11, 13, 15): Bureaucracy

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 12
- Golden, “Bureaucratic Responsiveness and the Administrative Presidency” in *What Motivates Bureaucrats?: Politics and Administration During the Reagan Years*
- **EXAM 2 on Friday, March 15**

Week 9 (Mar 18, 20, 22): Political Parties

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 7
- Blake, *Why are There Only Two Parties in American Politics?*

Week 10 (Mar 25, 27, 29): Political Parties/Elections

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 7
- Bianco and Canon, chapter 8

Week 11 (Apr 1, 3, 5): Elections

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 8
- Petrocik et al., *Issue Ownership and Presidential Campaigning, 1952-2000*

Week 12 (Apr 8, 10, 12): Interest Groups

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 9
- *Trustees of Dartmouth College v. Woodward*
- *Citizens United v. FEC*

Week 13 (Apr 15, 17): Public Opinion and the Media

- Bianco and Canon, chapter 6
- Ruane, *Fairness Doctrine*

Week 14 (Apr 22, 24, 26): Simulation and Debrief

- **Electoral systems simulation**
- **FINAL EXAM on Friday, May 3 at 1:30**