

# United States Politics

## POLS 151

Meeting Times: T & TR 12:30 - 1:45 P.M.

Location: Buckman Hall 103

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### Instructor

Professor Ali Masood

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Office: Buckman Hall 308

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 1:45 - 3 P.M. or by Appointment

### Course Overview

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to major concepts in American government and politics. This course will examine concepts such as partisanship, ideology, elections, voting, and public opinion. This course will give particular attention to the role of political institutions within the United States and the key actors within these important institutions. There will be an acute focus on executive, legislative, and judicial processes as well as how these important institutions interact with one another.

### Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this course, students will:

1. Be able to understand and identify basic concepts and terms within political science.
2. Have a thorough understanding of key concepts within American politics.
3. Apply conceptual and theoretical frameworks to describe, compare, and draw inferences about different political systems.
4. Be able to identify the various American political institutions and differentiate their functions.
5. Be able to identify the types of questions explored by American political scholars.
6. Think about concepts related to politics critically, analytically, and systematically.

### Required Textbook

The textbook listed below is available at the campus bookstore:

- ★ Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser and Lynn Vavreck. 2019. *The Logic of American Politics*. 9th Edition. Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.

## **Required Slack Account**

This class will use Slack for class-related communication. All students are required to join the course using their college email address. The Slack channel for the course is titled: us-politics-spring2020. You will receive an email prompt to join.

## **Course Structure and Evaluation**

In this course, we will engage in a variety of activities, including lecture-based discussion and critical evaluation of the readings. Over the course of the semester, students in this course will be evaluated on the following: attendance and participation, two writing assignments, two midterm examinations, and a final exam.

## **Attendance and Participation**

Regular on-time attendance to class is expected from each student. Attendance includes reading the assigned material for the session as well as adequately preparing for the discussion of the material in class. All students are required to pose a question that comes from the readings on Slack once a week. Each student is allowed three absences without penalty. Any additional absences will adversely affect the student's grade.

## **Midterm and Final Examination**

There will be two examinations in this course: one midterm exam and a final exam. The final exam is cumulative. The exams are designed to test the student's knowledge and comprehension of assigned readings and the discussion in class. Thus, it is worth reiterating the importance of completing your reading and attending class regularly. The exams will consist of a series of multiple choice, true and false, and short essay questions. Make-up examinations are only offered when there is documented proof of a medical emergency that is excused by the professor. In the event of such a medical emergency, a student may be given an essay make-up exam or the professor may substitute a student's score on the cumulative portion of the final exam for the missed exam. This decision is at the discretion of the instructor. If a student misses an exam due to a medical emergency, the student must contact the instructor as soon as it is practical to do so. If a student fails to appear for an exam for any other reason a grade of zero will be recorded.

## **Writing Assignments**

There are two writing assignments in this course. The first writing assignment is an essay on the U.S. Constitution. More details on this assignment will be provided in class. In a second assignment, students will write a 3-page letter to an organization, elected official, or an individual seeking public office about a policy position. This policy can be narrow or broad in scope, and one that affects either a local community or a national audience. The letter should demonstrate effective communication of an idea that is well supported with evidence and logic. Students may use the concepts discussed in class or issues that they research individually. All written assignments are due on the assigned due date in class. All assignments should be typed on standard letter with 1" margins in size 12 font. Late assignments are penalized five percentage points for each day the assignment is late.

## **Research Paper Alternative**

Students may opt to write a research paper in lieu of taking one of the exams. The research paper can examine any aspect of American politics. The scope of the paper is purposely broad so that the student can produce a research paper on an aspect of American politics that is interesting to the student. Early in the semester, students are encouraged to submit a short research proposal of the full paper. Any student electing to submit a research paper must have a research topic approved by the instructor. Early submission of rough drafts for instructor comments is highly encouraged. While quality matters more than quantity, students who elect to complete a research paper are expected to submit a paper no less than 20 pages. The research paper is due on the final day of class.

## **General Expectations**

Each student is expected to regularly attend class, arrive on-time, and leave only after the instructor has adjourned the day's session. Students are expected to be cordial with each other and the instructor to facilitate a good learning environment. Students with concerns relating to the classroom environment should bring them to the attention of the instructor before or after class or during office hours.

## **Technology in the Classroom**

Students are allowed to use tablets and laptops in the class to take notes and participate in class activities. Multitasking with material that does not relate to the class interferes with the learning process and can be highly distracting to other students. Cell phone use is not allowed in the class.

## **Accommodations**

Students requiring accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility Services at 901-843-3885, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. Students should also bring any request for reasonable accommodation to the attention of the instructor.

## **Honor Code**

Students should familiarize themselves with the Rhodes College Honor Code and policy for academic integrity. All work in this course is expected to be completed by the student submitting the work. Academic dishonesty, in any form, will not be tolerated. Students who engage in academic dishonesty by cheating or plagiarizing will receive a grade of zero for the work. In addition, the student may also receive a failing grade for the course. Violations of the Honor Code may result in additional sanction including expulsion from the college.

## **Grade Appeals**

Instructors occasionally make a mistake in grading. If a student wishes to appeal their grade, a written (typed) appeal must be submitted with the original graded work. Successful appeals will clearly identify specific mistakes made in the original grading.

## Grade Distribution

Attendance & Participation	15%
Writing Assignment 1	15%
Writing Assignment 2	15%
Midterm Examination	20%
Final Examination	35%

## Grading Scale

100 - 90.00	A	70.00 - 76.99	C
87.00 - 89.99	B+	67.00 - 69.99	D+
80.00 - 86.99	B	60.00 - 66.99	D
77.00 - 79.99	C+	<= 59.99	F

## Syllabus Amendments

Over the course of the semester, amendments to the syllabus are possible or may become necessary. The instructor reserves the right to amend the syllabus at any point during the semester. In the event of an amendment, students will be notified electronically and in class.

## Course Schedule

The schedule of courses is listed on the following page also lists the reading assignment for the session. The readings are listed by the class date prior to which they should be completed. Students should complete the reading assignments in their entirety. Students should make note of two important points. First, this course is reading intensive. Second, the readings listed below are required readings for the course – they are not optional. It is critical that students come to class prepared to discuss the material.

	<b>Content</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	
Thr 1/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Course Introduction &amp; Overview</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b>	
Tue 1/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Introduction to Political Science</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Thr 1/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Introduction to American Politics</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>

<b>Week 3</b>	
Tue 1/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The Logic of American Politics</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 1</li> </ul>
Thr 1/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The Logic of American Politics continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b>	
Tue 2/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The U.S. Constitution</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 2</li> </ul>
Thr 2/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The U.S. Constitution continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> <li>* <b>First Writing Assignment Due</b></li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b>	
Tue 2/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* American Federalism</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 3</li> </ul>
Thr 2/13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Civil Rights</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 4</li> </ul>
<b>Week 6</b>	
Tue 2/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Civil Liberties</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 5</li> </ul>
Thr 2/20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Marbury v. Madison</i></li> <li>* Reading assignment: Grant; Rose (Articles on Slack)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b>	
Tue 2/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <i>Marbury</i> continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Thr 2/27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The U.S. Supreme Court</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 9</li> </ul>
<b>Week 8</b>	
Tue 3/3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The U.S. Supreme Court continued &amp; Review Session</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Segal and Cover; Epstein et al. (Articles on Slack)</li> </ul>
Thr 3/5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>Midterm Exam</b></li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>

<b>Week 9</b>	
Tue 3/10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Spring Break (No Class)</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Thr 3/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Spring Break (No Class)</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10</b>	
Tue 3/17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The U.S. Congress</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 6</li> <li>* <b>Second Writing Assignment Due</b></li> </ul>
Thr 3/19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The U.S. Congress continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Miller and Stokes (Article on Slack)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 11</b>	
Tue 3/24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The American Presidency</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 7</li> </ul>
Thr 3/26	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The American Presidency continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Federalist #68</li> </ul>
<b>Week 12</b>	
Tue 3/31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The American Presidency continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
Thr 4/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Public Opinion</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 10</li> </ul>
<b>Week 13</b>	
Tue 4/7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Public Opinion continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Hetherington (Article on Slack)</li> </ul>
Thr 4/9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Easter Recess (No Class)</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 14</b>	
Tue 4/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Voting, Campaigns, and Elections</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 11</li> </ul>
Thr 4/16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Midwest Political Science Conference (No Class)</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>

<b>Week 15</b>	
Tue 4/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Voting, Campaigns, and Elections continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Jacobson (Article on Slack)</li> </ul>
Thr 4/23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Political Parties</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Chapter 12</li> </ul>
<b>Week 16</b>	
Tue 4/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Political Parties continued</li> <li>* Reading assignment: Federalist #10; Riker (Article on Slack)</li> </ul>
Thr 4/30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Course Wrap Up &amp; Review Session</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>
<b>Week 17</b>	
Fri 5/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* <b>Final Exam</b> (1 P.M.)</li> <li>* Reading assignment: None</li> </ul>