

POLS 331: American Politics

Mondays 1:00-2:30 and Wednesdays 11:30-1:00
MacDonald Hall 004

Instructor:

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Office: C407 Mackintosh-Corry Hall

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-12:00 PM, Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 PM and by appointment

Course Summary

American National Government and Politics is aimed at developing a systematic way to think about American government that goes beyond knowing current events. It provides students with a broad background in concepts and questions central to the study of political institutions, behaviors, and processes in the United States. Students will be asked to apply political science theories to important debates in American politics. In doing so we will develop tools that will help us to evaluate the political world and make sophisticated arguments about the practice of politics. Among the questions we will discuss are: How do people make voting choices? Does the president have too much power? Does the Supreme Court have too much power? Why does the United States have two parties? What do polls mean? Do political campaigns matter?

Learning Objectives

This course has two kinds of objectives. The first is to gain substantive knowledge about American politics, and the second is to acquire skills that you acquire as a university student. The specific outcomes are as follows:

- 1) Understand the basic structures and institutions in the American political system and how they affect governmental outcomes,
- 2) Develop tools and principles to evaluate political behavior of individuals and groups in the United States as they interact with the political system,
- 3) Learn about the tools that political scientists use to study politics,
- 4) Improve research and writing skills through analysis of political science literature.

Course Readings:

There are two required texts for the course:

- Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsburg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere, *American Government: Power and Purpose*. W.W. Norton Press. Core 14th Edition.
- Ken Kollman, *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*. W.W. Norton Press. 4rd Edition.

Each of the required books are available at the Campus Bookstore, and are also widely available on your favorite bookstores on the web. Used copies are perfectly acceptable, and you may also use the 12th or 13th edition of *American Government: Power and Purpose*, if you so choose, but you will be responsible for identifying the appropriate sections for readings where page numbers differ from the 14th edition. You must obtain the 4th edition of *Readings in American Politics* to have access to all assigned readings on the syllabus.

The remainder of the course readings will be academic political science articles and popular newspaper and magazine articles drawn from the web. These readings will be posted on onQ. Refer to the course calendar, onQ notifications, and emails from the instructor for updates on the reading schedule and where to find materials.

Readings on the syllabus should be read BEFORE the class for which they are listed.

Course Requirements

Reading and writing assignments are central to the course. Keeping up with the syllabus is essential to success in the course. Grades are *earned* based on the quality of work submitted. You are encouraged to see me if you are unsure about the expectations for any assignment. I will go over the paper assignments in detail when they are assigned. Use of office hours is highly encouraged—students who come to office hours to discuss assignments are much more likely to succeed.

Written Work: There are four written components of the course. There will be one midterm exam and one final exam, as well as two short papers. Both papers will involve applying the tools of political science to evaluate contemporary problems in American politics. The first paper will be assigned on **September 24** and due on **October 10**. The second paper will be Assigned on **October 31** and due on **November 19**. Papers will be 3-4 pages in length. See the assignment sheet for additional details.

All grading of written work will be done anonymously. This means that written work must be submitted with a **title page on which your name appears**, and then **your name should not appear on any other page**. All written work should include page numbers. Plagiarism will not be tolerated—see Academic Integrity in Course Policies, below.

Grades will be assigned based on the following rubric:

Paper #1	15%
Midterm Exam	25%
Paper #2	15%
Final Exam.....	30%
Attendance and Participation	15%

Final Exam: The exam dates for each Term are listed on the Faculty of Arts and Science webpage under “Important Dates.” Student exam schedules for the Fall Term are posted via SOLUS immediately prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Students should delay finalizing any travel plans until after the examination schedule has been posted. Exams will not be moved or deferred to accommodate employment, travel/holiday plans or flight reservations. Also, as indicated in Academic Regulation 8.3, students must write all final examination in all on-campus courses on the Kingston campus.

Grading: In this course, some components will be graded using numerical percentage marks. Other components will receive letter grades, which for purposes of calculating your course average will be translated into numerical equivalents using the Faculty of Arts and Science approved scale (see below). Your course average will then be converted to a final letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale (see below).

Arts & Science Letter Grade Input Scheme

Assignment mark	Numerical value for calculation of final mark
A+	93
A	87
A-	82
B+	78
B	75
B-	72
C+	68
C	65
C-	62
D+	58
D	55
D-	52
F48 (F+)	48
F24 (F)	24
F0 (0)	0

Queen's Official Grade Conversion Scale

Grade	Numerical Course Average (Range)
A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	49 and below

All grading of written work will be done anonymously. This means that **written work must be submitted with a title page on which your name appears, and then your name should not appear on any other page**. If you have any questions about written assignments, either before or after they are due, you are welcome to speak with me.

Grade appeals: Grades may be appealed in rare circumstances. To do so, you should submit a clean copy of the paper to me, along with an explanation for the reason why you think you deserve a higher grade than you received (1 page). I will then re-grade the paper from scratch. This means that you could receive a grade that is lower, higher, or the same as the grade originally assigned.

Turnitin: This course makes use of Turnitin, a third-party application that helps maintain standards of excellence in academic integrity. Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to through onQ to Turnitin. In doing so, students' work will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism.

Turnitin is a suite of tools that provide instructors with information about the authenticity of submitted work and facilitates the process of grading. Turnitin compares submitted files against its extensive database of content, and produces a similarity report and a similarity score for each assignment. A similarity score is the percentage of a document that is similar to content held within the database. Turnitin does not determine if an instance of plagiarism has occurred. Instead, it gives instructors the information they need to determine the authenticity of work as a part of a larger process.

Please read [Turnitin's Privacy Pledge, Privacy Policy, and Terms of Service](#), which governs users' relationship with Turnitin. Also, please note that Turnitin uses cookies and other tracking technologies; however, in its service contract with Queen's Turnitin has agreed that neither Turnitin nor its third-party partners will use data collected through cookies or other tracking technologies for marketing or advertising purposes. For further information about how you can exercise control over cookies, see [Turnitin's Privacy Policy](#):

Turnitin may provide other services that are not connected to the purpose for which Queen's University has engaged Turnitin. Your independent use of Turnitin's other services is subject solely to Turnitin's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, and Queen's University has no liability for any independent interaction you choose to have with Turnitin.

Notetaking: You are required to take reading notes so that you are prepared to participate in class discussions. You may take notes using whatever format is most useful for you, but using the following format should result in useful notes:

- Evaluate the **source** of the argument. Is this a detached academic source or does the author have an agenda?
- Identify the **argument**. What is the main idea that the author wants to relay to the reader? What assumptions does the author make? Are important terms clearly defined?
- Identify the **evidence**. What kinds of evidence does the author use to support his/her claims? Is this evidence reliable?
- Evaluate the **conclusion**. Are you convinced by the argument? Why or why not?
- Consider the **implications**. If you accept that the authors conclusions are true, what impact does this have on our understanding of American politics? Does it affect who wins and who loses?

Course Policies

Academic integrity: Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see www.academicintegrity.org). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities <http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities>).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1>), on the Arts and Science website (see <http://www.queensu.ca/artsci/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity>), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Laptops and other electronic devices: During class, your jobs are to listen actively, take careful notes, reflect on the concepts we are discussing, and participate in those discussions when you have something to say. None of these jobs requires a laptop, a tablet, or a phone, and the use of such devices during class can be quite distracting to students sitting nearby. Therefore, **no electronics will be permitted in class.**

Late assignment policy: Deadlines will be extended only under unusual circumstances, and only with Dr. Gardner's explicit permission. If you must be absent for one of the exams, you must inform me as early as possible, but **in no case later than two weeks before the exam**. Late papers will be reduced by a third of a grade for each day that they are late.

Academic support: Queen's University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances that are beyond their control and are interfering with their ability to complete academic requirements related to a course for a short period of time, not to exceed three months. Students receiving academic consideration must meet all essential requirements of a course. The Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Students in Extenuating Circumstances was approved at Senate in April, 2017 (see [policy here](#)). Each Faculty has developed a protocol to provide a consistent and equitable approach in dealing with requests for academic consideration for students facing extenuating circumstances.

Reasonable accommodation: Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for people with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. The Senate Policy for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities was approved at Senate in November 2016 (see [policy here](#)). If you are a student with a disability and think you may need academic accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at: <http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/>

Office hours and email communication: My regular office hours are listed above, but you are welcome to make an appointment for some other time. If you just have a quick question, I encourage you to reach me by email. In addition, I will regularly use onQ's announcement and mail feature to contact all members of the class. As such, all students are responsible for regularly checking their Queen's email accounts throughout the semester.

Course Calendar

(This is current plan of how we will progress through the semester. You should *always* consult Blackboard or instructor emails to the class for changes in the schedule.)

Part I: Foundations

Week 1: Course Introduction

September 10: Course Introduction

September 12: The Logic of Politics

Read: AGPP pp. 2-29

RAP 1.2 Mancur Olson, Jr., from *The Logic of Collective Action*

Week 2: The Constitution

September 17: The American Political Tradition

Read: RAP 1.1 John Locke, from *The Second Treatise of Government*

Skim: AGPP A7-A33, The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution of the United States. Pay special attention to Article I, Sections 2-4, 7, & 8; Article II, Sections 1 & 3, Article III, Section 1; Article V; and Amendments I-X.

September 19: The Constitution I: Democracy and the Constraint

Read: AGPP pp. 30-46

AGPP pp. A34-39 James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 10

AGPP pp. A39-43 James Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 51

Week 3: The Constitution/Congress

September 24: The Constitution II: Institutions and Federalism

PAPER #1 ASSIGNED

Read: AGPP pp. 46-62, skim 62-71, 72-92

RAP 2.3 Robert A. Dahl, from *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*

Part II: National Institutions

September 26: Congress I: Parties and Elections in Congress

Read: AGPP pp. 182-202, 490-506

RAP 5.1 David Mayhew, from *Congress: The Electoral Connection*

Week 4: Legislative Decisionmaking

October 1: Congress II: Legislative Decision Making

Read: AGPP pp. 202-205, skim 206-224, read 224-234, skim 242-239
RAP 5.3 Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, from *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*

October 3: Congress II: Legislative Decisionmaking, continued

In-class activity: Legislative Simulation

Week 5: The Presidency

October 10: The Presidency

PAPER #1 Due

Read: AGPP pp. 240-261, skim 261-270, read 270-289
RAP 6.1 Richard E. Neustadt, from *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*
RAP 6.5 Samuel Kernell, from *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*

Week 6: The Bureaucracy

October 15: The Bureaucracy

Read: AGPP pp. 290-299, 306-318, 325-327
RAP 7.3 Daniel P. Carpenter, from *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*

October 17: MIDTERM EXAM

Week 6: The Judiciary

October 22: The Federal Judiciary: Powers and Organization

Read: AGPP pp. 328-351
The Federalist #78 (Blackboard)

October 24: Supreme Court Decision Making

Read: AGPP pp. 351-375
onQ Lee Epstein and Jack Knight, from *Choices Justices Make*

Part III: Mass Behavior and Elections

Week 7: Behavior and Opinion

October 29: Citizens and Politics

Read: AGPP pp. 376-404
RAP 9.2 John R. Zaller, from *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*

October 31: Public Opinion

PAPER #2 ASSIGNED

Read: AGPP pp. 405-425 (419-422 optional until Week 11)
RAP 9.1 Arthur Lupia and Matthew D. McCubbins, from *The Democratic Dilemma*

Week 8: Interest Groups and Media

November 5: Interest Groups

Read: AGPP pp. 538-548, 555-577

November 7: The Media

Read: AGPP pp. 578-580, 596-609
RAP 14.1 Matthew A. Baum, from *Soft News Goes to War*

Week 9: Campaigns and Elections

November 12 & 14: Campaigns and Elections

In-class activity: Analyzing campaign ads
Read: AGPP pp. 426-455, 470-489
BB Darrell M. West, from *Air Wars*

Week 10: Voting

November 19: Voter Choice

PAPER #2 DUE
Read: AGPP pp. 455-469

November 21: Voting and Participation

Read: onQ Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer, “Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment”

Week 11: Policy

November 26: Representation

Read: AGPP pp. 419-422, 488
onQ James Stimson, Michael B. McKuen, and Robert S. Erikson, from “Dynamic Representation”
RAP 13.5 Achen and Bartels, from *Democracy for Realists:*

November 28: Civil Rights and Liberties

Read: AGPP pp. 104-112, 142-164, 179-181

RAP 8.1 Gerald N. Rosenberg, from *The Hollow Hope*