

PSC 1002
Introduction to American Politics and Government

Fall 2016
M + W, 9:35–10:50 am
Funger 103

Professor Danny Hayes
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Monroe 471
M + W, 2:00–3:30 pm (and by appointment)
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M, 11:00 am–12:30 pm + F, 2:30–4:00 pm

COURSE OVERVIEW AND GOALS

This course provides a survey of the political processes and institutions of American government.

I know what you might be thinking—that sounds boring. Let me assure you, this course will be anything but. The bulk of U.S. political history has been characterized by drama and conflict, and our investigation of American politics will include a focus on topics like the civil rights movement, polarization in the U.S. Congress, the 2016 presidential election (Trump!), and hotly contested debates over immigration, terrorism, and gun rights, to name a few. Controversial, always; boring, never.

Each of these political issues and events—and most others—can be seen most clearly through the lens of the historical and institutional development of the American political system. Our lectures, readings, and discussions will address the Constitution, Congress, the presidency, the judiciary, political parties, the media, and public opinion, among other topics. In all of this, our focus will be on how the basic features of American government illuminate the stories and events that appear in the news that we encounter every day, be it ongoing debates over gun rights, immigration reform, or use of force by the police.

This course, which satisfies GPAC requirements in critical thinking, has several goals:

- To provide you with a basic understanding of the United States’ political development and institutions, and to help you understand why our government works the way it does
- To help you develop familiarity a variety of political science theories, and their conceptual underpinnings, used to explain American politics
- To help you become a savvy analyst of politics, and a thoughtful consumer of political news

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

We will evaluate your success in achieving these goals with the following criteria:

- *Quizzes.* In almost every class, there will be a quiz of 5 questions. The quizzes will cover material from that day’s assigned reading and the previous lecture. There will be 25 quizzes over the course of the semester. We will drop your lowest 5 scores and average the rest. Your quiz average will constitute 75% 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 class in psychology, 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

¹ Pennebaker JW, Gosling SD, Ferrell JD (2013). “Daily Online Testing in Large Classes: Boosting College Performance while Reducing Achievement Gaps.” PLoS ONE 8(11): e79774. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0079774.

study habits that are beneficial in other courses, not just the course that assigns quizzes.

Frequent quizzes also help us ascertain how well certain concepts are understood, so that we can adjust the content of lectures accordingly.

Because we're giving you 5 get-out-of-jail-free cards by dropping your lowest quizzes, there will be **no makeup quizzes**. If you miss a quiz, you will receive a zero.

- *Final Exam*. At the end of the semester, you will take an exam that will assess whether you have acquired a basic knowledge of the structures, functions, and development of American politics and government. The final will consist of essay questions and short answers. It will be cumulative—that is, you will be asked to draw on material from the entire semester. We will hand out a study guide before the final. The exam will be worth 25% of your grade.

A makeup will be given only in extreme circumstances, such as illness or family emergency. In order to qualify for a makeup, you must (1) notify us *before* the exam and (2) provide documentation of the illness or emergency. If you fail to do either of these things, you will not be eligible to take a makeup.

The components of your final grade will be as follows:

- Quizzes: 75%
- Final exam: 25%

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).

READING

There are two required books. In the course schedule below, you are expected to complete the reading before the class for which it is assigned. You must acquire the listed editions of both books. There are a handful of supplemental materials available online, with the URLs listed below. You are also responsible for keeping up with the news.

Books

Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2016. *The Logic of American Politics*, 7th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Kernell, Samuel, and Steven S. Smith. 2016. *Principles and Practice of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 6th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

The News

It should come as no surprise in a political science course that you are expected to keep up with the news. Our discussions during lecture frequently will touch on current events, so it is critical that you keep apprised of major political goings-on. 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* blog about politics and political science of which I'm an editor.

OUT-OF-CLASS LEARNING

According to the University, in a 15 week semester, including exam week, students in a 3-credit course like this one are expected to spend at least 2.5 hours in direct instruction and 5 hours of independent learning.

Independent learning could include completing reading assignments, studying for quizzes and preparing for the final exam, and reviewing course material.

UNIVERSITY POLICY ON RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

- 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.
- Faculty should extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.
- Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday should arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at 202-994-8250 in Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information: <https://disabilitysupport.gwu.edu/>.

Mental Health Services

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information, go to counselingcenter.gwu.edu/ or call 202-994-5300.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY CODE

Thinking of cheating? Don't do it. Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the University's Academic Integrity Code, available here: studentconduct.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

Each student is strongly encouraged to participate in class discussions. In any classroom situation that involves discussion and critical thinking, particularly about political ideas, there are bound to be many differing viewpoints. Students may not only disagree with each other at times, but the students and instructor may also find that they have disparate views on sensitive topics. It is our hope that these differences will enhance class discussion and create an atmosphere where all of us will be encouraged to think and learn from each other. Therefore, be assured that students' grades will not be affected by any beliefs or ideas expressed in class or in assignments.

SHOULD THERE BE AN ALIEN INVASION OR SOME SUCH

If we experience an emergency during class time, we will try to stay at this location until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave the classroom, we will meet in front of Fungler Hall on G Street in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

TECHNOLOGY

You must bring a wi-fi-enabled device to every class session so that you can take the quizzes through Blackboard. But that is the only time you are permitted to use it. As great as technology is – how else would we get the cat videos? – the fact is that laptops, smart phones, and other devices are a distraction to your classmates and to me. Not only that, but [research](#) has shown that we learn more when we take notes by hand.

So other than for the quizzes, you may not use electronic devices in class. If you have a unique reason for needing a laptop to take notes, please contact me.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Subject to change as the semester proceeds)

L=*Logic of American Politics*, 7th Edition | P=*Principles and Practice of American Politics*, 6th Edition

Date	Topic	Reading/Listening/Viewing	Quiz?
8/29	Introduction	None	No quiz
8/31	Why Government?/The Founding	L: Ch. 1, Ch. 2 (pp. 38-53) P: Olson (1-1)	No quiz
9/5	No class: Labor Day	L: Constitution of the United States (pp. 641-652)	No quiz
9/7	The Founding and Constitution	L: Ch. 2 (pp. 53-80) P: Brutus (2-1); Madison (2-2 and 2-3)	Quiz
9/12	Federalism	L: Ch. 3	Quiz
9/14	Federalism	P: Kettl (3-1) Read two articles: “Protestors in Oregon Seek to End Policy that Shaped West” and “Why the Government Owns So Much Land in the West”	Quiz
9/19	Civil Liberties	L: Ch. 5	Quiz
9/21	Civil Liberties	P: Supreme Court (5-2) Listen to Radiolab, “Eye in the Sky”	Quiz
9/26	Civil Rights	L: Ch. 4	Quiz
9/28	Civil Rights	P: Levitt (4-2) Read Menand, “The Color of Law”	Quiz
10/3	Congress	L: Ch. 6	Quiz
10/5	Congress	P: Smith (6-1); Binder (6-2)	Quiz
10/10	The Presidency	L: Ch. 7	Quiz
10/12	The Presidency	P: Neustadt (7-1) Watch an interview with political scientist Francis Lee	Quiz
10/17	The Judiciary	L: Ch. 9	Quiz
10/19	The Judiciary	P: Hamilton (9-3); Carp and Manning (9-4)	Quiz
10/24	No class: Fall break	None	No quiz
10/26	The Bureaucracy	L: Ch. 8	Quiz
10/31	Political Parties	L: Ch. 12	Quiz
11/2	Political Parties	Read Masket, “Why Political Parties Never Die”	Quiz
11/7	Interest Groups	L: Ch. 13	Quiz

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Date	Topic	Reading	Quiz?
11/9	Interest Groups	P: Schattschneider (13-1) Read Burns, " K Street and the Status Quo. "	Quiz
11/14	The Media	L: Ch. 14	Quiz
11/16	The Media	P: Hamilton (14-1) Read Hayes, " When the Senate Gun Control Bill Died, So Did the Story "	Quiz
11/21	Public Opinion	L: Ch. 10	Quiz
11/23	No class: Thanksgiving break	Eating	No quiz
11/28	Public Opinion	P: Asher (10-1) Read Cassidy, " Is America an Oligarchy? "	Quiz
11/30	Campaigns and Elections	L: Ch. 11	Quiz
12/5	Campaigns and Elections	To be announced	Quiz
12/7	Campaigns and Elections	P: Bartels (12-2)	Quiz
12/12	Wrap-up and exam review	None! Geez, finally.	No quiz
TBA	Final Exam	Cumulative final	It's like a big quiz