

American National Government – Political Science #101

Illinois Wesleyan University

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About the scope of the class:

This course surveys the major institutions and processes of American government and politics: the Constitution, federalism, Congress, the presidency, judiciary, and executive bureaucracy, political parties, elections, and participation, the media, and public opinion. In this course students will develop an understanding of contemporary practices and gain some exposure to the historical roots of those practices. It is my expectation that you will come away from this course with a good understanding of how political institutions shape popular preferences and vice versa, and that you will become a much more critical consumer of political information in the American context.

About the style of the class:

This is, for the most part, not a lecture course. Most of our class sessions will be spent in discussions, activities, and student responses to materials. This course design requires that you keep up on the readings and assignments and that you come to class every time ready to respond to these assignments. You will need to check our Moodle page often, as you will find many of our class materials there. We will do several small-group activities that will require you to meet with peers outside of class. You will need to make time in your schedule for these meetings. Pleading that you are too busy will not be a successful strategy. Regular class attendance and punctuality are vitally important. Some weeks' reading assignments are longer than others. I encourage you to read ahead and take careful notes from those readings, in addition to the notes you take in class. I have high expectations, and many of you will find this to be a very demanding class. I very much encourage office visits. Even better is to ask those questions in class so that everyone else can benefit from the discussion.

About grades and academic integrity:

Students' grades will be based on 3 exams, several individual/small group projects, and class participation. Each of the exams is worth 25% of the final course grade. Performance on individual and small group projects will be worth 15% of the course grade. Class participation counts for another 10% of the course grade. Thoughtful and regular involvement in our discussions is crucial to your and our collective success. Before each exam I will make available a list of questions resembling those you will face on the up-coming exam. This will give you a framework for study and should be taken as a rough indicator of the level of difficulty and style of the questions that will appear on the exams. Taking an exam at any time other than in class on the designated exam date requires my advance approval.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows: 90-100% = A/A-; 80-89% = B+/B/B-; 70-79% = C+/C/C-; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F. The boundaries for plus and minus grades typically fall about three percentage points on either side of the decile. Taking an incomplete in this course is very strongly discouraged. Under no circumstances will a student be granted a grade of incomplete without discussing the matter with me well in advance of the end of the semester.

I am aware that academic dishonesty has become common at some institutions. While I am sure that very few, if any, Illinois Wesleyan students would cheat on class assignments, the university's policy and my policy on academic dishonesty bear repeating. Academic dishonesty fundamentally undermines the mission of the university and cheapens our collective enterprise. Students caught cheating on an exam or engaging in plagiarism on written assignments will receive a failing grade for the course. In these cases I will also file a formal complaint with the administration. Per the university's academic dishonesty policy,

the administration will move to expel from the university any student who is the object of two such substantiated complaints. See the university catalog for further explanation.

About technology:

If your cell phone goes off while in class I will expect you to leave promptly, disturbing others as little as possible on your way out, and to not return until the next class meeting. You will need a portable data storage device for this class. Check your IWU e-mail account regularly, as I will send you materials often. Nearly all of my class presentations will be accompanied by PowerPoint files, all of which will be available on our Moodle page, usually about one week in advance of that material being presented in class. You may find it helpful to access these files during class, or to bring paper copies of them with you, to help your in-class note taking. Laptop computers are welcome in class, though you must not allow non-relevant applications to become a distraction to you or others.

About course readings:

One text is required and available at the university bookstore:

Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives, Ken Kollman (W.W. Norton, 2010)

I have also placed a variety of other readings on electronic reserve at the library's website (password: Washington). Some are required, and others are optional. The required readings appear below, with the underlined selections being those on e-reserve.

Week of ...	Topics	Readings
	Course overview	
	Foundations of American Government	Declaration of Independence (internet) Federalist Papers #10 & #51 (Kollman 2.1, 2.2) <u>Katznelson, Kessselman & Draper, chapt. 1</u>
	The Constitution (small group presentations T & Th)	The Constitution (internet) Kollman 2.3, 2.4
	Federalism Church & State exercise <u>7th</u>	Kollman 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 <u>Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, <i>We the People</i>, shorter edition, ch. 3</u> Kollman 4.3 (<i>Roe v. Wade</i>)
	Congress	<u>Patterson, <i>The American Democracy</i>, 9th edition, ch. 11 ("Congress")</u> Kollman 5.1, 5.2, 5.3
	Congress	Document on how a bill becomes a law (U.S. House of Reps), available at: http://www.house.gov/house/Tying_it_all.shtml
	<i>First exam: (covering all material to date)</i> The presidency	Kollman 6.1, 6.2, 6.4, 6.5
	The executive branch bureaucracy	Cindy <u>Skrzycki, chapter 2</u>

	<p>Alison Berry, “Forest Policy up in Smoke” available at: http://www.perc.org/pdf/Forest%20Policy%20Up%20in%20Smoke.pdf Hugh Heclo, “Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment” Patterson, <i>The American Democracy</i>, 9th ed., ch. 13 (“The Federal Bureaucracy”) (optional: if you feel you need more info)</p>
The federal judiciary	<p>Federalist paper #78 (internet) Kollman 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4 (internet): Thomas’s concurring opinion in <i>Gonzales v Carhart</i> (2007); Stevens’s dissent in <i>DC v. Heller</i> (2008), up through section II</p>
The federal judiciary	<p><u>Scalia and Breyer essays</u> <u>Posner essay</u> <u>Meese essay</u></p>
<i>Second exam: (covering all material since first exam)</i>	
Political parties	<p><u>Campbell essay</u> Kollman 12.1, 13.3, 13.4</p>
Voting, elections, participation	<p>Kollman 12.2, 13.1 <u>Putnam essays 1 & 2</u> Abromowitz essay, “The Obama Generation” (search at: www.rasmussenreports.com)</p>
Interest groups Public opinion	<p>Kollman 11.1, 11.2 Kollman 9.1</p>
Public opinion	<p><u>Page & Shapiro essay</u> <u>Zaller, epilogue</u></p>
The media	<p>Kollman 14.1, 14.2</p>
The media	<p>Canon, Coleman, Mayher, <i>Faultlines: ..., 2nd ed.</i>, ch. 7</p>
Course evaluations Summing up	<p>Student presentations</p>

Final exam: emphasis on last portion of the course