

## **POLS 101: Introduction to American Government and Politics**

Class meets Online Monday through Friday

Instructor: Dr. I.M. Professor

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Office: Some Room in a Building, Norfolk Campus

Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11:00 to 12:00 in person and on Skype. My handle is XXXX, I am in my office most days of the week. Feel free to stop by. You can also e-mail me any time (response in 24 hours or less is my goal) or post a public question in the Office Hours discussion board.

**Course Description:** *Our goal in this course is to raise and pursue answers to a set of fundamental questions about politics in the context of American politics. How does the government work? What role do citizens play? What are the consequences of particular institutions for the functioning of the government? How might the public interest be defined, and how effectively does the government achieve it?*

The United States was a revolutionary experiment when initiated more than two centuries ago, and the US Constitution is one of the most enduring in the world. Why has American representative democracy endured? What are the tensions and challenges it faces, and how have people attempted to resolve these challenges?

We will work our way through a superb and well-written text, as well as newspapers, political analyses and key historical documents. Students will participate in individual and group simulations of political decisions and processes. In addition, students are expected to actively participate in discussions of politics and course material, including the American Politics Roundtable, and other class discussions.

### **By the end of this course students will achieve the following objectives:**

Demonstrate a detailed, systematic, and analytical understanding of the American political system – how it works, and major controversies.

Expand capacity to use theory, logic, and evidence make and evaluate arguments concerning the American political system and politics.

Pursue answers to fundamental questions of government and governance, and develop a better understanding of political positions, choices, and tradeoffs.

Be better prepared to effectively play future roles in politics as citizens, policy advocates, voters, and/or teachers.

### **Readings:**

*Required:*

*The American Political System* by Ken Kollman. ISBN 978-0-393-92696-5. The book website is at <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/polisci/american-political-system/> which includes summaries videos, self-quizzes, study plans, and more.

Additional short reading assignments will be available in each module.

## **Grading and Assignments**

Quizzes / attendance / roundtable 25%

Mid-term exams: 34 percent

Short papers: 21 percent

Final Exam: 20%

*Exams:* This class will have two multiple-choice in-class exams, and one multiple choice final exam. Multiple choice questions on the exams will include items that require thought, problem solving, and application. The ‘midterm’ exams will cover all course topics since the previous exam. The final exam will include coverage of all course topics, with some additional emphasis on the last part of the course.

*Short papers:* There will be three short paper assignments in this class. Each assignment is designed to help you master particular analytical tools in the course. All three assignments are attached to the back of the syllabus.

1. Checks and balances.
2. Spatial modeling.
3. Electoral institutions and outcomes.

*Quizzes:* Weekly quizzes will test your knowledge of course material. Quizzes will be on Blackboard unless other provisions are made (e.g. Respondus), and each will typically cover one module. I will drop the lowest two quiz grades when calculating final grades. Quizzes will help you evaluate your learning in the course and prepare for exams. In addition to in class quizzes, you may find it useful to access the <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/polisci/american-political-system/> textbook website for additional quizzes, outlines, exercises and simulations.

*American Politics Round Table:* Every week one thread of the discussion board involves a discussion of recent developments in American Politics and how those relate to American politics. Everyone is expected to post a link and an initial analysis of this issue and how it relates to that week’s topic (or a previous week’s topic). The analysis should be at least a paragraph (100 words) and should be specific about drawing connections. Don’t just summarize. Then each class member will respond to at least two other posts. Again, draw connections, and try to advance the analysis. The goal is to link theories about politics to what is happening now.

## **Course Policies**

Students are expected to attend class by logging into the website, to have read the assigned material, and to participate in the class discussions.

Students are expected to abide by the Classroom Code of Behavior (see below).

Extra credit: Up to five points of extra credit work may receive credit. Extra credit points are added to your final weighted grade. Thus, if your final weighted grade is an 86 (a B) five points of extra credit would boost it to a 91 (an A-). I will not develop specific extra-credit assignments, but I will consider your proposed extra-credit work. All extra credit work must be turned in by the last day of class to receive consideration. Examples of extra credit work from previous years: setting up an internship with a local member of Congress or political campaign; writing a paper on a student-selected topic; attending a speech or watching a politics-relevant movie and writing up a brief analysis of the experience, and watching a movie about politics with an eye towards writing a reflection to hand in. Some students have even played the election simulation game Election Day (see the election topic below) and written a brief essay about how they won (or lost) and what they learned. Assignments are evaluated on the basis of how much you did, how much you learned, and how well your report is written.

Late work: If you are unable to take an exam or turn in an assignment because of medical or family emergency, please let me know by telephone or e-mail ahead of time, and I will do my best to accommodate your needs. Other work completed late will only be able to earn partial credit at best. Assignments turned in one day late will automatically lose five points (1/2 letter grade). You will lose two percent of your assignment grade for every subsequent day that the assignment is late. Quizzes cannot be made up, but I do drop the lowest quiz grade when calculating your final grade.

Attendance. In an online class attendance means being present online and interacting with the course materials and your fellow students. Plan to spend at least an hour and half a day working on this class. Attendance and participation will be used to make choices about marginal grades.

Honor System: “University students shall conduct themselves in a manner compatible with the University’s educational mission... Any student who conspires to commit or who participates in an action that results in a violation of the Code of Student Conduct ... shall be disciplined accordingly.” (Old Dominion University Catalog, 2004-2006 pages 14-15).

Plagiarism: “A student will have committed plagiarism if he or she reproduces someone else’s work without acknowledging its source, or if a second source is cited which the student has not cited or used. Examples of plagiarism include: submitting a research paper from a commercial research service, the Internet, or from another student as if it were original work; making simple changes to borrowed materials while leaving the organization, content or phraseology intact; or copying material from a source, supplying proper documentation, but leaving out quotation marks. Plagiarism also occurs in a

group project if one or more of the members of the group does none of the group's work and participates in none of the group's activities, but attempts to take credit for the work of the group." ([Student Disciplinary Policies and Procedures](#)). I take plagiarism very seriously.

**Disabilities:** Students with disabilities are urged to contact Disability Services. "Reasonable accommodations are made for students with visual, hearing, mobility, learning and other impairments. Specific information about services may be obtained by calling (757) 683-4655."

**Sexual Harassment:** It is the policy of Old Dominion University to provide students and employees with an environment for learning and working that is free of sexual harassment, whether by members of the same sex or the opposite sex, which is prohibited by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. I expect all students to understand and abide by the University's sexual harassment policy and procedures.

### **Course Evaluation**

The syllabus is a contract between the professor and students regarding course requirements, expectations, and assessment, which establishes my obligations to you in teaching this class. I also take this contract to include your obligation to evaluate the course at the end of the semester. Student evaluations provide important feedback for me, and they are essential for measuring teaching effectiveness in the profession. Chairs and Deans see course evaluations every year in reviewing faculty performance, and committees at all levels of the University rely on the evaluations in making decisions regarding faculty retention, promotion and tenure. ODU takes your input very seriously, and a high rate of student response is necessary for a meaningful assessment of teaching effectiveness. Therefore, I ask you commit yourself to filling out the online course evaluation when prompted at the end of the semester.

### **A Classroom Code of Behavior**

Success in the classroom depends upon mutual respect among students and between students and their professors.

In order to everyone to enjoy and benefit from the class, PLEASE:

- Plan to put in at least 6 hours a week on this class outside of class time. Remember, the more you put in to the class, the more you get out. Don't cheat yourself.
- Prepare for class:
  - Read the assigned chapter, newspaper, etc.
  - Participate in modules, take notes
  - Go home, review your notes, write your reflections, questions and comments.

- Reread the assigned chapter.
- Take the practice quizzes before taking the recorded quizzes.
- Be courteous. Even though you will typically be interacting with classmates through the internet, they are still people.

(Thanks to Chris Drake, Professor of Geography (emeritus) for permission to reprint and modify this code of classroom behavior).

### **Internet-Access Readings**

These readings supplement the main text, and will be a starting place for class discussion. Questions about these readings may appear on quizzes or exams. Some of these articles require you to either be on the ODU campus computer network, or to log in to library journal access through the library proxy server (<http://proxy.lib.odu.edu/login>).

#### **Topic 1**

Does constitutional monarchy produce better government? ODU sports teams are the “Monarchs” so with tongue at least partly in cheek, this article investigates.

[Zog for Albania, Edward for Estonia, and Monarchs for All the Rest? The Royal Road to Prosperity, Democracy, and World Peace](#)

Jeremy D. Mayer; Lee Sigelman

*PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 31, No. 4. (Dec., 1998), pp. 771-774.

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1049->

[0965%28199812%2931%3A4%3C771%3AZFAEFE%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1049-0965%28199812%2931%3A4%3C771%3AZFAEFE%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z)

#### **Topic 2**

The Constitutional separation of powers, indirect election of presidents and Senators, and the creation of judiciary that serves during good behavior were arguably efforts to prevent tyranny of the majority. Madison lays these barriers out in his argument in Federalist 10 and 51. But De Tocqueville makes some interesting arguments to the contrary. What do you think? In what ways does American democracy experience “tyranny of the majority” and in what ways not? Try to think of examples as you read the excerpt and prepare for class.

Alexis De Tocqueville [Democracy in America](#). Begin at the heading titled: TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY., and continue until the heading titled: EFFECTS OF THE TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY UPON THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE AMERICANS

#### **Topic 3**

The two readings for this topic are both about the appropriate degree to which decisions should be made by the national government or the states. Both make arguments that build upon course ideas... but they come to rather different conclusions. What goals does each author think government should achieve? How does federalism interact with potential achievement of those goals?

[Federalism as an Ideal Political Order and an Objective for Constitutional Reform](#)

James M. Buchanan

*Publius*, Vol. 25, No. 2. (Spring, 1995), pp. 19-27.

Stable URL: [http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0048-](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0048-5950%28199521%2925%3A2%3C19%3AFAAIPO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B)

[5950%28199521%2925%3A2%3C19%3AFAAIPO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B](http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0048-5950%28199521%2925%3A2%3C19%3AFAAIPO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-B)

[The Devil in Devolution](#) By [John D. Donahue](#) <http://prospect.org/article/devil-devolution>

#### **Topic 4**

Thomas Jefferson's theory of individual liberty as laid out in the Declaration of Independence has been taken up by groups denied life, liberty, or the pursuit of happiness throughout American history. How are different groups using the theory? What would Jefferson make of it? How does use of a theory of natural liberty/law constrain or advantage? Can you think of other groups that have made similar claims?

[The Seneca Falls Declaration](http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html) (<http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html>)

["I Have a Dream Speech" Martin Luther King](#)

(<http://www.archives.gov/press/exhibits/dream-speech.pdf>)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UV1fs8lAbg>

#### **Topic 5**

In this excerpt from his book [Congressional Government](#), Woodrow Wilson describes the organization of Congress as it existed 100 years ago. How is Congress organized? What effects does this organization have on the individual member? Why does Wilson think it is organized this way? How can you link this reading to the changes in Congressional organization described by Kollman— has Congress really changed?

(<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=794>)

#### **Topic 6**

In [Federalist 69](#) Alexander Hamilton discussed the nature and scope of presidential power. <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa69.htm>. What powers does Hamilton emphasize? What limits? Has his conception of presidential power concerning foreign policy and war held up over time?

During the civil war, Abraham Lincoln developed the a “prerogative” approach to presidential power that justified violation of some provisions of the Constitution in order

to preserve the union.

<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/hodges.htm>

President Bush exercised presidential power aggressively. This article “[Bush challenges hundreds of laws](#)” discusses some of the concerns this raised.

<http://global.factiva.com/redirect/default.aspx?P=sa&NS=16&AID=9VIV000400&an=BSTNGB0020060501e24u0000x&cat=a&ep=ASI>

## **Topic 7**

Today many of the people doing work on behalf of the federal government do not work directly for the government. Janine Wedel argues that this creates challenges and dangers in “[Federalist No. 70. Where Does the Public Service Begin and End.](#)”

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1540-6210.2011.02471.x/pdf>.

Arguing partly contrary to Wedel, the [Cato Institute Handbook for Policymakers](#) argues that more government organizations and assets should be privatized.

<http://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/serials/files/cato-handbook-policymakers/2009/9/hb111-6.pdf>

## **Topic 8**

For two sharply contrasting views of how judges should interpret the Constitution, see Stephen Breyer’s speech “Our Democratic Constitution”

[http://www.supremecourt.gov/publicinfo/speeches/viewsspeeches.aspx?Filename=sp\\_10-22-01.html](http://www.supremecourt.gov/publicinfo/speeches/viewsspeeches.aspx?Filename=sp_10-22-01.html), and Justice Antonin Scalia’s speech “Constitutional Interpretation the Old Fashioned Way”

[http://www.cfif.org/htdocs/freedomline/current/guest\\_commentary/scalia-constitutional-speech.htm](http://www.cfif.org/htdocs/freedomline/current/guest_commentary/scalia-constitutional-speech.htm). Or watch these two justices debate the issues in a Supreme Court Historical Society program (<http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Intenta>). What ambiguities do critics of the originalist perspective find in the Constitution? How do critics of the Living Constitution frame their arguments? Can justices avoid having their own views shape their decisions? Should they? What role if any should public opinion and changing standards play in constitutional interpretation?

NOT MODIFIED FOR ONLINE BEYOND THIS POINT!!!

## Class Outline

Dates	Topic	Assigned Reading	Assignments
August 26-28 Note: No class on August 30: Professor will be in Chicago for a conference.	1. Introduction	<u>Kollman</u> Chapter 1 <u>Playing Politics</u> : Preface and Game 1: <i>State of Nature</i> <u>The Declaration of Independence</u> (Kollman appendix) Loeb Introduction (1-19)	
September 4-6	2. Constituting a Government	<u>Kollman</u> Chapter 2 <u>Playing Politics</u> Game 2: <i>The Great Compromise</i> The US Constitution and Articles of Confederation (Kollman appendix). Online: <a href="#">Democracy in America</a> . Begin at the heading titled: TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY., and continue until the heading titled: EFFECTS OF THE TYRANNY OF THE MAJORITY UPON THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE AMERICANS Loeb Chapter 1	Quiz 1 (9/6)
September 9-13	3. Federalism and Separation of Powers	<u>Kollman</u> Chapter 3 Federalist 51 (Kollman appendix) Online: <a href="#">Federalism as an Ideal Political Order and an Objective for Constitutional Reform</a> <a href="#">The Devil in Devolution</a> Loeb Chapter 2	Homework 1 (9/13)
September 16-20	4. Civil Liberties and Civil Rights	Kollman Chapter 4 Online: <a href="#">The Seneca Falls Declaration</a> <a href="#">"I Have a Dream" Martin Luther King</a> Loeb Chapter 3	Quiz 2 (9/20)
September 23	<b>Exam 1</b>	The exam will focus on material covered in class, homework, and quizzes.	
September 25	Spatial Modeling	Charles Stewart III Analyzing Congress Chapter 1 (on reserve – see class website for link)	
September 27 – October 2	5. Congress	Kollman Chapter 5 <u>Playing Politics</u> Game 5: <i>Lawmaking</i> Online: <a href="#">Congressional Government</a> Loeb Chapter 4	
October 4 – 9	6. Presidency	Kollman Chapter 6 <u>Playing Politics</u> Game 6: <i>Veto</i> Online: <a href="#">Federalist 69</a> , <a href="#">Bush challenges hundreds of laws</a> Loeb Chapter 5	Quiz 3. (10/9)
Oct 11-16	7. The Executive Branch	Kollman Chapter 7 <u>Playing Politics</u> Game 7: <i>Budget Cutting</i> <a href="#">Cato Institute Handbook for Policymakers</a> <a href="#">Federalist No. 70. Where Does the Public Service Begin and End</a> Loeb Chapter 6	Homework 2 due: spatial modeling (10/16)
Oct 18-23	8. The Judiciary	Kollman Chapter 8 Video debate: Originalism versus the Living Constitution <a href="http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Intenta">http://www.c-spanvideo.org/program/Intenta</a>	Quiz 4 (10/23)
Oct. 25	<b>Exam 2</b>	The exam will cover material from topics 5-8.	
Oct. 28- 30	9. Public Opinion	Kollman Chapter 9 (Online readings will be posted on Blackboard website) Loeb Chapter 7	
Nov. 1-8	10. Participation	Kollman Chapters 10 and 13	



	and Elections	Download and play Election Day (it's available in the assignments folder -- write about your experiences for extra-credit!) Loeb Chapter 8	
Nov. 11-15	11. Groups and Interests	Kollman Chapter 11 <u>Playing Politics</u> Game 9: Coalition Building (Online readings will be posted on Blackboard website) Loeb Chapter 9 and 11.	Quiz 5 (11/11)
Nov. 18 - 22	12. Political Parties	Kollman Chapter 12 <u>Playing Politics</u> Games 10 and 11: <i>Campaigns and Proportional Representation</i> (Online readings will be posted on Blackboard website)	Homework 3: elections and outcomes. (11/22)
Nov 25 and December 2	13. Economic Policy	Kollman Chapter 15 <u>Playing Politics</u> Game 14	
December 4-6	14. Social Policy	Kollman Chapter 16 <u>Playing Politics</u> Game 15	Quiz 6 (12/6)
Final. Friday December 13, 8:30-11:30 am.	<b>Final Exam</b>	The final is cumulative, though with emphasis on the last part of the course.	



**Assignment 1 – Checks and Balances.** Name: \_\_\_\_\_

*Due September 13<sup>th</sup>.*

**Question 1: The Great Compromise.**

Suppose that the nation of Likeus has five states (A through E).

State	A	B	C	D	E
Number of House Districts	5	7	4	1	2
Preferences of each Representative	XXXXY	XXXXXXY	XYYY	Y	YY
Preferences of each Senator	XX	XX	YY	YY	YY

This nation has adopted a constitution identical to the US constitution. In the Senate each state has two senators. The number of House of Representatives districts varies by state. The Likeus Congress is deciding whether to pass bill X or bill Y where X and Y are alternative ways to address a policy problem. Thus three of the Representatives from state C will vote for Y (unless they have reason not to follow their preferences) and one Representative will vote for X. Both Senators from state C will vote for Y.

Identify the bill (X or Y) that would win in the Likeus House of Representatives, and *explain* why it would win.

Identify the bill that would win in the Likeus Senate, and explain why it would win.

Identify the bill (if any) that would pass under bicameralism, and explain why this outcome occurs.

What does this suggest about the effect of bicameralism on the likelihood that legislation will pass?

Contrast the results in the example above with those in the ‘great compromise’ game we played in class.

**THE ASSIGNMENT CONTINUES ON THE BACK**

**Question 2: Checks and Balances**

Pick one of the following: Supreme Court, Legislative branch, Executive branch. Identify and briefly explain at least three ways that your branch can check/balance other branches of government, and at least three ways that other branches can check/balance the powers of your branch.

**NOTE:** An explanation must say how or why this power acts as a check or balance. Thus, simply stating that “the President can veto legislation passed by Congress” would be enough to identify a check on Congress, but it doesn’t provide enough detail to constitute an explanation of how that check works. You must explain how or why this limits what Congress can do in a brief paragraph.

**Three ways that \_\_\_\_\_ can check/balance other branches of government.**

Identification 1.

Explanation 1.

Identification 2.

Explanation 2.

Identification 3.

Explanation 3.

**Three ways those other branches can check/balance the powers of your branch.**

Identification 1.

Explanation 1.

Identification 2.

Explanation 2.

Identification 3.

Explanation 3.

**Assignment 2. Institutions and Models.**    NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
*Due October 15<sup>th</sup>.*

**Question 1. Median Voter Result**

**A.** Draw a one-dimensional (on a line) spatial model with 7 legislators. Under ‘open rule’ (all amendments can be considered), identify which legislator’s preferences will be closest to the bill that passes, and develop an explanation that demonstrates why this legislator is advantaged?

**B.** What could keep your prediction from being accurate about what law Congress will pass? Identify an institution/rule and/or legislator strategy that could keep your prediction in part A from coming true. Explain how this would happen.

**CONTINUED ON BACK**

## **Question 2. Presidential Veto**

Using the Internet, Kollman, and/or the library, find an example of a presidential veto that was overturned by Congress, and an example of a presidential veto that was not overturned by Congress. Be sure to cite your sources appropriately using MLA or APA format.

In analyzing what happened, you may want to think about whether the presidential veto game provides any insights. In the veto power game we played in class, different status quo locations created different conditions for successful or unsuccessful use of the veto.

1. Identify a veto that was overturned by Congress: What was the bill, who vetoed and why was the veto overturned?

2. Identify a veto that was *not* overturned by Congress: What was the bill, who vetoed and why did Congress fail to overturn the veto?

**Assignment 3: Electoral Institutions and Outcomes**  
*Due November 22<sup>nd</sup>*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Question 1. Assume that there are five House districts in the square ‘state’ below, and that each district has five members. Draw the districts, and identify the largest number of Republican-majority districts that can be produced by partisan gerrymandering?

D	D	R	R	D
D	D	R	R	R
R	D	R	R	D
R	R	D	D	R
D	D	D	R	D

**Number of Republican Districts** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Democratic Districts** \_\_\_\_\_

Assume that there are five House districts in the square ‘state’ below, and that each district has five members. Draw the districts, and identify the largest number of Democratic-majority districts that can be produced by partisan gerrymandering?

D	D	R	R	D
D	D	R	R	R
R	D	R	R	D
R	R	D	D	R
D	D	D	R	D

**Number of Republican Districts** \_\_\_\_\_

**Number of Democratic Districts** \_\_\_\_\_

Does the result you generated above matter? Why or why not?

**CONTINUED ON BACK**

Question 2. Explicitly draw upon your experience with the plurality and proportional representation games to identify and explain a reason why there are only two major political parties in the United States. (*Your answer must analyze both real world and game examples in order to earn full credit.*) Writing this essay may require you to do some outside research. Cite your sources.