

American Federal Government
POS 2041 Section 4976
University of Florida – Summer B 2013

Instructor: Matthew T. Harrigan
Office: 330 Anderson Hall
Office Hours: TH 12:00pm-2:00pm

Classroom: 134 Anderson Hall
Class Period: MTWHF 5 (2:00pm-3:15pm)
Email: matthewtharrigan@ufl.edu

Course Description

This course is designed to teach students how and why the American political system has developed and how and why politicians and citizens behave within that system. Students will learn how our political framework is structured and how it functions as a pluralistic system comprised of various individual and group interests. We will examine and evaluate both the ideals and the realities of our government, the people who run it, and the people who have to live with it.

Topics include the Constitution, federalism, civil rights and liberties, Congress, the presidency and bureaucracy, the federal judiciary, media and public opinion, elections and voting, and parties and interest groups. We will approach these topics with a focus on the logic behind governmental structure and functions and the behavior of the people participating in that government.

To augment our discussion of the facts and figures associated with American politics, we will examine contemporary problems and issues. The timing of this course allows us to review the 2012 presidential and congressional campaigns and elections and to consider government attempts to deal with the recent economic downturn, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the health care and fiscal debates, issues such as gun control and immigration reform, and the implications of each of these for the American political system.

Goals

By the conclusion of this course, students will be able to

- Describe the structure and functions of the institutions of American national government.
- Identify factors in the political environment that affect the public policy process.
- Describe the varying roles of the decision-makers at each level of government, including politicians, voters, and non-voters.
- Explain the impact of competing groups and interests on the public policy process.
- Identify key issues that consistently impact the activities of the national government.

Textbook and Readings

Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, and Thad Kousser. 2012. *The Logic of American Politics*, 5th Edition. Washington: CQ Press.

(Depending on where it is purchased, the book should cost around \$40-50 for a new copy. This edition has been in use for over a year, so numerous used copies should be available around town and online. Older editions may be used if this is deemed too expensive, but be aware that the authors have updated the material in the text to varying degrees over time, and there will be some

real differences in statistics, electoral information, laws, and court cases that could prove problematic when preparing for discussions, quizzes, essays, and exams.)

In addition to the textbook, supplemental readings will be assigned throughout the semester. These readings include news reports, historical documents, summaries of Supreme Court cases, and political commentary. All of these readings will be available online via links in the course schedule section of this syllabus. These readings are also required and will also be used in class discussions, quizzes, and exams.

Responsibilities and Grading

The first component of the semester grade is **attendance and participation**. Students are required to be in class for each of our meetings and prepared to discuss the material. Students will be permitted two unexcused absences for the semester; each subsequent absence will result in a loss of points from the participation grade. Participation includes more than simply attending class: students are expected to have read the assigned material and to actively engage in class discussions.

The second component of the final grade is comprised of short **online quizzes**. Six short quizzes will be given throughout the semester, with questions drawn from the readings and focusing primarily on vocabulary and identification of major concepts. Quizzes will be posted on E-Learning and open for a period of a few days. Once it is begun, each quiz will be open for no longer than 20 minutes (you will only be allowed a single attempt at each quiz, so be sure you have a reliable computer and internet connection before beginning). The overall quiz grade will be the total of the **five** highest quiz scores accumulated throughout the semester. In other words, your lowest quiz score will be dropped from your quiz average.

Additionally, there will be **three exams** in this course, and the average of these exams make up half of the final overall grade. The first exam covers the first third of the course, the logic and nationalization of American politics. The second exam covers the second third, the institutions of American national government. The third exam covers the final portion, on the public's influence on national policy. Each exam will consist of a combination of multiple choice and short answer questions. Exam questions focus on themes and concepts in much more intricate ways than do the simple identification questions in the quizzes, so plan your study habits accordingly.

The final component of the semester grade will be **three short (approximately 1000 words) essays**. Each week, students will be given a question to consider and will be expected to make an argument drawing on that week's readings. Students are required to submit one essay from each of the three segments of the course, but there are 12 potential topics to choose from. Essay questions and due dates can be found in the calendar section of this syllabus. **Essays will be graded based on the clarity of the argument and the use of evidence from both the textbook and the outside readings**. As a check against potential academic dishonesty, students are required to submit their essays to the designated Turn-It-In drop box on our E-Learning webpage. Students may write one additional essay of their choosing for 10 percentage points **extra credit** to be applied toward an exam grade.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Value</u>
Attendance/Participation	10%
Reading Quizzes (5)	15%
Essays (3)	25%
Exams (3)	<u>50%</u>
	100% total

Grading Scale

A (4.00)	90% to 100%
A- (3.67)	88% to 89.9%
B+ (3.33)	86% to 87.9%
B (3.00)	80% to 85.9%
B- (2.67)	78% to 79.9%
C+ (2.33)	76% to 77.9%
C (2.00)	70% to 75.9%
C- (1.67)	68% to 69.9%
D+ (1.33)	66% to 67.9%
D (1.00)	60% to 65.9%
D- (0.67)	58% to 59.9%
E (0.00)	0% to 57.9%

Grades for individual assignments and overall averages will be posted on E-Learning (<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>) throughout the semester.

Due Dates

The dates for essays, quizzes, and exams are final, unless modified by the instructor. Late essays will be accepted with a penalty of one letter grade per day. A missed quiz results in a grade of zero, with no exceptions (as we already drop the lowest quiz grade). If a student is going to be absent for an exam, he or she must notify the instructor prior to the exam to schedule a make-up test date and time. Make-up exams will be permitted only in the most extreme circumstances and with proper notice and documentation. Failure to notify the instructor of an absence on an exam day will result in a grade of zero for the exam.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism

As a UF student, you have agreed to abide by a [set of regulations](#) spelled out specifically in the University's [Student Honor Code](#). Any evidence of cheating or plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment, and an academic dishonesty case report will be filed with the administration. All essays will be checked online for evidence of plagiarism, so be sure to cite all quotations and paraphrasing. For further information, refer to the UF Library's [Guide to Avoiding Plagiarism](#).

Students with Disabilities

In compliance with University of Florida policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability, and I will make whatever accommodations are necessary to assist you. To facilitate this process,

students seeking disability accommodations are required to obtain an accommodation letter from the [Disabilities Resource Center](#) in 0001 Reid Hall.

Discrimination and Harassment

Per the [regulations of the University of Florida](#), “The University shall actively promote equal opportunity policies and practices conforming to laws against discrimination. The University is committed to non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations, genetic information and veteran status as protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act.”

Course Schedule

This schedule may be altered by the instructor. Readings are listed under the dates on which they will be discussed in class. As this course covers material that is heavily related to current events, **readings may be substituted or added to as current events dictate, so check back frequently.** Quizzes and essays must be completed on E-Learning by the dates listed, and exams will be administered in class on the dates listed. Assignment due dates are listed in **bold**.

July 1

Course Introduction
The Logic of American Politics

Readings:
Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 1

Tuesday, July 2: Drop/Add Ends

July 2-3

The Constitution

Readings:
Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 2
[The Constitution of the United States](#)
Madison: ["The Federalist #10"](#) (required)
Madison: ["The Federalist #39"](#) (required)
Madison: ["The Federalist #51"](#) (required)
“Brutus”: ["I" \(Anti-Federalist\)](#) (recommended)
“Brutus”: ["II" \(Anti-Federalist\)](#) (recommended)

Essay 1: What are some of the key ways in which the government established by the Constitution differs from that of the Articles of Confederation? Why did the founders make these changes? Which arrangement would you prefer for today's United States?

Quiz 1 to be completed on E-Learning by 1:30pm, July 5

July 5-8

Federalism

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 3

[McCulloch v. Maryland](#)

[Gibbons v. Ogden](#)

Sargent: "[SCOTUS Sides With Federal Power](#)"

Malewitz: "[In Energy Policy, a Year Marked by Clashes in Federalism](#)"

Grovum: "[How Federalism Could Doom DOMA but Save State Bans](#)"

Essay 2: Which level of government should handle most major policy decisions: the states or the national government? Has the increased nationalization of policy been good or bad for the country?

July 9-10

Civil Rights

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 4

Reading on classifications and scrutiny: TBA

Same-sex marriage reading pending Supreme Court decision

EqualRightsAmendment.Org: "[The History Behind the Equal Rights Amendment](#)"

NCSL: "[Same-Sex Marriage, Civil Unions, and Domestic Partnerships](#)"

Essay 3: In terms of the Constitution, how are the civil rights movements of African-Americans, women, and same-sex couples similar, and how are they different? Should the courts view all discriminatory laws in the same way, or should different types of discrimination be treated differently?

Quiz 2 to be completed on E-Learning by 1:30pm, July 11

Wednesday, July 10: Last day to withdraw with 25% refund

July 11-12

Civil Liberties

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 5

Liptak: "[Study Challenges Supreme Court's Image as Defender of Free Speech](#)"

Washington Post: "[Supreme Court Round-Up, 2011-2012 \(Key Cases\)](#)"

De Vogue: "[Supreme Court Backs Church in Landmark Religious Liberty Case](#)"

Mears: "[Supreme Court Rules Against Police in Drunk Driving Case](#)"

Savage: "[Supreme Court Declines to Hear Gun-Rights Case](#)"

Essay 4: Has the Supreme Court gone too far in protecting civil liberties? Has it gone far enough?

First Essay (your choice of topics 1-4) due on E-Learning by 1:30pm, July 12

July 15

Exam 1: The Nationalization of Politics (Chapters 1-5)

July 16-18

Congress

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 6

Abdullah: ["It's Your Fault: How Our 'Tribes' Create Gridlock in Congress"](#)

Ornstein: ["Worst. Congress. Ever."](#)

Klein: ["14 Reasons Why This Is the Worst Congress Ever"](#)

Nocera: ["The Last Moderate"](#)

Matthews: ["17 Bills That Likely Would Have Passed the Senate if It Didn't Have the Filibuster"](#)

Goldmacher: ["Why Would Anyone Ever Want to Run for Congress?"](#)

Film: PBS *Frontline* episode "Cliffhanger"

Essay 5: Why does today's Congress seemingly struggle to quickly enact clear policy programs? Should changes be made to the policy process, or is the current system necessary?

Quiz 3 to be completed on E-Learning by 1:30pm, July 19

July 19-23

The Presidency

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 7

Welna: ["Obama and Congress: Bipartisanship Talk Met Reality"](#)

Fahrenthold, Kane, & Montgomery: ["How McConnell and Biden Pulled Congress away from the Fiscal Cliff"](#)

Leonhardt: ["For Obama, Fiscal Deal Is a Victory That Also Holds Risks"](#)

Balz: ["The Summer Question: Can Washington Govern?"](#)

Shear and Baker: ["In Gun Bill Defeat, a President Who Hesitates to Twist Arms"](#)

Film: PBS *Frontline* episode "Obama's Deal"

Essay 6: Has the ability of the president to drive national policy increased or decreased over time? What obstacles still exist for presidents who want to drive national policy? Who should be the primary driver of national policy: Congress or the president?

July 24

The Federal Bureaucracy

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 8

Wilson and DeYoung: ["Benghazi Emails Show Clash Between State Department, CIA"](#)

Schmitt and Preston: ["Senators Say Case Indicates that Problems Persist in Agencies' Data Sharing"](#)

Eilperin and Goldfarb: ["IRS Officials in Washington Were Involved in Targeting of Conservative Groups"](#)

Horwitz: ["Under Sweeping Subpoenas, Justice Department Obtained AP Phone Records in Leak Investigation"](#)

Essay 7: Does the federal bureaucracy operate honestly and effectively as currently arranged? Do politics play too big a role in bureaucratic performance, or should elected officials have more control over the offices of the executive branch?

Quiz 4 to be completed on E-Learning by 1:30pm, July 25

July 25-26

The Federal Judiciary

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 9

TIME: ["Supreme Court Nomination Battles" \(read Bork, Thomas, and Miers\)](#)

Blake: ["The Supreme Court's Rightward Shift--Or Not \(In Two Charts\)"](#)

Bonneau: ["Why We Should Keep Judicial Elections" \(about state courts\)](#)

Gramlich: ["Judge Fights in Iowa, Illinois Signal New Era for Retention Elections" \(about state courts\)](#)

Chemerinsky and Sample: ["You Get the Judges You Pay For" \(about state courts\)](#)

Essay 8: What are the consequences, both good and bad, of presidential appointment of federal judges? Is this the right process, or should federal judges be elected by the people, as they are for the courts in some states?

Second Essay (your choice of topics 5-8) due on E-Learning by 1:30pm, July 26

July 29

Exam 2: The Institutions of Government (Chapters 6-9)

July 30

Public Opinion

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 10

July 31

The News Media

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 14

Essay 9: How do media and public opinion affect politics and policy? Do the media play a positive or negative role? (Draw on the material from Chapters 10 and 14 of the textbook when crafting your argument.)

Quiz 5 to be completed on Angel by 9:00am, August 1

August 1-2

Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 11

New York Times: ["From \\$25 to \\$10,000,000: A Guide to Political Donations"](#)

New York Times: ["Who's Financing the 'Super PACs'"](#)

Center for Responsive Politics: ["Super PACs"](#)

Liptak: ["Justices, 5-4, Reject Corporate Spending Limit"](#)

Terris: ["How Democrats Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Super PAC"](#)

Wyden and Murkowski: ["Our States Vouch for Transparent Campaign Financing"](#)

Essay 10: Is the United States in need of more or less campaign finance regulation? What is the effect of increased money in campaigns? What would be the effects of potential reforms? (Also consider the material on pp. 615-621 of your textbook.)

Friday, August 2: Last day to withdraw and receive a "W"

August 5-6

Political Parties

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 12

Doctoroff: ["Why an Independent Presidential Candidate Can Succeed in 2012"](#)

Lizza: ["But Is a Third Party Possible?"](#)

Lexington: ["When Not in Rome"](#) (Site may ask for registration. If so, Google author and title; search result link should work without registration.)

Gabriel: ["With Clout Diminished, Tea Party Turns to Narrower Issues"](#)

Essay 11: Why are there only two (and not more) viable political parties in American politics? Do we need a third party and do you see any potential for one to emerge?

Quiz 6 to be completed on E-Learning by 1:30pm, August 7

August 7-8

Interest Groups

Readings:

Kernell, Jacobson, & Kousser: Chapter 13

Center for Responsive Politics: "[Influence & Lobbying](#)"

Barone: "[In Defense of Lobbyists](#)"

Eggen and Farnam: "[Lobbyists Playing Key Role in 2012 Fundraising](#)"

Markon: "[As Momentum Builds Toward Tax Reform, Lobbyists Prepare for a Fight](#)"

O'Keefe: "[The Power of the NRA--in Two Charts](#)"

New York Times: "[How the NRA Ranks Lawmakers](#)"

O'Keefe: "[What's Changed in the Fight for New Gun Laws](#)"

Essay 12: Does the pluralist nature of the American political system lead to effective representation of the people or are interest groups and lobbyists a bad thing for American politics and policy?

Third Essay (your choice of topics 9-12) due on E-Learning by 1:30pm, August 8

August 9

Exam 3: The Public's Influence on National Policy (Chapters 10-15)