

## POLA 210: American Government, Spring 2008

Section 2: MWF 8:00–8:50 a.m., 101 Norman Mayer Building  
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Office: 309 Norman Mayer Building  
Hours: MWF 1:00–2:00 p.m., or by appointment  
Phone: (504) 862-8309

This course has two primary objectives: to acquaint you with the study of political science, and to improve your understanding of the institutions and processes that govern the United States (and, to a lesser extent, other democratic societies).

Students will generally be expected to think logically and rationally about American politics, and will be expected to demonstrate these abilities in their assignments. Although we will cover many of the same topics you may have encountered in a high school civics course, we will explore these topics here in greater detail and complexity.

### Required Texts:

Kernell, Samuel and Gary C. Jacobson. 2005. *The Logic of American Politics*, 3rd ed. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 1-56802-891-1 (standalone), ISBN 0-87289-353-7 (bundled with Kernell and Smith).

Kernell, Samuel and Steven S. Smith. 2006. *Principles and Practice of American Politics*, 3rd ed. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 1-933116-72-2 (standalone).

Fiorina, Morris P. 2006. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 2nd ed. New York: Longman. ISBN 0-321-36606-9.

Micklethwait, John and Adrian Wooldridge. 2005. *The Right Nation: Conservative Power in America*. New York: Penguin. ISBN 0-14-303539-8.

Kernell and Jacobson (KJ) is the primary text for the course, while Kernell and Smith (KS) includes a number of essays and essential texts that we will discuss in class.

Additional readings may be assigned at the discretion of the professor and will be provided for you at the library reserve desk, on the course Blackboard site, or as handouts in class.

**Assignments and Grading:** Your grade in this course will be based on the following elements:

Exams (3)	55%
Attendance and Class Participation	10%
Fantasy Congress	10%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Review Essay	15%

**Exams:** There will be three closed-book, in-class examinations, including the final examination, on the dates that are indicated on the syllabus, covering the assigned materials.<sup>1</sup> The exams may include multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions, and will be mostly drawn from the material covered in the most recent section of the course: Exam 2 will mostly cover material

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<sup>1</sup>No consultation with other students will be permitted during the examinations. For the purposes of this syllabus, the “assigned materials” include any readings specifically assigned on the syllabus, the content of class discussions, and all subjects and materials covered by the professor during class.

studied after Exam 1, and Exam 3 will mostly cover material after Exam 2. The examinations will account for 55% of your final grade in the course. Your lowest-scoring exam will count for 15% of your final grade, while the other two exams will count 20% each.

**Review Essay:** The review essay assignment will be based on *The Right Nation*. More details on this assignment will be provided in-class early in the semester. This essay will count for 25% of your final grade in the course.

**Quizzes:** For each module (chapter) of the course, starting with Chapter 2, there will be two quizzes: one covering the chapter of the primary textbook (KJ), and one covering the supplementary essays in KS. Both quizzes will be available online in Blackboard at least 24 hours before the first class scheduled for that chapter. No quizzes will be accepted after the quiz deadline, which is 15 minutes prior to the start of class.

You may work with other students in the class on the online quizzes, although it is probably *not* in your best interest to simply copy someone else's answers without understanding *why* they chose those answers.

Only the highest 20 quiz grades will count toward your final grade; the remaining quizzes will be dropped. The quizzes, together, will account for 10% of your final grade.

**Fantasy Congress:** 10% of your final grade will be based on your participation in Fantasy Congress, an online simulation based on Congress where you earn points based on the legislative prowess of a team of legislators drafted by you. Initially, you should pick a team of legislators; over the course of the semester, a series of short exercises based on the site will be assigned, which will count toward this element of your grade.

To join the league on FantasyCongress.com, go to <http://www.fantasycongress.com/edu>. You will need the following information to join our league: the Class ID is 577 and the Class Code is 01Cp2gr2kT. This information will also be available in Blackboard.

**Participation:** The remaining 10% of your final grade will be based on your level of participation in class discussions; you will primarily be graded based on the relative *quality* of your participation. As this course is a *seminar*, you are expected to be prepared to discuss the assigned materials for each class.

**Policies:** Attendance at class is required, and is a component of your "participation" grade. Please discuss any planned absences with me as soon as practicable. Regular attendance and participation are essential for understanding the material; if you don't come to class, you will probably be hurting your grade.

All students are expected to be prepared for class, including having completed the relevant readings *prior to class*. Asking thoughtful or insightful questions is just as important as answering questions posed by others in the class. Absences, tardiness, cell phone disruptions and abuse of Internet technologies (e.g., web browsing/IMing during class) will adversely affect your participation grade.

**Please arrive at class *on time* and mute (or switch off) all pagers, cell phones, and alarms during class.**

Make-up examinations must be scheduled two weeks in advance in the case of an **unavoidable** planned absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or emergency that is **documented** with a doctor's note dating from *prior* to the exam. Should you have three final exams scheduled for one day, please consult with me to arrange an alternative time to take your final. Other assignments may be made up at the discretion of the professor.

Students are expected to demonstrate basic proficiency in communicating using the English language, as defined by Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* and other references. Poorly-written assignments and responses to essay questions may receive reduced credit.

This syllabus is subject to revision by the professor.

**Grade Appeals:** If you wish to dispute a grade for any reason other than an obvious arithmetic error on my part, you will need to type a one-page explanation of your position and turn it in, along with the original graded assignment, *at least one week after* the assignment is returned to you. I will then consider your appeal and make a determination. Appeals must be submitted in hard copy format; no appeals submitted via email will be considered.

**Academic Integrity and Honesty:** All students in this course are expected to comply with the Code of Academic Integrity of the Newcomb-Tulane College, which can be found online at <http://college.tulane.edu/code.htm>. An excerpt from the honor code appears below:

The integrity of the Newcomb-Tulane College is based on the absolute honesty of the entire community in all academic endeavors. As part of the Tulane University community, students have certain responsibilities regarding work that forms the basis for the evaluation of their academic achievement. Students are expected to be familiar with these responsibilities at all times. No member of the university community should tolerate any form of academic dishonesty because the scholarly community of the university depends on the willingness of both instructors and students to uphold the Code of Academic Conduct. When a violation of the Code of Academic Conduct is observed it is the duty of every member of the academic community who has evidence of the violation to take action. Students should take steps to uphold the code by reporting any suspected offense to the instructor or the associate dean of the college. Students should under no circumstances tolerate any form of academic dishonesty.

In all work submitted for academic credit, students are expected to represent themselves honestly. The presence of a student's name on any work submitted in completion of an academic assignment is considered to be an assurance that the work and ideas are the result of the student's own intellectual effort, stated in his or her own words, and produced independently, unless clear and explicit acknowledgment of the sources for the work and ideas is included (with the use of quotation marks when quoting someone else's words). This principle applies to papers, tests, homework assignments, artistic productions, laboratory reports, computer programs, and other assignments.

**Course Outline:** Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and will be posted to the course Blackboard site.

**Jan 14, 16: Introduction** Introduction to the course; political institutions and the collective action problem; republican democracy.

Readings: KJ Chapter 1, "The Logic of American Politics"; Olson, from *The Logic of Collective Action* (KS 1.1); Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (KS 1.2).

**Jan 18, 23, 25: The Constitution** The struggle for independence; the Articles of Confederation; weaknesses of the Articles; the Constitutional Convention—influences, key debates, and compromises; ratification; the theory of the Constitution.

Readings: KJ Chapter 2, "The Constitution"; Roche, "The Founding Fathers" (KS 2.1); Madison, *Federalist* 10 and 51 (KS 2.2, 2.3); Burns, "Showdown" (KS 2.4).

**No Class, January 21: Martin Luther King Holiday**

**Jan 28, 30; Feb 1: Federalism** Dual versus shared (marble-cake) federalism; the evolution of state-federal relations; why policy becomes nationalized.

Readings: KJ Chapter 3, “Federalism”; Buchanan, “Federalism as an Ideal Political Order” (KS 3.1); Kettl, “Federalism” (KS 3.2).

**Feb 4 No Class: Mardi Gras break**

**Feb 6, 8, 11: Civil Rights** What are civil rights?; the politics of civil rights for African-Americans; civil rights for other groups.

Readings: KJ Chapter 4, “Civil Rights”; Lee, “Immigration and the Future of Identity Politics in the United States” (KS 4.1); Frederickson, “Still Separate and Unequal” (KS 4.2).

**Feb 13, 15, 18: Civil Liberties** Nationalization and incorporation of civil liberties; freedom of speech; freedom of the press; religious liberties (free exercise and establishment); rights of the criminally-accused; privacy; firearms; property.

Readings: KJ Chapter 5, “Civil Liberties”; Rosenberg, “The Real World of Constitutional Rights: The Supreme Court and the Implementation of the Abortion Decisions” (KS 5.1); Epstein et al., “The Effect of War on the Supreme Court” (KS 5.2).

**Feb 20 Exam 1**

**Feb 22, 25 No Class: APSA Teaching and Learning Conference**

**Feb 27, 29; Mar 3: The Legislative Branch** Key provisions of Article I; Congress and electoral politics; legislative organization: committees and parties; the legislative process.

Readings: KJ Chapter 6, “Congress”; Fenno, “The Senate in Bicameral Perspective” (KS 6.1); Mayhew, from *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (KS 6.2); Smith, “Congressional Trends” (KS 6.3).

**Mar 5, 7, 10: The Executive Branch** Key provisions of Article II; the historical and modern presidencies; the evolution of the bureaucracy; bureaucratic oversight and reform.

Readings: KJ Chapter 7, “The Presidency”; KJ Chapter 8, “The Bureaucracy”; Neustadt, from *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (KS 7.1); Kernell, from *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (KS 7.2); Wilson, from *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (KS 8.1).

**Mar 12, 14: The Judicial Branch** Judicial review; the “three eras” of the Court; structuring the judiciary; judicial decision-making; the Supreme Court and the separation of powers.

Readings: KJ Chapter 9, “The Judiciary”; Hamilton, *Federalist* 78 (KS 9.3); Binder and Maltzman, “Congress and the Politics of Judicial Appointments” (KS 9.4); Carp et al., “The Voting Behavior of George W. Bush’s Judges: How Sharp a Turn to the Right?” (KS 9.5).

**Mar 17, 19, 21, 24 No Class: Spring Break**

**Mar 26: The Media** The mass media as a business; the politics of news-making; relationships between the media and politicians; the role of the media in public opinion.

Readings: KJ Chapter 14, “The News Media”; Hamilton, “The Market and the Media” (KS 14.1); Lemann, “Telling Secrets” (KS 14.2); Baum and Kernell, “How Cable Ended the Golden Age of Presidential Television” (KS 7.3).

**Mar 28** Exam 2

**Mar 31; Apr 2, 7: Public Opinion** What is public opinion?; where public opinion comes from; content and meaning of opinion; group/demographic effects on opinion formation.

Readings: KJ Chapter 10, “Public Opinion”; Asher, “Analyzing and Interpreting Polls” (KS 10.1); Stimson et al., “Dynamic Representation” (KS 10.2); Fiorina, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*.

**No Class, April 4: Midwest Political Science Association conference**

**Apr 9, 11, 14: Voting and Elections** The right to vote; turnout; voter decision-making; election campaigns.

Readings: KJ Chapter 11, “Voting, Campaigns, and Elections”; Popkin, from *The Reasoning Voter* (KS 11.1); Jacobson, “Party Polarization in National Politics” (KS 11.2).

**Apr 16, 18, 21: Parties** Why parties?; features of the party system; party systems and realignments; dealignment?

Readings: KJ Chapter 12, “Political Parties”; Aldrich, from *Why Parties?* (KS 12.1); Bartels, “Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952–96” (KS 12.2); Valelly, “Who Needs Political Parties?” (KS 12.3).

**Apr 23, 25: Interest Groups** The evolution of interest groups; the modern proliferation of interest groups; what interest groups do (lobbying, litigation, and campaign finance); commonalities and differences with parties.

Readings: KJ Chapter 13, “Interest Groups”; Schattschneider, “The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System” (KS 13.1); Wright, “The Evolution of Interest Groups” (KS 13.2).

**Apr 28: Conclusions and Exam Review** Biases of existing institutions; reforming political institutions.

Readings: KJ Chapter 15, “The Dilemmas of Institutional Reform”

**Final Review Essay due at beginning of class.**

**Friday, May 2, 5:00–9:00 p.m.** Exam 3