

SUNY, Potsdam College
Department of Politics

Politics 110: Introduction to U.S. Politics

Fall 2017
MTuWTh 11:00-11:50
On M and W: MacVicar 129
On Tu and Th: Satterlee 120I

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Office Hours: MW 1:30-3:15

Course Description. Politics 110 is concerned with government and politics in the United States at a national level. This is an introductory course, and there are no prerequisites. The course has two major goals:

1. To ensure that you have an understanding of the mechanics of national government and politics—the ways important processes operate. By the end of the semester, you should have a clear sense of such matters as the process by which Congress adopts legislation, the structure of the federal bureaucracy, and the routes that cases take as they flow through the federal courts.

2. To improve your understanding of the ways that the processes of government and politics work in practice, and of why they work in those ways. We will explore such phenomena as the success that members of Congress enjoy when they run for reelection, the role of the President in shaping public opinion, and the recent conservatism of the Supreme Court.

In addition, the course is designed to hone your critical thinking and analytical writing skills. Our readings have been selected and assignments structured with this in mind. In particular, a number of readings, and the two written assignments will address current controversies and debates in American politics.

Finally, because this course is a part of the Pre-Law FIG, we will cover some content typically not a part of an Introduction to U.S. Politics class: specifically, we will read about and discuss several bioethics-related legal controversies

I think that these goals are important, and I want to do everything I can to help you achieve them. I also want to help you do as well in the class as possible. This syllabus is intended to be helpful to you. Please read it carefully, because it includes material that you will need to have about the class and about your responsibilities in the class.

Please note also that this course meets the Social Analysis (SA) General Education requirement.

Grading. Course grades will be based on the following components:

Midterm, 15% of final grade.

Final Exam (non-cumulative), 20%.

First Analytic Paper (5-7 pages), 15%.

(10% is the paper itself; 5% is a preliminary assignment involving source selection and evaluation.)

Second Analytic Paper (5-7 pages), 20%.

Attendance and Participation, 5% each (10% total).

Quizzes (in-class, closed book/note), 5%.

Response papers to articles and Ellis/Nelson chapters, 15%

Extra Credit. There will opportunity for extra credit, worth 2% of your final grade. I will give details in class, and post information on Moodle.

Attendance. Class attendance is required, and I will take attendance several times a week *at the start of class*. Documented absences for health or religious reasons are considered excused; otherwise an absence is unexcused. After four unexcused absences, I subtract 20% of your attendance grade for each additional absence.

Participation. Although we have a large class, I will try to encourage class discussion, and allow for all of you to participate. We will have occasional small-group discussions as well. When discussing the readings, remain respectful of opposing viewpoints, and refrain from personal attacks. (You might find it useful to review the Potsdam Pledge, at <http://www.potsdam.edu/about/>). Unless necessary for taking notes or another class-related function, please do not use your computer or any other electronic device in class. Students who do not pay attention in class will lose participation points. Students who consistently pay close attention and contribute to class discussion will get full credit for participation.

Quizzes. Coming to class prepared—having read and thought about the readings—will help you get the most out of class lectures, and will ensure that you can contribute intelligently to class discussion. At the beginning of class, and at my discretion, I may give unannounced quizzes that cover the readings for that day's session and the lecture/discuss from the previous class.

Late Paper Policy. Papers are due at the beginning of class. For *major* papers that are late because of reasons not cleared with me in advance, I will subtract 3 % of the total possible points for each *day* (or fraction thereof) it is late. For *major* papers more than 14 days late, no credit will be assigned. No credit for late *response* papers.

Exam Policy. Failure to take the final exam or the midterm at the scheduled time will result in a 20% reduction of the exam grade. Students may not leave classroom once an exam is handed out.

Assistance. I want to give you any help with the course that you need. My office hours are listed at the beginning of the syllabus; you can always stop by at these times. Feel free to send me an e-mail when you have a question or concern; my e-mail address is listed also. My office phone number is 267-2716. I will often be in my office, even outside of office hours; you can stop by, although I cannot guarantee that I will always be free. If you'd like to meet outside of office hours, it is safest to email, or call, to set up an appointment. If you notice that you are struggling with any aspect of the course, it may be a good idea to meet with me as soon as possible, so that we can discuss ways of overcoming the struggles before there is a serious impact on your grade.

Academic Honesty. Please review the Honor Code:

<http://www.potsdam.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/honorcode/index.cfm>

I expect all of the work you do in this course to be your own. I will tolerate absolutely no cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation). To be explicit, this means that working together on written assignments is not allowed, unless authorized in writing. Any case of cheating, plagiarism, or other academic dishonesty will be reported to the Campus Judicial System, where it will be handled according to College policy.

Accommodations/Disability. I rely on Accommodative Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you are a student with a disability who will require accommodations in this course, please meet with Accommodative Services in Sisson Hall Room 111 for assistance in developing a plan for accommodations. If you are already working with Accommodative Services, please set up a time to meet with me, or come by during office hours, to discuss accommodations. For more information, visit the Accommodative Services website at <http://potsdam.edu/support/oas>.

Textbooks.

Required

Cavalli et al. *The Basics of American Government*. 2013 rev ed. U. North Georgia. (Abbreviated C)
Ellis and Nelson. *Debating Reform*, 3 ed.. Sage CQ. (Abbreviated EN)

Schedule of Readings and Topics.

Readings for each session are listed below the session date, and should be read by the start of that session. Articles will be posted on the course Moodle page for you to download/print.

Session 1. 8/28. Organizational Session.

Session 2. 8/29. Introduction and Overview.

Session 3. 8/30. Democracy and Types of Government 1.

C, Chapter 1.

Session 4. 8/31. Democracy and Types of Government 2.

Session 5. 9/4. Constitution 1.

C, Chapter 2.

Session 6. 9/5. Constitution 2.

Session 7. 9/6. Constitution 3.

EN, Chapter 1.

Session 8. 9/7. Federalism 1.

C, Chapter 3.

Session 9. 9/11. Federalism 2.

Session 10. 9/12. Federalism 3.

Session 11. 9/13. Federalism 4.

EN, Chapter 4.

Session 12. 9/14. Bioethics Session 1.

Read articles for “Bioethics Session 1” on Moodle (bring hard copy to class)

Session 13. 9/18. Political Socialization and Media 1.

C, Chapter 4.

Session 14. 9/19. Political Socialization and Media 2.

Session 15. 9/20. Political Socialization and Media 3.

Session 16. 9/21. Political Socialization and Media 4.

EN, Chapter 8.

Session 17. 9/25. Interest Groups 1.

C, Chapter 5.

Select paper topic by 9/25 (sign up in class or email me by class time if you are not in class).

Session 18. 9/26. Interest Groups 2.

Session 19. 9/27. Interest Groups 3.

Session 20. 9/28. Bioethics Session 2.

Read articles for “Bioethics Session 2” on Moodle (bring hard copy to class)

Email three sources to group members by 11:59 PM, 9/29.

Session 21. 10/2. In-class exercise for paper prep.

Bring written critique of group members' sources to class on 10/2

Session 22. 10/3. Parties, Voting, and Elections 1.

C, Chapter 6.

Session 23. 10/4. Parties, Voting and Elections 2.

Session 24. 10/5. Parties, Voting, and Elections 3.

No class 10/9 and 10/10

Session 25. 10/11. Parties, Voting, and Elections 4.

EN, Chapter 9.

Sargent, “First Among Thirds.” *American Prospect* Jul/Aug 06. (On Moodle).

Session 26. 10/12. Parties, Voting, and Elections 5.

EN, Chapter 10.

Session 27. 10/16. Bioethics Session 3.

Read articles for “Bioethics Session 3” on Moodle (bring hard copy to class)

Session 28. 10/17. Campaigns.

We will watch a film in class.

Session 29. 10/18. Campaigns.

Film, continued.

Session 30. 10/19. Review Session.

First Paper due 10/19

Review for Midterm.

Session 31. 10/23. Midterm.

Midterm in class.

Session 32. 10/24. Congress 1.

C, Chapter 7.

Session 33. 10/25. Congress 2.

Session 34. 10/26. Congress 3.

EN, Chapter 15.

Recommended, if you are interested, EN, Chapters 12 and 14.

Session 35. 10/30. Presidency 1.

C, Chapter 8.

Session 36. 10/31. Presidency 2.

Session 37. 11/1. Presidency 3.

Session 38. 11/2. Presidency 4.

EN, Chapter 16.

Session 39. 11/6. Executive Branch 1.

C, Chapter 9.

Session 40. 11/7. Executive Branch 2.

Session 41. 11/8. Executive Branch 3.

EN, Chapter 18.

Session 42. 11/9. Bioethics Session 4.

Read articles for “Bioethics Session 4” on Moodle (bring hard copy to class)

Session 43. 11/13. Federal Judiciary 1.

C, Chapter 10.

Session 44. 11/14. Federal Judiciary 2.

Session 45. 11/15. Federal Judiciary 3.

Session 46. 11/16. Federal Judiciary 4.

EN, Chapter 19.

Session 47. 11/20. Civil Liberties 1.

C, Chapter 11, until start of “Civil Rights” section (p. 261 in ’13 edition; p. 319 in ’17 edition).

Session 48. 11/21. Civil Liberties 2.

No class 11/22-23.

Session 49. 11/27. Civil Liberties 3.

Session 50. 11/28. Civil Rights 1.

C, Chapter 11, from start of “Civil Rights” section to the end of chapter.

Session 51. 11/29. Civil Rights 2.

Session 52. 11/30. Civil Rights 3.

Session 53. 12/4. Civil Rights 4.

EN, Chapter 6.

Recommended, if you are interested, EN, Chapter 5.

Session 54. 12/5. More on Rights and Liberties.

We will watch a film in class.

Session 55. 12/6. More on Rights and Liberties.

We will watch a film in class.

Session 57. 12/7. Review Session.

Second Paper Due 12/7

Review for final exam.

Final exam location: MacVicar 129

Final exam time:

Wednesday, Dec. 13, 10:15 am -
12:15 pm

Good luck on the final exam!