

POLS 120/AMER 119: INTRO TO AMERICAN POLITICS

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

LAKE FOREST COLLEGE

Spring 2023

Instructor Adam Hii

Course Schedule: M/W/F 9:00am - 9:50am

Course Location: Brown 315

Office Hours: W 10:00am-11:00am

Office Location: Lillard 360

Email: ahii@lakeforest.edu

Course Description and Objectives

Origins of the American political system, basic institutions, political parties and interest groups, and evolution of constitutional interpretation. No prerequisites.

Students who complete this course will:

- 1) Understand how the American political system was created and has changed over time.
- 2) Know the key governmental and nongovernmental actors in political decision making and what their contributions are.
- 3) Understand how policy making comes to be and its impact on the American public.

This course meets 3 times per week for 2.5 hours per week. The course carries 1.0 course credit (equivalent to four semester credit hours). Students are expected to devote a minimum of 12 hours of total work per week (in-class time plus out-of-class work) to this course.

Required Texts

The American Political System. Third Edition.

Author: Ken Kollman

ISBN:9780393675283

Many readings for the course will come directly from this book and students are responsible for getting their own copies. All other readings will either be made available for download on Moodle or be directly linked in the syllabus in the case of online news articles.

Course materials may not be shared with others outside of the class without my written permission.

Grades

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to individual grades based on overall performance in the course and/or extenuating circumstances. There is no guarantee that extra credit opportunities will be made available.

Grade scale: *A*: 93 - 100 *A-*: 90 - 92 *B+*: 87 - 89 *B*: 83 - 86 *B-*: 80 - 82 *C+*: 77 - 79 *C*: 73 - 76
C-: 70 - 72 *D+*: 67 - 69 *D*: 60 - 66 *F*: 0 - 59

The proportion of each assignment as part of your overall grade is as follows:

- Attendance & Participation: 50 points (10%)
- 3 Response Memos: 25 points each (5%), totaling 75 points (15%)
- 3 Unit Exams: 75 points each (15%), totaling 225 points (45%)
- Group Project: 75 points (15%)
- Final Paper: 75 points (15%)

Each assignment's grade will be added to the Moodle gradebook within one week of the due date.

Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to participate in activities and in-class discussions of the course material. Quality of participation can make up for a lack of frequency. Please note that attendance is an integral part of discussions so it will be recorded each session. Having said that, students will not be penalized for missing classes in cases of illness, emergencies, or college sponsored events. In these cases students will be expected to notify me via email of missing the class period, and will be responsible for obtaining any notes on course material they may have missed from their classmates.

The participation component will also include discussion questions and comments submitted via Moodle by no later than 8pm the evening prior to the class to provide adequate time to incorporate them into the day's session. Students will choose 3 different class periods to submit discussion questions/comments throughout the semester. These can be based on parts of the readings that were unclear, inspired further questions, or that students found particularly insightful and wanted to stress in the lecture/discussion. It is not enough to simply copy a portion of the reading you find thought provoking, you must also explain why or what questions arose from it.

Students will sign-up for these on the first day of the course.

Response Memos

Each student will turn in three response memos throughout the semester. These should be between 1-2 pages, double spaced 12pt Times New Roman font, and critically engage with the readings they have selected. Critical engagement means more than just a summary of the argument in the reading. A summary of the main point of the reading related to our topic for the day should be included but should constitute less than half of the memo length. Students

need to also engage with the reading with a critical eye. Some questions to consider to help guide this: Are there points that you think the author may be missing in their analysis of the issue? Is there an argument made that you think should be expanded on and how? Is there an argument in the reading that you think does not adequately support the author's point and how would you alter it? These are just some ways you can critically engage with a reading.

Response Memos are due prior to the class period that the reading is assigned. Students are free to pick any reading that falls before the due date of the response memo and after the due date of the prior memo. In the calendar section of the syllabus there are three dates that are listed for Memos to be due. These are just the final times that each memo can be turned in. This is to ensure that students are not overloading themselves with work at the last week or two of class. What these dates mean in practice is that those are the final opportunities to turn in a memo for that particular time period, but students can do so on any class prior to that date. For instance, the first memo has a final turn in date of February 10. That means students can do a memo on any of the readings prior to this date, but you still must turn in those memos prior to the class period of the assigned reading. So, for Memo 1, if you decide to pick a reading prior to February 10 for your response memo, such as January 25, then the memo would be due prior to the class period on January 26. The response memo deadlines are: February 10, March 22, and April 28.

Unit Exams

Throughout the term there will be three Unit Exams. Each exam will cover the material presented in that Unit. For instance, the first Unit Exam will cover all the material from the start of the term. The second Unit Exam will cover material presented following the first Unit Exam but prior to the second. And the third Unit Exam will cover the remaining material of the semester. Each unit exam is worth 15% of students' grades. Any material that was covered in class or in the assigned readings can appear on the Unit Exams. **Unit exam dates: February 13, March 24, and May 1.**

Exam Review Sessions

During the class period prior to each Unit Exam, I will set aside part of the class for asking questions about the content covered during that unit that students may want more explanation on prior to the exam. Students can either email me questions prior to this class of material they want me to touch on or can bring questions to class. In the session prior to the first Unit Exam, I will also provide sample questions so students know the style of questions that will appear on the Unit Exams.

Group Project

During the first week of class, students will be assigned groups to give a class presentation later in the semester. Each group will prepare a 20-25 minute presentation (not including Q&A) about a policy area in US politics which will also be assigned during the first week of class. These presentations will occur on April 17, April 19, April 21, and April 24 and there will be two in-class days prior to this to allow students to work on this project. All group presentations must be emailed to me no later than Saturday, April 15th at 11:59pm.

The goal for the group project is to understand the who, what, why, and how changes in the

policy area have occurred. To do this successfully, presentations should address the following points:

1. Identify major milestones (legislation, social movements, court cases, etc.) in the area you are discussing and what occurred. There will likely be too many milestones to adequately address in the time of the presentation, so pick 3 that your group considers the most important and address those. (20 points)
2. Explain the role governmental actors (from Unit 1) have played in the three milestones your group addresses. (20 points)
3. Explain the role non-governmental actors (from Unit 2) have played in the three milestones your group addresses. (20 points)
4. End by discussing current issues in the policy area you are covering and what your group thinks may occur in these issues and why. (15 points)

Final Paper

The US Constitution has seen multiple amendments following the initial 10 included in the Bill of Rights. Students will pick one amendment between the 11th and 27th Amendment and write a paper addressing the following points:

1. What does the amendment specifically do? (15 points)
2. Why was it proposed? And who was proposing it/pushing for its passage? (15 points)
3. Who were the chief opponents of the amendment? And why were they opposed? (15 points)
4. Trace its path to passage both in the US Congress and through the states. (15 points)
5. Elaborate on what the long-term impact of this amendment has been on the United States including any other policy areas that have been impacted by the passage of this amendment. (15 points)

Throughout the semester students will have the opportunity to submit (via email) paper topics and paper outlines prior to class on the dates listed in the syllabus. These are to encourage students to make progress on the paper and plan ahead for success in this assignment.

Submission of the topic and outline prior to the dates listed will result in extra credit on the paper, but students will not be penalized for not turning these in. **The Final Paper is to be turned in on Moodle no later than Wednesday, May 10th at 3pm! This is a date set by the university in the final exam calendar and cannot be changed. Due to this, late papers cannot be accepted.**

The paper is 5 to 8 pages long, double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman font. The Final Paper requires outside research to complete. As such, both in-text citations and a works cited page are required. Anytime you are presenting new, factual information you need to include a citation so the reader knows where this information came from (whether a direct quote or paraphrasing). When in doubt, cite. It is always better to overuse citations than underuse them. Students are free to use either MLA or APA style citations for this paper.

Communication Outside of Class

Please direct all communication with me outside class via email, which can be found in the

header of this syllabus. I do my best to reply to student emails as quickly as possible but students should not necessarily expect me to reply immediately, especially regarding last-minute inquiries. For example, I may not be able to reply to questions about course material the morning of an exam or provide resources for an assignment the night before it is to be turned in. In general all emails will be answered within 24 hours during the week and on the Monday following a weekend for weekend inquiries.

Technology Use

I will allow the use of computers, tablets, or other electronic devices during class for the purposes of taking notes.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student who needs an academic accommodation because of a disability or medical or psychological condition that limits your ability to fully participate in this course, please contact Kara Fifield (kfifield@mx.lakeforest.edu), Director of Disability Services. The Director of Disability Services also supports students with temporary debilitating conditions, such as concussions or recovery from physical injury. Because it can take a week or more to arrange accommodations, you should reach out as soon as possible as accommodations are not retroactive and usually require a medical diagnosis. For more information about services for students with disabilities at Lake Forest College, please see the webpage, <https://foresternet.lakeforest.edu/student-resources/disability-services>

Academic Honesty Policy

Academic honesty is expected of all students – and faculty. It is a central norm of academic life. Plagiarism is a serious violation of this norm. The scholarship you produce is the key determinant of my evaluation of you as a student. Therefore, if the words and ideas of others are represented in your work as your own – or if you recycle an earlier piece of your writing without indicating as such – you are committing academic fraud. You should assume that your work is being monitored for all possible plagiarism. Cases of fraud will be penalized, with outcomes ranging from an “F” for the offending assignment to an “F” for the course and including a hearing before the Academic Honesty Judicial Board and the notification of the Dean of Students. Please refer to this [most helpful guide](#) on the Writing Center page and educate yourself about plagiarism and how to prevent it. You are obliged to discuss with me any concerns you have about whether your work conforms to the policy. See the [Lake Forest College Statement on Academic Honesty and Plagiarism](#) and the [Academic Honesty section](#) of the College catalog for more information.

Sexual Misconduct Statement

Lake Forest College is committed to making our campus a safe and equitable place for students. Because of this commitment, and our state and federal obligations, faculty and other employees are obligated to report incidents of sexual harassment, sexual assault, interpersonal violence (dating or domestic violence) and stalking.

Disclosures of this nature must be passed along to the College's Title IX Coordinator(s), titleix@lakeforest.edu, 847-735-6009 who can help by providing support, resources and, as applicable, academic accommodations. They can also explain your rights options for formal or informal resolution.

As a faculty member, I am required to report incidents of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct as outlined above, of which I am informed, whether in written assignments or in person. I may also have an obligation to report these types of incidents and other crimes as a Campus Security Authority (CSA) under the Clery Act. Additional information and the campus policy may be found at: <https://www.lakeforest.edu/sexualmisconduct/>.

If you have experienced sexual harassment or assault, or interpersonal violence and wish to seek support without having the incident reported to the Title IX Coordinator, there are confidential resources you can talk to on and off campus. They are:

- Lake Forest College Health and Wellness Center 847-735-5240 (after hours 224-501-1621)
- Zacharias Sexual Abuse Center in Gurnee: 847-872-7799
- National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-4673 (HOPE)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233 (SAFE) or text LOVEIS to 22522
- Illinois Domestic Violence Help Line: 877-863-6338 (Chicago area)

If you are seeking information about other sex or gender-based rights (i.e., pregnancy, access etc.) or other sex-based discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, please contact the Title IX Coordinator.

At this time, all incidents may still be reported/accepted the same as when we were physically on campus: via the online reporting form <https://www.lakeforest.edu/title-ix-reporting-form-sexual-dating/domestic-violence-and-gender-discrimination> and office email titleix@lakeforest.edu. Title IX Coordinator LaShun McGhee, or a designee, will also be available by phone call, 847-735-6009, or virtual Zoom appointment. You would share a request by phone or email at lmcghee@lakeforest.edu, and she will arrange to schedule a time. Call 9-1-1 for emergencies.

Faculty Diversity Commitment Statement

The faculty at Lake Forest College are committed to creating a truly inclusive community that allows all members to thrive, including those who are members of underrepresented minority groups in higher education or in society more broadly. We respect and support our diverse perspectives and we value the numerous identities and experiences of our students and colleagues. We will continue to strive for increased diversity, equity, and inclusion as a faculty to ensure that the diversity of our student body is represented among our faculty.

Teaching and mentoring students at Lake Forest College are privileges we hold dear and we recognize that what we teach carries weight in and beyond the classroom. We pledge to speak thoughtfully, to encourage civil discussion, to practice nondiscrimination, and to respect all members of our community. We will not tolerate acts of violence or hate in our community. We

commit to the ongoing evaluation and communication of our practices and policies, consistent with this statement and in service to our community.

READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS

All readings and assignments are to be completed *before* the beginning of class on the day listed, unless otherwise noted. Read carefully and be ready to discuss the material. I reserve the right to make changes to the reading list and will inform students in advance of any changes.

Unit 1: Governmental Actors

January 18 – Course Introduction and Collective Action Problems – Reading: Kollman, p.12-21

January 20 – The Constitution – Reading: Kollman, p.35-54.

January 23 – Congress, Institutions – Reading: Kollman, p.147-175.

January 25 – Congress, The Process of Lawmaking – Reading: Kollman, p.176-196.

January 27 – Presidency, Sources of Power – Reading: Kollman, p.199-217.

January 30 – Presidency, The Modern President – Reading: Kollman, p.218-240.

February 1 – Judicial Branch – Reading: Kollman, p.285-302.

February 3 – Supreme Court and Politicization – Reading: Kollman, p.303-324.

February 6 – Federalism – Reading: Kollman, p.71-104.

February 8 – Growth of the Bureaucracy – Reading: Kollman, p.243-269.

February 10 – Influencing the Bureaucracy – Reading: Kollman, p.269-280.

Response Memo 1 due no later than February 10th prior to class.

February 13 – **Unit Exam 1.**

Unit 2: Non-governmental Actors.

February 15 – Political Parties – Reading: Kollman, p.464-487.

February 17 – Measuring Public Opinion – Reading: Kollman, p.327-350.

Paper topics due for extra credit.

February 20 – Public Opinion Effects – Reading: Kollman, p.350-370.

February 22 – Political Participation by the Public – Reading: Kollman, p.373-401.

February 24 – Interest Groups – Reading: Kollman, p.411-432.

February 27 – Social Movements – Reading: Kollman, p.432-444.

March 1 – US Elections Structure and Goals – Reading: Kollman, pg. 491-507.

March 3 – US Elections Challenges – Reading: Kollman, pg. 507-528.

March 6 – The Electoral College – Reading: Two Articles on Different Stances Towards the Electoral College: <https://www.usforacle.com/2020/11/23/opinion-the-electoral-college-should-be-abolished/> and <https://electoralvotemap.com/5-reawsons-to-keep-the-electoral-college/>

March 8 – The Role of the Media – Reading: Kollman, p.535-556.

March 10 – Media Bias – Reading: Kollman, p.556-570.

March 13 – No Class. Spring Break.

March 15 – No Class. Spring Break.

March 17 – No Class. Spring Break.

March 20 – Social Media – Reading: Schiffrin – Available on Moodle (The scope of this article is broader than the US, but has some good lessons we can get from it).

March 22 – Religious Groups – Reading: Chapp – Available on Moodle.

Response Memo 2 due no later than March 22nd prior to class.

March 24 – Unit Exam 2.

Unit 3: Policymaking in Practice.

March 27 – Economic Policy, Purpose – Reading: Kollman, p.573-592.

March 29 – Economic Policy, Types – Reading: Kollman, p.593-613.

Paper Outlines due for extra credit.

March 31 – Taxation and Social Safety Nets – Reading:
<https://poverty.ucdavis.edu/article/war-poverty-and-todays-safety-net-0>

April 3 – Foreign Policy Tools and Theories – Reading: Kollman, p.657-677.

April 5 – Foreign Policy in practice – Reading: Kollman, p.682-694.

April 7 – Group Project and Final Paper Working Day.

April 10 – Race and Ethnicity – Reading: Reading: Kollman, p.107-126.

April 12 – LGBTQ Rights – Reading:
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/stonewall-milestones-american-gay-rights-movement/>

April 14 – Group Project and Final Paper Working Day.

April 17 – Group Presentations.

April 19 – Group Presentations.

April 21 – Group Presentations.

April 24 – Group Presentations.

April 26 – Healthcare – Reading: <https://affordablehealthca.com/timeline-obamacare/>

April 28 – Infrastructure – Reading: <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/crains-forum-illinois-infrastructure/how-bidens-infrastructure-bill-will-change-chicago-0>

Response Memo 3 due no later than April 28th prior to class.

May 1 – Unit Exam 3.

Week 16 – Final Exam Week: Final Papers are due on Moodle by the end of the exam period provided by the university. For our course this is **Wednesday, May 10th at 11:30am!**