

American Government & Politics

Political Science (POLS) 101 section 001 – Fall 2016

Colorado State University, TR 9:30-10:45a, Behavioral Sciences Building 131

Instructor:

Dr. Matthew P. Hitt
Clark C-342

Matthew.Hitt@colostate.edu

Office Hours: R 1:30-4:30p, and by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

Ms. Desiree Fiske
Clark B-206

Desiree.Fiske@colostate.edu

Office Hours:

T 11-12p, W 2-4p

Ms. Julie Liebenguth
Clark C-341

Julianne.Liebenguth@colostate.edu

Office Hours:

TW 12-1:30p

Course Description:

Welcome to American Government & Politics! This course is an introduction to the institutions, processes, and influences of American government, politics, and political behavior. It is roughly broken into two sections. The first half of the course discusses the foundations of the American government, along with how people participate in that government in the mass public through voting, elections, and interest groups. The second half of the course focuses on elite institutions: the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. If you have any questions during the semester, please do not hesitate to contact me or teaching assistants. We all aim to respond to emails in 48 hours. You **do not** need to make an appointment to come ask a question during our office hours.

Learning Outcomes:

- a. *Demonstrate knowledge of political systems.* Naturally our focus will be on the American political system, though the concepts you will master in this course can be applied much more broadly.
- b. *Use the social sciences to analyze and interpret issues.*
- c. *Explain diverse perspectives and groups.*

Required materials:

1. A subscription to www.globalyceum.com. This excellent resource will be the platform for our writing assignments, short video lectures by nationally renowned political scientists to serve as our “guest speakers”, key terms lists, and the polls that we will conduct daily. Subscriptions are \$39.99. Just navigate to www.globalyceum.com, click “student registration”, register with your colostate.edu email address, and then subscribe with our unique section number: **5BCL8SLV**. *Please register with your official CSU email address.*

Strongly recommended materials:

1. Kollman, Ken. *The American Political System*. (Hereafter TAPS). Core 2nd edition (no policy chapters). 2014. WW Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-26421-0. Available as an ebook rental for \$35. See https://digital.wwnorton.com/aps2electioncore?_ebook. That’s probably what I’d do in your shoes. Though this is a great book, and the physical edition available over at the bookstore does last forever.

Honor Pledge:

The course will adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy of the Colorado State University General Catalog and the Student Conduct Code.

Boilerplate aside: I believe in and deeply value the integrity of this University and the courses I teach. As a Colorado State University alumnus myself, nothing cheapens the value of our degrees more than those who attempt to obtain them dishonestly. I expect that every student adheres fully to our university’s Honor Pledge:

“I will not give, receive, or use any unauthorized assistance.”

Attendance Policy:

Your ability to succeed in this course is directly tied to your physical presence in class. I expect you attend every session, unless you have a University sanctioned excuse. If you are ill, experience a family emergency, or need to be excused for religious observance, please let me know in advance via email whenever possible.

Electronic Device Policy:

Using electronic devices (laptops, tablets, cell phones) in class for anything other than responding to the assigned poll questions is strenuously discouraged. Using such devices wastes your time and tuition dollars. Remember, attending a university is a privilege that billions of people around the world will never enjoy. Of course as adults, you enjoy the freedom to waste these resources as you see fit. That said, personal use of electronics during class may disrupt and distract your colleagues who might be making much better use of their time and tuition dollars. As such, if a student’s use of any device becomes distracting to others, in the sole determination

of the instructor or GTAs, the instructor or GTAs will ask that student to shut off and put away their device or leave the room, at the instructor or GTAs' sole discretion.

Expectations for Outside Work:

Students should expect to complete at least two hours of outside work (reading, studying, etc.) for each class hour.

Course Requirements:

1. *Attend class.* And pay attention, taking good notes.
2. *Complete the assignments.* Throughout the semester, there are 6 short assignments that involve reading some source material and writing a short, structured response to that material. You access these assignments through www.globalyceum.com. Outstanding work gets 10/10 (check plus), satisfactory work that fulfills the requirements gets 8/10 (check), and unsatisfactory work that still represents a meaningful attempt to complete the assignment gets 6/10, (check minus). I define outstanding as follows: display full command of the material and critical thinking above and beyond the recitation of rote facts. Writing quality matters as well. I will drop your lowest scoring assignment when calculating your final grade.
3. *Take the polls.* There are two in class polls for *every class session*, except the first day. The first poll will be on the week's material, and is worth 1 point. The second poll gauges your attendance and allows you to ask for feedback or clarification on any of the week's material as you study for the exams. This poll is worth 1 point. Note that the poll grades are out of 20 for each type of poll. You can earn extra credit points by attending every day and taking the daily poll!
4. *Take the exams.* We will have three multiple choice exams, spread throughout the semester. See the schedule below for dates.

Grading:

Assignments: 50 points
Polls: 20 points
Attendance Polls: 20 points
Exam 1: 35 points
Exam 2: 35 points
Final Exam: 40 points

Total: 200 points

Grading Scale, in percentages:

| | |
|--------|----|
| 93-100 | A |
| 90-92 | A- |
| 87-89 | B+ |
| 83-86 | B |
| 80-82 | B- |
| 77-79 | C+ |
| 70-76 | C |
| 60-69 | D |
| < 60 | F |

Course Schedule:

Note: A blank space next to a date means that we are covering a general topic for the week; specific concepts covered daily will depend on the progress we are making overall. A blank space also means that nothing is due that day other than the usual 2 polls.

Week 1: Beginnings

8/23: Welcome, syllabus, course overview.

8/25: What is political science? How are we going to approach this subject? Introduction to strategic behavior, incentives, and collective dilemmas. Is democracy meaningless?

Readings: TAPS Ch. 1

Week 2: The Constitution

8/30

9/1: **Assignment 1 (Federalist 10) due on Globalyceum by 11:55 p.m.**

Readings: TAPS Ch. 2

Week 3: Federalism

9/6

9/8

Readings: TAPS Ch. 3

Week 4: Civil Rights

9/13

9/15: **Assignment 2 (Voter ID Laws) due on Globalyceum by 11:55 p.m.**

Readings: TAPS Ch. 4

Week 5: Public Opinion

9/20

9/22

Readings: TAPS Ch. 9

Week 6: Mass Media & *Exam week*

9/27:

9/29: **Exam 1 today!**

Readings: TAPS Ch. 14

Week 7: Political Participation & Deliberation

10/4

10/6: **Assignment 3 (How Does Your Government Affect You?) due on Globalyceum by 11:55 p.m.**

Readings: TAPS Ch. 10

Week 8: Political Parties

10/11

10/13

Readings: TAPS Ch. 12

Last date to drop with a W is 10/17

Week 9: Interest Groups & Social Movements

10/18

10/20: **Assignment 4 (Advocacy Groups) due on Globalyceum by 11:55 p.m.**

Readings: TAPS Ch. 11

Week 10: Campaigns and Elections

10/25

10/27

Readings: TAPS Ch. 13

Week 11: The President and Exam week

11/1

11/3: **Exam 2 Today!**

Readings: TAPS Ch. 6

Week 12: More on the President, and The Bureaucracy

11/8: Election day baby! American Political Science Super Bowl! **Extra Credit Assignment due to TAs via email by Monday night, 11/7, at 11:55 p.m.**

11/10

Readings: TAPS Ch. 7

Week 13: Congress

11/15

11/17: **Assignment 5 (The Gender Gap in Voting) due on Globalyceum by 11:55 p.m.**

Readings: TAPS Ch. 5

11/21-25:

Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 14: The Judiciary

11/29

12/1: **Assignment 6 (Decision Making in the US Supreme Court) due on Globalyueum by 11:55 p.m.**

Readings: TAPS Ch. 8

Week 15: Wrap up

12/6: What have we learned? What can you do next?

12/8: Final exam review session and course wrap up

Final exam: 12/15/16, 6:20-8:20p, Behavioral Sciences 131

Extra Credit Policy:

You can earn extra credit by coming to every class and taking the required polls. Also, there will be an extra credit opportunity related to the presidential election to be revealed in class. No other extra credit opportunities will be extended under any circumstances.

Disability:

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, you should contact me to arrange an appointment as soon as possible. At the appointment we can discuss the course format, anticipate your needs, and explore potential accommodations. I rely on the Office for Disability Services for assistance in verifying the need for accommodations and developing accommodation strategies. If you have not previously contacted the Office for Disability Services, I encourage you to do so. Visit <http://rds.colostate.edu/>, located in 100 General Services Building, P: 970-491-6385, for more information.