

Introduction to American Government

Government 103 Spring 2017

Location Hepburn 20

Time 9:20-10:20am MWF

Final Exam Period May 8 M, 1:30pm-4:30pm

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Office Hours 1:30pm-4:30pm T, 9:30am-12:30pm R, and by appointment

Overview

This course is designed to introduce students to the academic study of American government. While students certainly are familiar with government through its representations in news media and popular culture, political scientists take a more systematic approach to describing and analyzing government and its functions. In other words, the “What do you know?” question, while important, is inseparable from the “How do you know it?” question. We will read examples over the course of the semester of political science research on various topics. Students will produce a term paper that answers an interesting question in a similar way.

In addition to empirical research, we will also pay close attention to the constitutional underpinnings of American government. How do ideas of limited government, majority rule, minority rights, and individual liberties interact to produce a functioning society within the rule of law? We will examine what goes on in government, politics, and society from both positive (“what is”) and normative (“what should be”) perspectives. These questions are present in all aspects of American government that we will discuss: Foundations, Institutions, Public Policy, and Public Participation.

Textbook and course readings

A textbook is necessary in an introductory class, but it is not sufficient. The required textbook for this class is

Coleman, John J., Kenneth M. Goldstein, William G. Howell. *Understanding American Politics and Government, 2012 Election Edition, 3rd edition*. Boston: Pearson. (Abbreviated CGH below.)

I will provide additional readings electronically via the course Sakai site. Cases and academic articles can be found through the library’s electronic resources. Becoming familiar with the library’s resources will prove invaluable to you over your academic career here, so there is no time like the present to learn how to use them. The *Federalist Papers* are in the public domain and widely available on the Internet. Note that readings are not evenly distributed throughout the course. You may wish to do some of them in advance to space the workload out more evenly.

Course format

Part of the course will be a lecture for the “nuts and bolts” aspects of American government, but I will spend as little time as possible talking at you. I encourage you to ask questions and participate at any time. Classroom discussions will take the readings as their jumping off point, consequently **you are responsible for all material covered in lecture as well as in the readings**. Some material I will present in lecture will not be in the readings.

Attendance and participation are mandatory to the extent that they factor significantly in your final grade. Note: It is not possible to do well on the latter if you do not do well on the former.

Course requirements and grading

Midterm 1 (February 22):	17.5%
Midterm 2 (March 31):	10%
Take-home essay (March 31):	7.5%
Policy memo (April 19):	7.5%
Final presentation (March 3 or 5):	10%
Final paper (May 8):	15%
Midterm 3 (May 8):	17.5%
Attendance and participation (throughout):	15%
Total:	100%

Let me know before class if you must miss. There is no acceptable number of unexcused absences. Regardless of the reason for your absence, you are responsible for the material covered during the class meeting. **After three unexcused absences, each subsequent unexcused absence will lower your final letter grade by a quarter-point** (e.g., a 3.25 becomes a 3.0 at four unexcused absences, a 2.75 at five, etc.). We will also do activities that require some out-of-class coordination. They will go toward your attendance and participation grade.

I will employ a standard grading scale:

4.0 (100-97)	3.25 (90-87)	2.5 (80-77)	1.75 (70-67)	1.0 (61-60)
3.75 (97-93)	3.0 (87-83)	2.25 (77-73)	1.5 (67-63)	0.0 (below 60)
3.5 (93-90)	2.75 (83-80)	2.0 (73-70)	1.25 (63-61)	

I will not round grades as a matter of course; however, your *exceptional* effort in one or more elements of the final grade may be considered a plus factor if your grade is on the borderline. There is no curve in this course, though I reserve the right to adjust grade cutoffs if necessary. The adjustments will only work neutrally or in your favor, if applied.

Please note that this course is designed to challenge you, even though it is nominally “introductory.” Don’t overlook it as you plan your semester schedule. **The work in the course is weighted to the end of the semester.** I am happy to discuss your grade and anything else about the course with you at any time, either in-person or over email. I do sleep, though, just to let you know.

Barring clerical error (e.g., I added up the points incorrectly), all grades are final. Late work is not acceptable, and heavy, non-appealable penalties will attach for work turned in after the deadline. **You must turn in everything in order to have a shot at a passing grade in the class.** I am always willing to talk with you about exam grades and suggest ways to improve. **But, I will not bargain over grades or points, nor will there be extra credit opportunities.**

There is no pass/fail option for this course. There are no exceptions to this policy.

Exams

We will have three midterm exams. Midterm 1, which will cover Foundations and Congress, is tentatively scheduled for **February 22** in class. It will be part multiple choice and part short answer. Midterm 2, which will cover the remaining three Institutions, is tentatively scheduled for **March 31** in class. The in-class portion of Midterm 2 will be solely multiple choice, and you will turn in a take-home essay in hard copy on the same day. Midterm 3 will be taken during our scheduled final exam period, **May 8**. It will cover Public Policy and Public Participation. The multiple choice section will cover both topics, but the short answer will cover only Public Participation.

Pro-tip on how to do well on short answer questions: The short answer questions are designed to get you integrate what we talked about in class with what you read in the textbook and non-textbook readings. The best answers will show clear integration of information from in-class discussions, the relevant textbook section(s), and the non-textbook readings, including examples or further explanation of the answer *drawn from things you read but we did not necessarily discuss in class*.

Final paper and presentation

The final paper will be a substantial analytical work (between eight and 10 pages) in which you use data to answer a substantive research question of your choice about American government. Citations will follow the American Political Science (APSA) citation guide, a copy of which can be found here: <http://www.apsanet.org/portals/54/Files/Publications/APSASStyleManual2006.pdf>. Pay particularly close attention to pages 17 through 33. To keep you on track to completion, there are four parts to the project:

- 1) You must meet with me in office hours (or by appointment) to propose a topic and research strategy **by the end of February**. Failure to do so will result in a **10 percentage point** penalty on the final paper. Once you have had this meeting, you must stick with your proposed topic. Feel free to have meetings both before and after this “official” one to clarify your thoughts and receive guidance on the paper.
- 2) After you have identified your research question, you must meet with a reference librarian at the ODY Library for an individualized research consultation. The research librarian will help introduce you to the library’s resources that are relevant to your topic. Information about scheduling a research consultation can be found here: <https://www.stlawu.edu/library/help>. The earlier you identify your question, the earlier you can make an appointment for a consultation. **In no case, however, should you wait until after Spring Break to meet with a librarian.**
- 3) An annotated bibliography (a list of academic source material with a short description of what each source “brings to the table” for your paper), a one-page written introduction to your paper (what you’ve found so far), and a two-paragraph reflection on your meeting with the reference librarian are **due on April 3**. While these pieces will not be graded *per se*, they will allow both of us to identify problems and opportunities as you continue working on the paper. Failure to turn in these items on time will result in a **20 percentage point** penalty on the final paper.
- 4) **On one of the last two days of class, you will present your research as if you were at an academic conference.** Broadly, this means that you will present the main argument of the paper, the data used, the results, and conclusions. You will also field questions from the audience if time allows. To minimize switching time, **you will need to e-mail your final presentation to me by 8am the morning of your presentation.** The length of the presentation will ultimately be determined by how many students are in class, but the presentations will be short. Thus, a central challenge in the presentation

is to convey all that needs to be conveyed in a succinct, clear manner. **The final paper is due in hard copy at the end of our final exam period, 4:30pm on May 8.**

Expectations and technology policy

I expect this class, the readings, making an argument, and getting involved to be the thing you care about most in the world during the 180 minutes we meet each week. I expect you to come to class at least having read the material for the day, even if you haven't fully understood it or have an opinion on it yet. That's why we have class - to work through those issues. **But**, understanding and evaluation of the materials will be difficult if you have not done the first part: reading them yourself.

I expect you to bring assigned reading material to class with you. Many of the readings are on the course Sakai site or accessible through the library's databases. For this reason, if you do not print out the readings, you should bring a laptop with which you can access them. Accessing readings and note-taking are the only regularly authorized uses of an electronic device during class.

Disability accommodations

Please inform me during the first two weeks of classes if you need any accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of this course to enable you to participate fully. Confidentiality of the shared information will be strictly maintained. We will work with Disability and Accessibility Services (<http://www.stlawu.edu/disability-and-accessibility-services>) if accommodations require such assistance.

Academic honesty

I expect everyone to conduct themselves with integrity and honesty in this class. There are two facets to this expectation.

First, all of the work you do in this class will be your own. **Don't cheat. Don't plagiarize. Don't take short cuts.** If you commit an act of academic dishonesty, I am bound to follow the procedures outlined in the St. Lawrence University Student Handbook (available at <http://www.stlawu.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Student%20Handbook%202015-2016%20final.pdf>) The Handbook describes what constitutes academic honesty and penalties for violation on pages 93 through 95. Again, don't cheat.

As the semester goes on, you may find yourself in a situation where, due to multiple pressures on your time, you may consider taking a short cut in order to turn in an assignment or paper by the deadline. If this is the case, the thing to do is to **drop everything and contact me via email immediately regarding your situation.** I can help relieve some of the pressure related to my class in a way that is equitable for the other students in the class as well. **But**, I can't do anything for you once you commit an act (knowingly or negligently) of academic dishonesty.

Second, I expect everyone to be intellectually honest. This means listening attentively to other's comments and questions and responding appropriately. Some of the material in the class is controversial, and an intellectually vibrant community like St. Lawrence ought to entertain opinions on most any side of a controversy. Moreover, a liberally-educated person ought to be able to articulate fearlessly the "best case" for any legitimate proposition. So, we will not resort to *ad hominem* attacks, shut-down-by-slogan, or straw person arguments. (Ok, I might do the straw person argument sometimes, but only for effect.) Believe in the rightness of your argument; be prepared to challenge both yourself and others; and be open to changing your mind.

Topics and readings

Please note that the **readings are subject to change**. I will let you know throughout the semester where we are in the schedule and where we are going. Questions for the non-textbook readings will be posted to Sakai. Readings posted to Sakai are marked with an asterisk (*).

Foundations

- I. American Government: Culture and Context (January 18-27)
CGH, Chapters 1-3
Elazar, "The Three Political Cultures"*
Smith, Rogers M. 1993. "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz" The Multiple Traditions in America," *American Political Science Review* 87(3): 549-566.
Hamilton, The *Federalist*, No. 15
The US Constitution and Amendments, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CDOC-110hdoc50/pdf/CDOC-110hdoc50.pdf>
- II. The Constitution I: Separation of Powers and Federalism (January 30 & February 1-3)
CGH, Chapter 4
Madison, The *Federalist*, No. 46
Madison, The *Federalist*, No. 51
Petersen, *The Price of Federalism*, Chapter 1 *
One of the following cases:
McCulloch v. Maryland, 17 U.S. 316
Wickard v. Filburn, 317 U.S. 111
U.S. v. Lopez, 514 U.S. 549
- III. The Constitution II: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (February 3-10)
CGH, Chapters 5-6
King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail," http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu:5801/transcription/document_images/undecided/630416-019.pdf
Rauch, Jonathan. "In Defense of Prejudice," http://www.jonathanrauch.com/jrauch_articles/in_defense_of_prejudice/
One of the following cases:
Barron v. Baltimore, 32 U.S. 243
Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113
Katzenbach v. McClung, 379 U.S. 294

Institutions

- IV. Congress: The First Branch (February 10-20)
CGH, Chapter 13
Burke, Edmund. "Speech to the Electors of Bristol," <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s7.html>
Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Chapter 1 *
Fenno, *Home Style*, Chapters 1 & 7 *

Winter Break: No class February 17

Midterm 1: In class, February 22 W

- V. Presidency: Historical and Contemporary Problems (February 24-27 & March 1-6)
 CGH, Chapter 14
 Hamilton, The *Federalist*, Nos. 67, 70-72
 Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, Chapter 3*
 Neustadt, "The Power to Persuade"*
 Wildavsky, "The Two Presidencies"*
 "Capitol Hill Cold Open - Saturday Night Live," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUDSeb2zHQ0>

Last day to finalize paper topic: February 28 T

- VI. The Courts: The Least Dangerous Branch? (March 8-15)
 CGH, Chapter 15
 Hamilton, The *Federalist*, No. 78
 McCloskey, *The American Supreme Court*, "The Genesis and Nature of Judicial Power"*
 O'Brien, *Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics*, "No Longer the 'Least Dangerous' Branch" (required) & Chapter 6 (highly recommended)*
 Breyer, "Active Liberty," http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/b/Breyer_2006.pdf
 Scalia, "Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System," http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/s/scalia97.pdf
- VII. Bureaucracy: Policy Implementation in the Modern State (March 17-29)
 CGH, Chapter 16
 Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do & Why They Do It**
 McCubbins, Mathew and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms," *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1): 165-179

Spring Break: No class March 20-24

Midterm 2: In class, March 31 F (Take-home "On the Size of an Institution" due in hard copy)

Public Policy

- VIII. The Policy Process and Evaluation (April 3-5)
 CGH, Chapters 17 (required) & 18 (recommended)
 Lindblom, Charles. 1959. "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review* 19(2): 79-88*
 Rowe, Jonathan, and Judith Silverstein. "The GDP Myth: Why Growth Isn't Always a Good Thing," *Washington Monthly*, <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/1999/9903.rowe.growth.html>

Withdrawal deadline: April 7

Public Participation

- IX. Interest Groups and Problems of Collective Action (April 7-14)
 CGH, Chapter 12
 Madison, The *Federalist*, No. 10
 Skocpol, Theda. "Associations without Members," *The American Prospect*
 Rauch, Jonathan. "The Hyperpluralism Trap," *The New Republic*

- X. Public Opinion: Measurement and Impact (April 17-19)
CGH, Chapter 7
Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, Chapter 3*

Due April 19 - "Policy Analysis Memo" due in hard copy

- XI. Media and Politics (April 21-24)
CGH, Chapter 10
Scheufele, Dietram and David Tewksbury. 2007. "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models," *Journal of Communication* 57(1): 9-20*
Prior, Markus. 2005. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout," *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 577-592
- XII. Campaigns, Elections, and Political Parties (April 26 & May 1)
CGH, Chapters 8-9, 11
Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, Chapter 3*
Aldrich, *Why Parties?*, Chapter 1*
Polsby, *How Congress Evolves*, Chapter 3*

Festival Day: No class April 28

Due May 3 or 5 by 8am - Final project presentations

Final Exam Period: May 8, 1:30pm-4:30pm (final paper due in hard copy at 4:30pm, Midterm 3 should only take about an hour)