Poli 100: Introduction to Government in the United States
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 7:30-8:45 PM
Greenlaw 305
Fall 2011

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Course Description
This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to politics and government in the U.S. While it is not possible to adequately cover all important topics in a single survey course, this course will offer a broad overview of how the political system functions in the U.S. The course will focus primarily on mass behavior (how citizens behave and interpret the political world) and political institutions (the rules and constraints placed upon political actors operating in the three branches of government), though we will also briefly touch on American political development. Keep in mind that this is a political science class, not a course on civics. Because of this, we will move beyond simple description of how the government operates and will attempt to learn why it functions the way it does. The most important goals of this class are to provide students with: (1) a foundation that will allow them to continue to study politics scientifically and (2) the analytical skills to think critically about various political and social phenomena.

Required Textbooks
The required reading materials are as follows and are available at the university bookstore. You should be able to buy both books bundled together at a significant savings.


Grading
Your grade in this course will be determined by each of the following components:

1. 25% – First midterm exam
2. 25% – Second midterm exam
3. 25% – Final exam
4. 10% – Ten short analytical reaction papers (1 page long each)(1% each)
5. 15% – Participation

I will round grades to the nearest percentage point. Grades will be posted on Blackboard. I will return tests, essays, and quizzes to you as quickly as possible.

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Expectations and Procedures

Attendance

Class attendance is required. You will be allowed two unexcused absences over the course of the semester. After that, each additional unexcused absence will lower your course grade by ten percent (one letter grade). It is important that you miss as few classes as possible because each period will contain vital information, the vast majority of which is not contained within either your textbook or your reader. If you know you will miss a class, please let me know as soon as possible. If you are more than ten minutes late to class, I reserve the right to mark you absent. If you get to class after I’ve taken roll, it is your responsibility to make sure I marked you present (remind me at the end of the class period). If you come to class after a quiz has been administered (if we have any), you will receive a zero on it, so don’t be late.

Discussions and the participation grade

The in class discussions we will have are designed to explore a topic in greater depth than in the lecture. I expect everyone to be well-prepared and respectful to one another during these discussions. Your participation grade will be based on both the quantity and the quality of your contributions to our discussions. It is incumbent upon students to finish the daily reading before class begins so that we may have fruitful discussions.

Papers

You will write ten short reaction papers for this course, each of which should be approximately one page in length, not counting headers and footers. The text should be double spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman font. Please justify your text; justified text is easier for me to read. You should use margins of either 1 or 1.25 inches. I expect you to use parenthetical citations each time you cite material from a reading. If you only use readings that I have assigned to you, there is no need for you to include a works cited page in the paper you give me. If you choose to use other sources, you will need to submit to me a properly formatted works cited page. Do not include direct quotes from the readings in your papers.

Each reaction paper should be about one of the assigned readings from either the Principles and Practice book or from the course’s Blackboard page. I want you to critique the arguments contained in these readings. What do you find compelling or troubling
about them? Be sure to tell me why you think the arguments are well founded or baseless. Can the authors’ arguments be applied to the real world? Why or why not? Do not summarize the article you are writing about. I know what they’re about; I want to know what you think about the arguments contained within the reading.

Your grade for each reaction paper will be determined by (1) the completeness of your argument, (2) the strength of your analysis, and (3) the strength of your writing. Hard copies of your reaction papers are due in class on that day that they appear on the syllabus. For example, if you choose to write about Principles and Practice section 1-1, your paper will be due on 8/25. I will not accept late reaction papers. You must turn in at least three reaction papers to me by the date of the first midterm and at least three more between the first and second midterms. I will only accept a maximum of four reaction papers between the second midterm and the final exam. I will do my best to return your reaction papers to you by the next class period.

Exams

There will be three exams in this class: two midterms and a (somewhat) cumulative final. Approximately half of the points in each test will come from the readings while the remainder will come from my lectures and our discussions.

Technology

Silence your phone’s ringer or turn it off entirely. I know what it looks like when students attempt to text during class, so do not bother trying to hide it. If I see you texting during class, your participation grade will suffer. You will be able to access my slides on Blackboard. You are free to bring your laptops, but be aware that I will not allow them if they become a distraction to either me or to your classmates.

Disabilities

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should (1) contact the office of Learning Disabilities at UNC (http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/index.html) and (2) bring a letter to the instructor (me) indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first few days of class.

Research Participation

All students enrolled in POLI 100 are required to participate in research studies conducted in the Political Science Department. These will usually be research experiments. The total time commitment should not exceed 3 hours. Students who object to participating in these studies will have the opportunity to satisfy the research requirement in another way, usually by writing an additional paper. Failure to complete the requirement will result in a grade of I (Incomplete). That said, research studies are not performed every semester. I will notify you if and when one comes along requiring your participation. Otherwise, if you hear nothing from me about this, do not worry about fulfilling this requirement.
Honor Code

You may not give or receive any assistance while taking any examinations or completing any of the class assignments. Sentences, ideas, etc. cannot come directly from the Internet or any other reference material unless they are properly cited. For further details, please refer to the University Honor Code at [http://honor.unc.edu/](http://honor.unc.edu/).

Communication

I make every effort to communicate to you my expectations, your responsibilities, and the substantive information covered in this course. I will send e-mails to the entire class. I maintain a Blackboard site for the class, and I will make announcements and issue some reminders in class. Note that I will only send e-mail out to your UNC e-mail accounts as listed on the course roster in Blackboard. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses that you might use. I am also very easy to reach if you need to communicate with me. Come to my office hours or even better, send me an email. It is important for you to stay in touch, particularly if any problems arise. I don’t like to change exam schedules. If a situation arises where I need to give a make-up exam, I reserve the right to give it during the final week of the semester. I reserve the right to give a make-up exam that differs substantially from the normal exam in order to protect the integrity of the exam process. I or any instructor will be much more understanding if you just communicate with us early and up front.

Course Outline

Introduction

- **8/23:** Course introduction; what is politics?
- **8/25:** What is politics part two; collective action problems
  - Begin Logic chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics
  - Principles and Practice section 1-1

The Political Behavior of Individuals

- **8/30:** Survey research and the study of political behavior
  - Finish Logic chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics
  - Principles and Practice section 1-3
- **9/1:** No class (conference)
  - Start Logic chapter 2: The Constitution
  - Principles and Practice section 2-1
- **9/6:** Sociological approaches to political behavior
  - Finish Logic chapter 2: The Constitution
– *Principles and Practice* sections 2-2, 2-3, and 2-4

**9/8:** Social-psychological approaches to political behavior
- Start *Logic* chapter 3: Federalism
- *Principles and Practice* sections 3-1 and 3-3

**9/13:** Party identification
- Finish *Logic* chapter 3: Federalism
- *Principles and Practice* section 3-2

**9/15:** Turnout
- Start *Logic* chapter 4: Civil Rights
- *Principles and Practice* section 4-1

**9/20:** Review
- Finish *Logic* chapter 4: Civil Rights
- *Principles and Practice* section 4-2

**9/22:** Midterm 1

**9/27:** Belief structures 1: issues and ideology
- Start *Logic* chapter 5: Civil Liberties
- *Principles and Practice* section 5-1

**9/29:** Belief structures 2: passive recognition, attitudes, and non-attitudes
- Finish *Logic* chapter 5: Civil Liberties
- *Principles and Practice* section 5-5

**The Political Behavior of the Electorate**

**10/4:** Macroideology
- Start *Logic* chapter 12: Political Parties
- *Principles and Practice* section 12-1

**10/6:** Public policy mood
- Finish *Logic* chapter 12: Political Parties
- *Principles and Practice* section 12-2

**10/11:** Presidential approval
- Start *Logic* chapter 7: The Presidency
- *Principles and Practice* section 7-1
Campaigns and Elections

- **10/13**: Candidates and campaigns
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 7: The Presidency
  - *Principles and Practice* section 7-3

- **10/18**: Campaign strategy
  - Start *Logic* chapter 14: The News Media
  - *Principles and Practice* section 14-1
  - Watch political advertisements in class

- **10/20**: The horse race: presidential campaigns
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 14: The News Media
  - *Principles and Practice* section 14-3

- **10/25**: Review

- **10/27**: Midterm 2

- **11/1**: The news media and candidates
  - Start *Logic* chapter 6: Congress
  - *Principles and Practice* section 6-1
  - Watch *Journeys With George* in class

Political Institutions and Public Policy

- **11/3**: No class (fall break)

- **11/8**: Congress
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 6: Congress
  - *Principles and Practice* section 6-3

- **11/10**: Representation
  - Start *Logic* chapter 9: The Federal Judiciary
  - *Principles and Practice* section 9-3

- **11/15**: The electoral college
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 9: The Federal Judiciary
  - *Principles and Practice* section 9-4

- **11/17**: Income inequality and tax policy
  - Start *Logic* chapter 8: The Bureaucracy
  - *Principles and Practice* section 8-1
• **11/22**: Political economy
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 8: The Bureaucracy
  - *Principles and Practice* section 8-2

• **11/24**: No class (Thanksgiving)

• **11/29**: Rational expectations
  - Start *Logic* chapter 13: Interest Groups
  - *Principles and Practice* section 13-1

• **12/1**: Voter fraud
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 13: Interest Groups
  - *Principles and Practice* section 13-2

• **12/6**: Review for the final exam

• **12/16**: Final exam - 6:30 PM