Poli 100: Introduction to Government in the United States
Tuesdays and Thursdays: 8:00 - 9:15 AM
Murphey 105
Spring 2012

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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. 20% – First midterm exam
2. 20% – Second midterm exam
3. 20% – Final exam
4. 15% – In class quizzes
5. 10% – Ten short analytical reaction papers (1 page long each)(1% each)

6. 15% – Participation

Below is a description of UNC’s grading system.

A Mastery of course content at the highest level of attainment that can reasonably be expected of students at a given stage of development. The A grade states clearly that the student has shown such outstanding promise in the aspect of the discipline under study that he/she may be strongly encouraged to continue.

B Strong performance demonstrating a high level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The B grade states that the student has shown solid promise in the aspect of the discipline under study.

C A totally acceptable performance demonstrating an adequate level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The C grade states that while not yet showing any unusual promise, the student may continue to study in the discipline with reasonable hope of intellectual development.

D A marginal performance in the required exercises demonstrating a minimal passing level of attainment for a student at a given stage of development. The D grade states that the student has given no evidence of prospective growth in the discipline; an accumulation of D grades should be taken to mean that the student would be well advised not to continue in the academic field.

F For whatever reasons, an unacceptable performance. The F grade indicates that the students performance in the required exercises has revealed almost no understanding of the course content. A grade of F should warrant questioning whether the student may suitably register for further study in the discipline before remedial work is undertaken.

The table below describes this course’s grading scale. I will round grades to the nearest percentage point. Grades will be posted on Sakai. I will return tests, essays, and quizzes to you as quickly as possible.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
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</tbody>
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Expectations and Procedures

In Class Quizzes
I will give six unannounced quizzes over the course of the semester. Each will cover the reading material that was supposed to be completed that day. 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. I will drop your lowest quiz grade.
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.

Analytical Reaction 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 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 Sakai 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 1/12. 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 Sakai.
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/.

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 Sakai 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 Sakai. 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

- **1/10:** Course introduction; What is politics? I
  - Begin *Logic* chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics

- **1/12:** What is politics? II; collective action problems
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics
  - *Principles and Practice* sections 1-1 and 1-3

- **1/17:** The Constitution I
  - Start *Logic* chapter 2: The Constitution
  - *Principles and Practice* section 2-1

- **1/19:** The Constitution II
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 2: The Constitution
  - *Principles and Practice* sections 2-2, 2-3, and 2-4

- **1/24:** Federalism
  - *Logic* chapter 3: Federalism
  - *Principles and Practice* section 3-3

- **1/26:** Civil Rights and Civil Liberties I
  - *Logic* chapter 4: Civil Rights
  - *Principles and Practice* section 4-1

- **1/31:** Civil Rights and Civil Liberties II
  - *Logic* chapter 5: Civil Liberties
  - *Principles and Practice* section 5-1

- **2/2:** Congress I
  - Begin *Logic* chapter 6: Congress
  - *Principles and Practice* section 6-1

- **2/7:** Congress II
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 6: Congress
  - *Principles and Practice* section 6-3

- **2/9:** Review

- **2/14:** Midterm 1

- **2/16:** No class (conference)
  - Start *Logic* chapter 7: The Presidency
- *Principles and Practice* section 7-1

- **2/21**: The Presidency
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 7: The Presidency
  - *Principles and Practice* section 7-3

- **2/23**: The Bureaucracy
  - *Logic* chapter 8: The Bureaucracy
  - *Principles and Practice* section 8-1

- **2/28**: The Judiciary
  - Start *Logic* chapter 9: The Federal Judiciary
  - *Principles and Practice* sections 9-3 and 9-4

- **3/1**: Public Opinion I
  - Begin *Logic* chapter 10: Public Opinion
  - *Principles and Practice* section 10-3

- **3/6**: No class (spring break)

- **3/8**: No class (spring break)

- **3/13**: Public Opinion II
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 10: Public Opinion
  - *Principles and Practice* section 10-4

- **3/15**: Political Participation I
  - Start *Logic* chapter 11: Voting, Elections, and Campaigns
  - *Principles and Practice* section 11-1

- **3/20**: Political Participation II
  - Finish *Logic* chapter 11: Voting, Elections, and Campaigns
  - *Principles and Practice* section 11-2

- **3/22**: Review

- **3/27**: Midterm 2

- **3/29**: Campaigns and Elections I
  - *Principles and Practice* section 11-3

- **4/3**: Campaigns and Elections II
  - *Principles and Practice* section 11-4
• **4/5:** Campaign Advertising
  – Start *Logic* chapter 12: Political Parties
  – *Principles and Practice* section 12-1
  – Watch political advertisements in class

• **4/10:** Political Parties
  – Finish *Logic* chapter 12: Political Parties
  – *Principles and Practice* section 12-2

• **4/12:** The News Media
  – Start *Logic* chapter 14: The News Media
  – *Principles and Practice* section 14-1 14-3

• **4/17:** Watch *Journeys With George* in class
  – Start *Logic* chapter 14: The News Media
  – *Principles and Practice* section 14-3

• **4/19:** Interest Groups and Social Movements
  – Start *Logic* chapter 13: Interest Groups
  – *Principles and Practice* section 13-1

• **4/24:** Review for the final exam
  – Finish *Logic* chapter 13: Interest Groups
  – *Principles and Practice* section 13-2

• **5/1:** Final exam - 8:00 AM