

# American National Government

## POL 1 - Summer II, 2011

**Instructor:** Matthew Pietryka  
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**Class:** MW 10:00-11:40PM in OLSON 217  
**Office Hours:** Monday 1-3pm  
and by appointment

## 1 Course Information

### Required Textbook

*The Logic of American Politics* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), by Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, and Thad Kousser, CQ Press

Additional required readings are available on SmartSite: <https://smartsite.ucdavis.edu/>

### Course Objectives

This course has two goals. First, students will develop an understanding of the U.S. political system. Second, students will learn to evaluate politics from a scientific perspective. The course will pursue these goals by focusing on a broad motivating question, which is:

**“How well does the U.S. political system live up to the ideals of a representative democracy?”**

To answer this question, the course will emphasize the competing conceptions of representative ideals, the various means to achieve these ideals, and the methods to evaluate their achievement. These concepts will help students understand how the current system emerged, the degree to which the system achieves the founders’ goals, and the reasons why it may not always meet those goals. In so doing, students will build a framework that allows them to evaluate proposals for reforming the system and defenses of the status quo.

Analysis of the U.S. political system can be clouded by a variety of biases that arise from self-interest, partisan predispositions, and popular myth. Thus, an important goal of this course is to expose students to systematic empirical research that seeks to minimize the influence of these biases on the conclusions it draws. To that end, students will develop the tools they need to assess political behaviors, practices, and institutions based on theory and evidence.

## 2 Course Grades

Students' grades are comprised of two exams, an essay, and a variety of in-class activities. Each component is weighted as follows:

**midterm exam (Thursday, August 11): 30%**  
**final exam (Thursday, September 8): 40%**  
**essay (due Monday, August 22): 20%**  
**in-class activities: 10%**

The final letter grade will be assigned according to the standard table:

<b>97-100: A+</b>	<b>73-76 : C</b>
<b>93-96: A</b>	<b>70-72 : C-</b>
<b>90-92 : A-</b>	<b>67-69 : D+</b>
<b>87-89 : B+</b>	<b>63-66 : D</b>
<b>83-86 : B</b>	<b>60-62 : D-</b>
<b>80-82 : B-</b>	<b>00-59 : F</b>
<b>77-79 : C+</b>	

### Exams

There will be one midterm exam and a final exam. The two exams will each feature multiple choice questions, short answer responses, and essay questions. Therefore, **students must bring a scantron sheet and a blue book to each exam**. Exams will cover lecture material as well as material from the readings. There will be no make-up exams, except in the case of documented emergencies. The final is *not* cumulative.

The midterm exam is on Thursday, August 11.

The final exam is on Thursday, September 8.

### Essay

The essay asks you to use the theories and research from class to make an argument about the threat of majority factions toward the ideals of representative democracy. The essay will be approximately four pages in length (Times New Roman font, double-spaced, one-inch margins). More details will be provided during the quarter.

The essay is due on Monday, August 22. Late essays will *not* be accepted.

### In-Class Activities

Students will take part in various in-class activities over the course of the quarter. These activities will be graded on a pass/fail basis. Students may miss up to two of these activities with no penalty.

## 3 Expectations

### Participation & Attendance

To succeed in the class, students must show up to class having done the assigned readings for the day. Students do not need to have mastered the material, but rather they must have begun to think about the concepts in order to keep up with lecture.

There is no formal grade for participation or attendance, but the exams require information only available in lecture. The instructor will discuss the readings with students and may select students to provide summaries and insight about the readings. Once again, students do not need to be an expert to respond, but must demonstrate that they have put some thought into the material.

### Email Policy

The instructor encourages email questions and comments. The instructor will respond to emails within 24 hours. There are two types of course-related questions the instructor *will not* answer via email:

1. questions that students can answer themselves by reading the syllabus.
2. questions that require more than a short paragraph to address fully. For more detailed responses, students are encouraged to see the instructor during office hours.

### Classroom Etiquette

- Cell phones must be silent and *out of sight*: no text messaging, Internet browsing, etc.
- Students who miss class should talk to other students to find out what they missed.
- Laptops are allowed in class, if they are used solely for note taking and other course-relevant purposes. Students must ensure that they are not distracting others with the content of their screen.

### Students with Disabilities

Students should inform the instructor *in the first week of class* of any special needs they may have. Students are required to bring documentation of their disability.

### Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the university's policies regarding plagiarism and cheating online at <http://sja.ucdavis.edu/cac.html>.

## 4 Schedule

### Week 1: Theoretical and Constitutional Foundations

Date	Topic	Readings
Mon., August 01:	Self interest as the problem	Chapter 1
Tue., August 02:	Self interest as the solution	Chapter 2, Appendix 4, and Appendix 5
Wed., August 03:	Federalism	Chapter 3
Thur., August 04:	Discussion	Appendix 3

### Week 2: Citizen Participation

Date	Topic	Readings
Mon., August 08:	Public opinion	Chapter 10, Stimson*
Tue., August 09:	Participation	Chapter 11, Green*
Wed., August 10:	Voting with limited information	Bartels*
Thur., August 11:	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	

### Week 3: Rethinking the Role of Factions

Date	Topic	Readings
Mon., August 15:	The party theory alternative	Chapter 12
Tue., August 16:	The two-party system	Cox*, Sundquist*
Wed., August 17:	Interest groups and pluralist theory	Chapter 13
Thur., August 18:	Discussion	Olson*, Esterling*, Kollman*

### Week 4: Representation in Congress

Date	Topic	Readings
Mon., August 22:	A model of Congress and the policy process	Chapter 6, Krehbiel* <b>Paper Due Today</b>
Tue., August 23:	Reelection, representation, and polarization	Mayhew*, Arnold*
Wed., August 24:	Congressional organization	Reread Cox*
Thur., August 25:	Discussion	

### Week 5: Representation in the Executive

Date	Topic	Readings
Mon., August 29:	The Office of the Presidency	Chapter 7, Moe*
Tue., August 30:	Executive branch politics.	Chapter 8, Wilson* , McCubbins*
Wed., August 31:	The Judiciary.	Chapter 9, Bickel*
Thur., September 01:	<b>NO CLASS</b>	

### Week 6: Representation in the Judiciary

Date	Topic	Readings
Mon., September 05:	<b>NO CLASS</b>	
Tue., September 06:	Interbranch politics	
Wed., September 07:	Review for final exam	
Thur., September 08:	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	

\*Reading available on SmartSite.