

Introduction to Political Science: American Politics

POLI 10D

Lecture:

Section: date, time, and location as assigned.

Professor Benjamin Noble

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Office:

Office hours:

TA Contact Information

Course Description

We are living through times of change: a global pandemic, political polarization, mass protests, democratic backsliding, and challenges to civil rights—to name a few pressing issues. These developments have challenged the institutions of American government and changed how citizens engage with politics in their everyday lives. We'll use the tools of political science to examine how the institutions of American government work, how citizens participate in our democracy, and how some new (and some very old) challenges threaten our political system.

Our class is divided into roughly three parts. In the first half of the quarter, we will cover the foundations and institutions of American government—things like Congress, the presidency, and the courts. Then, we will turn to public opinion and voter behavior. We'll conclude by discussing current challenges facing the American political system: nationalization, polarization, threats to civil rights, and democratic backsliding.

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand, describe, and analyze (i) how the institutions of American government work, (ii) how people engage with these institutions, and (iii) current challenges facing American democracy.

- Interpret current events using the tools of political science.
- Engage more fully with politics in your academic and personal life.

Course Format

- Lectures (with occasional discussion) on Mondays and Wednesdays covering the weekly readings, additional content, and related current events. We may have guest speakers.
- Sections led by graduate TAs.
 - Sections meet each week and will provide an opportunity to engage with, and expand on, the week's material in a smaller group setting.
 - TAs will take attendance at these sections.

Required Readings

Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, Lynn Vavreck, and Timothy R. Johnson. *The Logic of American Politics*. CQ Press.

- Purchase a hard copy or e-book. I will be using the 11th Edition and course content (lectures, exams) will be based on it. A copy should soon be available on reserve in the library.

Most weeks, we will supplement the textbook reading with other materials. These are linked below and freely accessible. Please let me know if you encounter any issues.

And just so you know...[UCSD provides free access](#) to newspapers like the New York Times and Wall Street Journal for students. I encourage you to take advantage of these resources to continue learning about American politics during, and after, this course.

Course Evaluation

- Weekly, in-person section attendance and participation (as determined by your TA) – 10%
- Essay 1 – 25%
- Exam 1 (25 multiple choice questions) – 20%
- Essay 2 – 25%
- Exam 2 (25 multiple choice questions) – 20%

Weekly Section Attendance

- Each student will get one excused absence, no questions asked, that will not count against their grade. This is not an invitation to skip one section. This policy is designed to ensure you are covered in the event of a one-time unanticipated event and to reduce the burden on you.

- Any *excused* absence (i.e., illness, disability flare, athletic travel, etc) *with corresponding documentation* beyond the first absence will require a short, written makeup assignment related to that week's topic to avoid any negative impact to your grade. If you need to request a make up assignment, please email Professor Noble and your TA *before* your section (or as soon as possible following) and we will assign the makeup. You will have until the following section meeting to submit the assignment.

Essays

- You will complete two essays during the quarter.
- These should be about five paragraphs, and you should plan to spend about 50m on this assignment. Please do not spend several days on it. My goal is to give you an opportunity to reflect on some of the core content of the course and integrate what you're learning into a short essay outside of the constraints of a multiple choice test.
- You *MAY* use the book, class notes, lecture and section slides, outside readings I've assigned, and you may even look things up on the internet (please cite sources)—*however, you will not need to look anything up to succeed on the essay.* Course content and resources from class will be sufficient.
- You *MAY NOT* consult other students or use generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Bing AI, Bard, etc) at all whatsoever. When you submit your essays, you will be asked to confirm that you did not consult other students or use generative AI on the essay.
- The essay assignments will be posted on Canvas and you can complete them there. If you would prefer to complete the essay by hand, you may do so and then scan and submit it through Canvas. Please do not submit paper copies to me or email me your essay—essays must be submitted through Canvas.
- At office hours, the TAs and I will not provide specific feedback or advice on the essay assignment. What we will or will not answer in particular is at my or your TA's discretion.
- Additionally, please do not consult with the OASIS Writing Center. Again, the overall goal is to approximate a 50m in-class essay. Please do your own independent work only using the resources listed above.

Exams

- You'll answer 25 multiple choice questions that address topics from the first half of the quarter (for Exam 1) or second half of the quarter (for Exam 2).
- Closed book/closed note.
- You'll have the duration of class (about 50m) to complete this exam.
- Anything from textbook readings, lectures, section, or supplemental readings may appear on the test.

Policies

Academic Integrity

I take academic honesty and integrity seriously. You must do your own independent work on assignments. You may not plagiarize. You may not use any form of generative AI to assist you. Please see the [UCSD policy on academic integrity](#) for more information.

Requests for Re-grades

If you believe an error has been made, you have one week following the return of the assignment to request a regrade. To do so, please email Professor Noble (*not* your teaching assistant) with a brief explanation of why you are requesting a re-grade as well as evidence from our course materials justifying the request. I reserve the right to refuse to re-grade, and if I do re-grade, please note it may result in a lower grade.

Communication

For all questions or comments, you may get in touch with me or the teaching assistants during our office hours listed on this syllabus, or via email. At the beginning of the subject line, please include [Poli 10D] (including the brackets) so we know your email is in reference to our class. If your email requires a response, you can expect one within 24–48 hours, Monday through Friday. If you email us over the weekend, you can expect a response the following week.

Accommodations

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the [Office for Students with Disabilities](#). Students are required to discuss accommodation arrangements with instructors, TAs, and OSD liaisons in the department.

Other resources, including the inclusive classroom statement, advising, and resources to support equity, diversity, and inclusion, and more can be found in the [Additional Resources](#) section below the reading list.

Reading List

Please complete each reading *before* the class/date on which it appears below.

Note: LAP stands for our textbook, Logic of American Politics.

10/02/2023: Introduction

- No reading.

10/04/2023: Thinking Like a Political Scientist

- Read LAP, Chapter 1.

Week 1 Section

10/09/2023: The Founding

- Read the Declaration of Independence in Appendix 2 of LAP.
- Read LAP, Chapter 2, stop before "Features of the Constitution."

10/11/2023: The U.S. Constitution and the Separation of Powers

- Read the U.S. Constitution. The National Constitution Center provides an [interactive version of the U.S. Constitution](#) or see Appendix 3 of LAP.
- Read LAP, Chapter 2, section "Features of the Constitution" to end.

Week 2 Section

10/16/2023: Congress (Part I)

- LAP, Chapter 6, stop before "The Committee System."
- Nathaniel Rakich. June 8, 2023. [The Supreme Court's New Ruling Could Help Democrats Flip The House In 2024](#). *FiveThirtyEight*.

10/18/2023: Congress (Part II)

- LAP, Chapter 6, "The Committee System" to end.
- Steven Smith. June 3, 2021. [Note 14. Regular Order: What is It? What happened to It?](#) *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*.

Week 3 Section

10/23/2023: The Presidency

- LAP, Chapter 7.
- Ezra Klein and Brendan Nyhan. May 20, 2014. [The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency, explained](#). *Vox*.

- Matthew Yglesias. June 7, 2023. [It's Great to Have a President Who Knows When to Shut Up](#). *New York Times*.

10/25/2023: The Courts

- LAP, Chapter 9.
- Amelia Thomson-DeVeaux and Holly Fuong. July 7, 2023. [The Supreme Court Had A Few Surprises This Year. That Doesn't Make It Moderate](#). *FiveThirtyEight*.

Week 4 Section

10/30/2023: The Bureaucracy

[Essay 1](#) assigned at 2pm.

- LAP, Chapter 8.
- Jonathan Swan, Charlie Savage and Maggie Haberman. July 18, 2023. [Trump and Allies Forge Plans to Increase Presidential Power in 2025](#). *New York Times*.

11/01/2023: Exam Review

- No reading, but come with questions.

Week 5 No Section

11/06/2023: [Exam 1](#)

11/08/2023: Public Opinion

Essay 1 due by 11am.

- LAP, Chapter 10, stop before "Current Public Opinion."
- *Pew Research Center*. April 26, 2018. [What do you know about the U.S. government?](#)
Take the quiz (no cheating!) and read the article.

Week 6 Section (Recorded Lecture and Assignment)

11/13/2023: Political Parties

- LAP, Chapter 12.
- Sahil Chinoy, August 8, 2019. "[Quiz: Let Us Predict Whether You're a Democrat or a Republican](#)." *New York Times*. (Take the quiz and read the article).
- Hakeem Jefferson and Alan Yan. October 6, 2020. [How The Two-Party System Obscures The Complexity Of Black Americans' Politics](#). *FiveThirtyEight*.

11/15/2023: Elections

- LAP, Chapter 11 (skip the "Campaign Money" section).
- Dan Hopkins. August 21, 2018. [What We Know About Voter ID Laws](#). *FiveThirtyEight*.
- Adam Nagourney. May 24, 2018. [Here's How California's "Jungle Primary" System Works](#). *New York Times*.
- Nathaniel Rakich. July 24, 2023. [16 States Made It Harder To Vote This Year. But 26 Made It Easier](#). *FiveThirtyEight*.

Week 7 Section

11/20/2023: Special Interests and Lobbying

- LAP, Chapter 13. Read up to "The Origins of Interest Group Politics..." Also read, "What Do Interest Groups Do."
- Sameea Kamal and Jeremia Kimelman. August 3, 2023. [Why California cities use your tax dollars to lobby the Legislature](#). *CalMatters*.
- David Miller. February 2, 2021. [Here's the evidence lobbyists are trying to persuade your member of Congress](#). *3Streams*.

11/22/2023: Current Challenges, Nationalization and Federalism (Recorded Lecture, No Office Hours)

- LAP, Chapter 3, stop before "Interpreting the Constitution's Provisions."
- Morris Fiorina. 2016. [The \(Re\)Nationalization of Congressional Elections](#). *Hoover Institution*.
- Dan Hopkins. June 6, 2018. [All Politics Is National Because All Media Is National](#). *FiveThirtyEight*.

No Week 8 Section: Thanksgiving Holiday

11/27/2023: Current Challenges, Polarization and Negative Partisanship

- Steven Smith. June 13, 2021. [Note 4. Pivotal Player: Gingrich and the Polarization of Congressional Parties](#). *Steve's Notes on Congressional Politics*.
- Frances Lee. January 9, 2014. [American politics is more competitive than ever. That's making partisanship worse](#). *Washington Post*.
- Benjamin Noble. 2023. [Presidential Cues and the Nationalization of Congressional Rhetoric, 1973-2016](#). *American Journal of Political Science*. This should be accessible on UCSD's internet.

11/29/2023: Current Challenges, Democratic Backsliding

- David J. Kramer. September 7, 2023. [Presidential Centers Affirm that "Democracy Holds Us Together"](#). *George W. Bush Presidential Center*.
- Dan Balz and Clara Ence Morse. August 18, 2023. [American democracy is cracking. These forces help explain why.](#) *Washington Post*.
- Ankia Rao, Pat Fillon, Kim Kelly, and Zak Bennet. November 7, 2019. [Is America a democracy? If so, why does it deny millions the vote?](#) *The Guardian*.
- Jake Grumbach. December 1, 2022. [Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding.](#) *American Political Science Review*. (Don't worry about some of the more technical aspects, focus on the narrative, the way democracy is measured, and the results). *This should be accessible on UCSD's internet.*

Week 9 Section

12/04/2023: Current Challenges, Civil Rights

[Essay 2](#) assigned at 2pm.

- LAP, Chapter 4.
- Jennifer Chudy and Hakeem Jefferson. May 22, 2021. [Support for Black Lives Matter Surged Last Year. Did It Last?](#) *New York Times*.
- Zoltan Hajnal. July 2023. "[Understanding the Demographic Sources of America's Party Divisions](#)" (pp 39-48) in *More than Red and Blue: Political Parties and American Democracy*. APSA Prepresidential Task Force on Political Parties.

12/06/2023: Exam Review

- No reading, but come with questions!

Week 10 No Section

[Essay 2](#) due 12/13 at 11am.

12/14/2023: [Exam 2](#)

Additional Resources

These additional resources come from the UCSD Political Science Department:

Inclusive Classroom Statement

The TAs and I are fully committed to creating a learning environment that supports diversity of thought, perspectives, experiences, and identities. We urge each of you to contribute your unique perspectives to discussions of course questions, themes, and materials so that we can learn from them, and from each other. If you should ever feel excluded, or unable to fully participate in our class for any reason, please let me know, or please consult the Department's "[Report and Issue](#)" page for additional campus resources to support you, and diversity, equity, and inclusion in our classroom, and beyond.

Additional resources to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in our classroom, and beyond, may be found here:

<https://diversity.ucsd.edu/>

<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/diversity/index.html>

<https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4400.ht>

Resources to Support Student Learning

Library Help, eReserves and research tools: <https://library.ucsd.edu/ask-us/triton-ed.html>

Writing Hub: <https://commons.ucsd.edu/students/writing/index.html>

Supplemental Instruction:

<https://aah.ucsd.edu/supplemental-instruction-study-group/index.html>

Tutoring: <https://aah.ucsd.edu/content-tutoring/index.html>

Mental Health Services: <https://caps.ucsd.edu>

Community Centers: Learn about the different ways UC San Diego explores, supports, and celebrates the many cultures that make up our diverse community.

<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/diversity/index.html>

Academic Advising

Students who have academic advising questions related to the Political Science major, should contact the department's Undergraduate Advisor, Emilie Hines, via the Virtual Advising Center. Academic advising questions often include (but are not limited to): add/drop deadlines, course enrollment policies, planning major and minor requirements, quarter-by-quarter plans, department petitions and paperwork, and referrals to campus and student support services.

Additional resources to support equity, diversity, and inclusion in our classroom, and beyond:

Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

858.822.3542 | diversity@ucsd.edu | <https://diversity.ucsd.edu/>

<https://students.ucsd.edu/student-life/diversity/index.html>

<https://regents.universityofcalifornia.edu/governance/policies/4400.html>

Office for the Prevention of Harassment and Discrimination

<https://ophd.ucsd.edu/>

ophd@ucsd.edu or (858) 534-8298

UCSD Office of the Ombuds

<https://ombuds.ucsd.edu/>

To reach a Confidential Ombudsperson, please call 858-534-0777.

UCSD's Principles of Community

To foster the best possible working and learning environment, UC San Diego strives to maintain a climate of fairness, cooperation, and professionalism. These principles of community are vital to the success of the University and the well being of its constituents. UC San Diego faculty, staff, and students are expected to practice these basic principles as individuals and in groups. The Principles of Community (<https://ucsd.edu/about/principles.html>) and the Student Code of Conduct(https://students.ucsd.edu/_files/student-conduct/ucsandiego-student-conduct-code_interim-revisions1-16-18.pdf) support equity, diversity, and inclusion in our classroom.

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