

Political Science 100H | Power and Politics in America (Honors)

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Spring Semester 2016 | Section 001

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 1:30-2:20pm | Oldfather Hall Room 207

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Office hours: Mondays & Wednesdays 2:30-3:30 in 531 Oldfather Hall (or by appointment)
Course website: Accessible through <http://my.unl.edu>

INTRODUCTION

This course will focus on the fundamentals of the American political system, particularly the political behavior of American citizens and the political institutions that share in governing this country. Special emphasis will be put on the impact individuals have on the political system and the responsiveness of the government to various groups in our society. By the end of the course, students should have an improved understanding of: (1) how the American political system works, (2) how individual citizens think about and influence politics, and (3) how to analyze current political events critically.

ACE (GENERAL EDUCATION) PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

By passing this course, you will fulfill ACE Learning Outcome 6: "Use knowledge, theories, methods, and historical perspectives appropriate to the social sciences to understand and evaluate human behavior" and ACE 8: "Explain ethical principles, civics, and stewardship, and their importance to society." Through this course, you will have several opportunities to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the ACE Learning Outcome(s). Your work will be evaluated by the instructor according to the assignments described in this course syllabus. You may be asked to provide samples of your work for ACE assessment as well.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

Bond, J. R., & Smith, K. B. (2013). *Analyzing American Democracy: Politics and Political Science*. New York, NY: Routledge. [ISBN: 978-0415810517]

Miroff, B., Seidelman, R., & Swanstrom, T. (2012). *Debating Democracy: A Reader in American Politics* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Publishing. [ISBN: 978-0495913474]

In addition to the textbook, you are encouraged to read a major national newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*) on a daily basis. College students are eligible for free online accounts.

Any additional readings will be posted on the course website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Exams (50%). You are required to take two midterm exams and a final exam. Exams will be primarily multiple choice, but may include some short answer or essay questions. Midterm exams will focus on new material only and the final exam will be cumulative (covering material from the entire semester).

Reaction Papers (20%). Students will use the assigned chapters from the *Debating Democracy* reader to write brief reaction papers (2-3 typed, double-spaced pages) where the student will outline and support his or her position on the debate while addressing the strength of each author's arguments. Reaction

papers are due by noon the day before class and should be submitted on Blackboard (see course schedule for specific deadlines). This will enable me to read through your thoughts and questions prior to our class meeting.

Final Paper (15%). At the end of the semester, your final paper assignment will be to write a research paper tackling some of the big questions/debates in American politics. We will go over the details of the assignment in class. The final product will be a paper that is 8-10 typed, double-spaced pages. Final papers will be due Friday, 4/22, by 5:00pm, and should be submitted on Blackboard.

Participation and Attendance (10%). Your participation will be based on attendance and active participation in discussion. I will focus on both the quantity and the quality of your contributions when determining participation grades. In other words, the goal should be to contribute often, but also to make sure that any contributions are valuable to the class discussion. Completion of in-class activities will also count toward your participation grade.

Discussion Leading (5%). Each student will be asked to lead discussion in class on one of the assigned chapters from the *Debating Democracy* reader. A sign-up sheet will be circulated during the first week of class and I will give you additional guidelines for the assignment.

GRADES

Final grades are based on a possible 500 points and will be based on the distribution and percentages below. I don't round up or assign extra points at the end of the semester, so it is your responsibility to earn the grade you want. Final grades will be curved up for everyone in the class *only* if the overall class average is below a B- (< 80%). I will use Blackboard throughout the semester to post grades so that you can keep track of your progress. Incompletes are only given under extreme circumstances, and at the sole discretion of the instructor.

Exam #1	75
Exam #2	75
Final Exam	100
Reaction Papers	100
Final Paper	75
Participation	50
Discussion Leading	25

Total	500

Points	Percent	Grade
485	97-100%	A+
465	93-96%	A
450	90-92%	A-
435	87-89%	B+
415	83-86%	B
400	80-82%	B-

Points	Percent	Grade
385	77-79%	C+
365	73-76%	C
350	70-72%	C-
335	67-69%	D+
315	63-66%	D
300	60-62%	D-
< 300	< 59%	F

COURSE POLICIES

Deadlines and Completion of Coursework

Late assignments will not be accepted, and make-up exams will not be given. Should you miss any exam or assignment without an approved excuse, you will receive a zero grade for that exercise. In rare circumstances, an exception may be granted to a student who provides a validated excuse to the instructor *prior to the paper due date or exam date*. If you foresee being unable to turn in a paper or take an exam on the assigned date, contact the instructor *immediately*. Excused absences for University sponsored events (field trips, athletic trips) and medical / personal emergencies *must be documented*.

Attendance, Preparation, and Participation

Regular attendance at lecture is required, and unexcused absences will hurt your participation grade. Absences will be excused only for medical/personal emergencies or university sponsored events, documentation of the absence will be required, and you must notify the instructor in advance. If you do miss class, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and getting notes from someone in class. Reading assignments are to be completed before class meetings. You should be prepared at all times to discuss the readings and concepts scheduled for each class period. This is genuinely necessary for your success in this course. You must carefully read all of the assigned material, take notes while you read, and take good notes in class in order to perform well on the exams. Your participation grade and, more importantly, the quality of class discussions hinges largely upon your preparation and your informed contributions. This class will be more enjoyable and productive for all of us if everyone comes prepared!

Communication

The best way to reach me is through email. I check it often (more often than I check voicemail) and will do my best to respond to your questions within 24 hours. You are also welcome and encouraged to stop by my office during office hours, or make an appointment to meet with me at another time. I will send announcements electronically, so please check your email and the course website often. Please make sure that the email address associated with your Blackboard/MyUNL account is one you check frequently.

Academic Misconduct Warning

All work must be your own. Plagiarism and all other forms of cheating outlined by the University's Student Code of Conduct (Section 4.2) will not be tolerated in this class. Cheating or plagiarism will be reported through official university channels, and the consequences will be severe. The minimum punishment is usually failure in the course. No one exam or assignment is ever worth this penalty. To avoid missing out on a good college GPA, or even your degree, keep your eyes on your own test and write your own final paper.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

POLS 100H | COURSE SCHEDULE

Due dates for assignments and exams, as well as required readings, are listed below on the course schedule. All readings should be completed prior to class. Please note that this schedule represents a tentative plan and is subject to change at the instructor’s discretion. Any changes will be announced in class.

Please note--reading assignments are labeled as follows:

- **B&S** = Bond, J. R., & Smith, K. B. (2013). *Analyzing American Democracy: Politics and Political Science*. New York, NY: Routledge. [ISBN: 978-0415810517]
- **MSS** = Miroff, B., Seidelman, R., & Swanstrom, T. (2012). *Debating Democracy: A Reader in American Politics* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Publishing. [ISBN: 978-0495913474]

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
1	M 1/11	Syllabus and Course Introduction	Syllabus and Course Schedule	
SECTION I: FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY				
	W 1/13	Democracy and the Foundations of American Government	B&S: Chapter 1	
	F 1/15	Designing the American Constitution	B&S: Chapter 2 Appendix C: The Constitution	
2	M 1/18	NO CLASS (MLK Day)		
	W 1/20	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – The Founding: Debating the Constitution	MSS: Chapter 1	Reaction Paper 1 due by noon 1/19
	F 1/22	Founding Fathers – Part I (Documentary)		
3	M 1/25	Federalism and Separation of Powers	B&S: Chapter 3	
	W 1/27	Founding Fathers – Part II (Documentary)		
	F 1/29	NO CLASS (SPSP Conference)		
4	M 2/1	Civil Liberties	B&S: Chapter 4, pp. 108-131	
	W 2/3	Civil Liberties	B&S: Chapter 4, pp. 131-143	
	F 2/5	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – Civil Liberties: Is Corporate Spending on Elections the Equivalent of Free Speech?	MSS: Chapter 6	Reaction Paper 2 due by noon 2/4
5	M 2/8	Civil Rights: Race	B&S: Chapter 5, pp. 144-168	
	W 2/10	Civil Rights: Gender and Sexual Orientation	B&S: Chapter 5, pp. 168-183	
	F 2/12	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – Civil Rights: Debating Same-Sex Marriage	MSS: Chapter 7	Reaction Paper 3 due by noon 2/11
6	M 2/15	MIDTERM EXAM 1		
SECTION II: AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS				
	W 2/17	Congress	B&S: Chapter 12, pp. 430-351	
	F 2/19	Congress	B&S: Chapter 12, pp. 451-479	
7	M 2/22	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – Congress: Can Our Representatives Serve the Public Good?	MSS: Chapter 13	Reaction Paper 4 due by noon 2/21
	W 2/24	The Presidency	B&S: Chapter 13, pp. 480-504	
	F 2/26	The Presidency	B&S: Chapter 13, pp. 504-533	
8	M 2/29	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – The Presidency: How Much Differences Does the Individual Make?	MSS: Chapter 14	Reaction Paper 5 due by noon 2/28

WEEK	DATE	TOPIC	READING	ASSIGNMENTS
9	W 3/2	The Bureaucracy	B&S: Chapter 14	
	F 3/4	Judicial Branch	B&S: Chapter 15	
	M 3/7	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – The Judiciary: How Should it Interpret Our Constitution?	MSS: Chapter 15	Reaction Paper 6 due by noon 3/6
	W 3/9	MIDTERM EXAM 2		
SECTION III: POLITICAL BEHAVIOR				
10	F 3/11	Interest Groups	B&S: Chapter 6	
	M 3/14	Political Parties	B&S: Chapter 7	
	W 3/16	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – Political Polarization: How Divided Are We?	MSS: Chapter 10	Reaction Paper 7 due by noon 3/15
	F 3/18	The Role of Third Parties in American Politics (Documentary: <i>A Third Choice</i>)		
11	3/21-3/25	NO CLASS (Spring Break)		
12	M 3/28	The Role of the Media	B&S: Chapter 8, pp. 266-286	
	W 3/30	The Role of the Media	B&S: Chapter 8, pp. 286-299	
	F 4/1	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – Digital Media: Do They Expand or Shrink Democracy?	MSS: Chapter 9	Reaction Paper 8 due by noon 3/31
13	M 4/4	Public Opinion	B&S: Chapter 9, pp. 300-317	
	W 4/6	Public Opinion	B&S: Chapter 9, pp. 317-331	
	F 4/8	NO CLASS (MPSA Conference)		
14	M 4/11	Elections and Campaigns	B&S: Chapter 10, pp. 332-376	
	W 4/13	Elections and Campaigns	B&S: Chapter 10, pp. 376-395	
	F 4/15	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – Campaigns and Elections: Do Negative Ads Damage Democracy?	MSS: Chapter 11	Reaction Paper 9 due by noon 4/14
15	M 4/18	Voting Behavior and Participation	B&S: Chapter 11, pp. 396-416	
	W 4/20	Voting Behavior and Participation	B&S: Chapter 11, pp. 416-429	
	F 4/22	<i>Debating the Issues</i> – Low Voter Turnout: Good for Democracy?	Bennett & Resnick (1990) Pew Research article (2012) [Note: these readings will be posted on Blackboard]	Reaction Paper 10 due by noon 4/21 Final Paper due by 5:00pm
16	M 4/25	Introduction to Political Psychology		
	W 4/27	Introduction to Political Psychology		
	F 4/29	Review for Final Exam		
***	T 5/3	FINAL EXAM 1:00-3:00 PM		