



POL SCI 104 – 202
Introduction to American Government and Politics
Spring 2020: 02/10 – 03/21
Online only
Prerequisites: none

Instructor Information

Professor:	Patrick Kraft, PhD	Teaching Assistant:	Shin Young Park
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Office hours:	Thu, 12pm–2pm (via Canvas chat)	Office hours:	Tue, 11am–1pm

I Course Overview

Description

This course is designed to be an introduction to American government, its historical foundations, institutions, and political processes. The purpose of this class is to teach you about the institutions, practices, and history of politics and government in the United States. This course will cover a great deal of ground, as we will discuss the Constitution, the three branches of the federal government, interest groups, public opinion, campaigns, elections, and parties. For each subject, we will examine some of the leading perspectives in political science, and we will incorporate current events and our personal experiences, as well.

The main textbook for this course, *The Logic of American Politics*, takes a novel approach to the study of American politics. It frames the course in terms of understanding collective action problems. A collective action problem exists when people would be better off if they cooperated, but they can't help acting in their own interests, even if that makes everyone worse off. Over time, we have developed institutions to solve some collective action problems. The book, along with the course, investigates the kinds of collective action problems we have faced in our history, the solutions we've come up with to address them, and the success we've had in resolving them.

Course Learning Objectives

- To understand the structures and processes of American government and politics, the collective action challenges inherent in this system, and the practical implications of political structure and contestation in our lives.
- To sharpen our ability to think critically about the American political system by reading both contemporary and classic materials from a variety of sources that encompasses both objective and opinion-based points of view.
- To demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contemporary political debates.

This course fulfills the Social Science General Education Requirement (GER) through its focus on:

- a) the study of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, or societal development.
- b) the study of human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures, and interrelationships.

This course meets these requirements through our examination of the varied personal, social, and cultural forces that shape individual and collective political behavior. We will also examine the institutions and organizations on which our political and governmental system is built and discuss the development of those systems.

II Required Readings and Additional Materials

There is one required textbook for the course and it is available at the bookstore:

The Logic of American Politics.

Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, Lynn Vavreck. 2019.

9th Edition. CQ Press. ISBN: 9781544322995

Price (UWM Bookstore): \$49.24 (rental), \$81.40 (used).

Note: No access code for online content is required, so you may purchase a used copy of the book. Any additional material will be available electronically on Canvas.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that you regularly read a major daily newspaper (e.g., *The New York Times* or *The Wall Street Journal*) or watch political news broadcasts (e.g., PBS NewsHour).

III Course Requirements

Online Course

This is an online course and therefore there will not be any face-to-face class sessions. All assignments and course interactions will utilize internet technologies. Preparation for class means reading the assigned readings & reviewing all information required for each week. Attendance in an online course means logging into Canvas on a regular basis and participating in the activities that are posted in the course.

Work Load

This is a full-credit course (3 credits) that is condensed into 6 weeks, which implies that the class meets in an accelerated time frame online. As such, you should expect a very quick pace and you have to be careful not to fall behind. A three-credit course typically requires 144 hours of student work, which amounts to approximately 24 hours per week. Most of your time should be spent preparing the course readings, but you should set aside plenty of time to prepare for exams or work on assignments. Keep in mind that you are also encouraged to actively participate in the discussions on Canvas.

Activity	Estimated Time Commitment
Readings	75 hours
Preparing for and taking exams	30 hours
Writing assignment	25 hours
Discussion board participation	14 hours

Computer Requirements

This course requires that you have access to a computer that can access the internet. You will need to have access to, and be able to use, the following software packages:

- A web browser (Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Safari, etc.)

- Adobe Acrobat Reader (free)
- Adobe Flash Player (free)
- Microsoft Word, Open Office, etc.

You are responsible for having a reliable computer and internet connection throughout the course.

Email and Internet

You must have an active UWM e-mail account and access to the Internet. *All instructor correspondence will be sent to your UWM e-mail account.* Please plan on checking your UWM email account regularly for course related messages. This course uses Canvas for the facilitation of communications between faculty and students, submission of assignments, and posting of grades. The Canvas course page can be accessed at <https://uwm.edu/canvas/>.

Campus Network or Canvas Outage

When access to Canvas is not available for an extended period of time (greater than one entire evening, i.e., 6pm – 11pm) you can reasonably expect that the due date for assignments will be changed to the next day (due by midnight).

IV Course Policies and Evaluation

Basic Structure

This online course is divided into three parts (lasting 2 weeks each) that cover fundamental aspects of American politics. Each part consists of a set of textbook readings and concludes with a non-cumulative exam. To help you prepare for each exam, I am going to provide lecture slides and ungraded short quizzes on each chapter, as well as additional resources. Throughout the course, you will also have to complete two short writing assignments (see schedule below for more information).

Textbook Readings: The chapters in the required textbook are the main focus of the course. Please read the assigned chapters carefully. If you have any questions or comments about the readings, you are encouraged to post them on the discussion board on Canvas. Furthermore, staying informed with current events is a good way for you to apply what you are learning in class to the real world.

Exams: There will be three non-cumulative exams covering the material of each two-week section. You may complete the exam at any point in time before the section ends (please see specific due dates below). Each exam consists of 50 questions (mostly multiple choice and a few short essay questions), and you will have 90 minutes to complete it. The time limit is designed so that you will not be able to spend much time searching the book or notes for answers—*so please make sure to review all the material before you start the exam.*

Here's the good part: *You can take each exam up to two times anytime before the due date and only your highest score will be recorded.* If you are not happy with your first score, feel free to take the exam again. Although it is possible that you will get some repeat questions across the two attempts, most of the questions will be different, as they are randomly selected from a large set of questions (200+).

Writing Assignments: There are two short writing assignments that have to be completed throughout the course (~500 words each). In the first part, you are asked to choose a political issue that you personally care about (e.g., environmental protection, foreign affairs, campaign finance, ...) and identify a political representative or public official who is involved in the policy-making process related to this issue. In the second part, you are asked to write a letter to the representative you identified to express support for your preferred policy. You are not required to submit the letter to the representative, but you may do so if you like. Please check Canvas for more detailed instructions on the writing assignments.

Study Resources: There are a number of resources available to help you study for exams and understand the material. On Canvas you will find PowerPoint slides for each chapter of the textbook. These slides are provided by the publisher and do a good job summarizing some of the important concepts and points from the chapters. I suggest that you read the chapters before you look at the slides, otherwise the slides might not make sense to you. In addition, I will post a short quiz (10 multiple choice questions) for each textbook chapter. These quizzes are voluntary and will not be graded, their only purpose is to help you recap the material. You may repeat each quiz as many times as you like (note that the set of questions will change each time). Furthermore, you will find links on Canvas to additional online resources and supplemental readings.

Discussion board: We will have a discussion board as a part of this class where you are encouraged to post your questions and thoughts about the readings. I will similarly post questions and ideas. However, you are not required to do so as a part of your grade. Please remember to be kind and respectful to your fellow students on the discussion board.

Extra Credit: In order to get extra credit in this course, you can share a recent news articles that highlights one (or multiple) concepts covered in the material to the discussion board. You must also write a paragraph explaining how the article applies to the course. News articles should be from reputable sources. These posts will be graded, and for each article you post and write about you can get up to 2% extra credit. You may post up to two news articles (for a total of 4% extra credit). However, if you share two news articles, they must relate to two different learning units.

Submissions & Make-up Policy: All assignments, unless otherwise announced by the instructor, MUST be submitted via Canvas. Each assignment will have a designated place to submit the assignment. As a general rule, I do not allow students to make up missed exams or assignments. I will make exceptions to this policy only in the most severe and rare circumstances (severe illness, etc.). This means that it is better to turn in a partially completed assignment and receive partial credit than to turn it in late and receive no credit.

Grading Breakdown by Percentage

Writing Assignment 1	10%
Writing Assignment 2	15%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Exam 3	25%
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	100%

Grading Scale for Final Grades

Your course grade will be determined according to the following system:

93-100	A	77-79	C+	60-62	D-
90-92	A-	73-76	C	0-59	F
87-89	B+	70-72	C-		
83-86	B	67-69	D+		
80-82	B-	63-66	D		

Final grade percentages ending in a decimal of .5 or greater will be rounded up to the next wholenumber.

Communicating With the Instructor

This course uses a “three before me” policy in regards to student to faculty communications. When questions arise during the course of this class, please remember to check these three sources for an answer before asking me to reply to your individual questions:

1. Course syllabus
2. Announcements on Canvas
3. Canvas discussion board

This policy will help you in potentially identifying answers before I can get back to you and it also helps your instructor from answering similar questions or concerns multiple times.

If you cannot find an answer to your question, please first post your question to the discussion board. Here your question can be answered to the benefit of all students by either your fellow students who know the answer to your question or the instructor. You are encouraged to answer questions from other students in the discussion forum when you know the answer to a question in order to help provide timely assistance.

If you have questions of a personal nature such as relating a personal emergency, questioning a grade on an assignment, or something else that needs to be communicated privately, you are welcome to contact me via email. I will usually respond to messages from 8am to 5pm on weekdays, please allow 24 hours for me to respond.

If you have a question about the technology being used in the course, please contact the UWM Help Desk (<https://uwm.edu/technology/help/>) or the UWM Canvas support (<https://uwm.edu/canvas/students/>) for assistance.

Summary: How to Succeed in this Course

- Check your UWM email regularly
- Log in to the course web site daily
- Communicate with your instructor and participate on the Canvas discussion board
- Complete all assigned readings before taking the exams and prepare by compiling notes.
- Create a study schedule so that you don't fall behind on assignments

V Course Schedule

Part I: The Nationalization of Politics (February 10 – February 21)

Chapter	Read ✓	Slides ✓	Quiz ✓
1. The Logic of American Politics			
2. The Constitution			
3. Federalism			
4. Civil Rights			
5. Civil Liberties			

Exam 1 due: February 21, 11:59pm

Part 2: The Institutions of Government (February 24 – March 6)

Chapter	Read ✓	Slides ✓	Quiz ✓
6. Congress			
7. The Presidency			
8. The Bureaucracy			
9. The Federal Judiciary			

Exam 2 due: March 6, 11:59pm

Writing assignment 1 due: March 7, 11:59pm

Part 3: The Public's Influence on National Policy (March 9 – March 20)

Chapter	Read ✓	Slides ✓	Quiz ✓
10. Public Opinion			
11. Voting, Campaigns, and Elections			
12. Political Parties			
13. Interest Groups			
14. Media			
15. Is there a Logic to American Policy?			

Exam 3 due: March 20, 11:59pm

Writing assignment 2 due: March 21, 11:59pm

VI University Policies

Drop and Add dates

Please see the following website for full details on the types of withdrawals that are available:
<https://uwm.edu/onestop/dates-and-deadlines/interactive-adddrop-calendar/>

Academic Integrity

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has detailed its policies on academic integrity (<http://uwm.edu/academicaffairs/facultystaff/policies/academic-misconduct/>). You should acquaint yourself with policies concerning cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and academic interference. Any submission of work in this course constitutes a certificate that the work complies with university policies on academic integrity.

Student Disabilities

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I, will work either directly with you or in coordination with the Accessibility Resource Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA. Please also see <http://uwm.edu/arc/> for further information.

Other Policies

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee has several additional policies concerning issues such as accommodations for religious observances, students called to active military duty, discriminatory conduct, or sexual harassment available for you here: <https://uwm.edu/secu/syllabus-links/>. I strongly encourage you to access this link and familiarize yourself with these policies and procedures.