

POLI 100: Introduction to Government in the United States

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Class Meetings: Tuesday/Thursday 3:30-4:45, Phillips Hall 265

Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3, Wednesdays 9-10, and by appointment, 303 Hamilton Hall

In order to fully understand our complicated and contentious political climate and events, it is necessary to understand how the American political system works. We will work toward that understanding together by exploring the system from two angles: *institutions*, or the structure of the United States government; and *behavior*, or the actions and motivations of political actors, both politicians and the general public. We will discuss what problems the government and political system seek to solve and why they sometimes succeed and sometimes fail to solve those problems.

Learning objectives:

By the end of the semester, students should understand:

1. The major analytical and theoretical approaches that political scientists use to study government and politics in the United States
2. How the origins and evolution of the American political system have shaped the processes that make up our contemporary politics and government
3. Ways in which students can be active, lifelong participants in civic life and the political process by applying their knowledge to the world around them
4. Strategies for formulating and defending ideas through critical analysis of evidence and the communication of those ideas through speaking and writing

Required text:

Kollman, Ken. 2017. *The American Political System*. 3rd Edition. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

- As of this summer, this book was available to buy used on Amazon or to rent as an eBook, both for \$40. If you buy an earlier edition of this book, you will have different page numbers and I cannot promise you the information will be the same, as the third edition is an update from the second. Also: make sure you're getting the Third Edition and not the Core Third Edition, which doesn't have all the chapters we'll be reading.
- If you choose to buy or rent an eBook, please have it out in class only on a tablet, not a phone or computer.

Course requirements:

- Two papers
 - Paper one: 5-6 pages long plus citations, students sign up for due dates, written in the first half of the semester, about political institutions
 - You should apply the topic you signed up to write about to a current event or recent (in the last 5 years) political issue, and to make an argument about the desirability of the American political system's current way of addressing that issue.
 - You will sign up for your own due date. For example, if you sign up for the lesson on federalism on September 4, you are signing up to write about federalism and turn your paper in on September 4. You may want to write about how states' refusal to expand Medicaid exemplifies a conflict within a

- federal system and make an argument critiquing federalism and explaining why you think a unified system of government would avoid problems such as state Medicare expansion.
- Paper two: 5-6 pages long plus citations, due November 30, about political behavior
 - The second paper will ask you to apply your knowledge about political behavior, public opinion, and campaigns and elections to a real election. The prompt will be distributed on November 13.
 - Further details about what I'm looking for in papers are available on Sakai>Resources>"Paper 1 Expectations" and, closer to the due date, "Paper 2 Expectations"
 - 12-point, Times New Roman, one-inch margins all around, double-spaced
 - Use whichever (legitimate) citation style you'd like, but keep it consistent throughout a paper. For information on citation styles, see <http://guides.lib.unc.edu/citing-information/home>. I encourage you to bring your work to the Writing Center, whose website is <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/>.
 - Please submit papers by the beginning of class on the date due in your personal drop box on the Sakai site. To access: Sakai > your section site > Drop Box > [drop box labeled with your name] > Actions > Upload Files > Choose file > Continue and submit.
 - You will be able to see if your file has successfully uploaded. If you can see it in your personal drop box, I can see it but your classmates cannot.
 - The submission time will be timestamped. Late assignments will receive half of a letter grade penalty for each day they are late.
 - I will submit graded papers in your personal drop box.
 - I will grade your paper on whether it fulfills the assignment (including the guidelines above and in the paper prompt), accurately represents and cites its sources, is clear about its point of view, and is stylistically and mechanically error-free.
- Discussion questions: two sets
 - On our second day of class, you will select your own due dates for discussion questions. You will be submitting discussion questions twice throughout the semester.
 - Each time you submit discussion questions, you should write *two* questions. These should be concise – one or two sentences each, not a whole paragraph
 - Complete discussion questions that meaningfully address the topic will be awarded full points
 - "Meaningfully" means not just asking for a definition of a glossary word or a basic fact, but rather engaging with a critical issue from the material covered. It could be a normative ("should") question asking your classmates' opinions on an issue or it could be an descriptive ("is") question, but if it is the latter it should engage deeply, not superficially, with an issue.
 - An example of a good normative question: "Do you think the federal government should restrict states' partisan gerrymandering?"
 - An example of a good descriptive question: "How is the rhetoric of the deserving and undeserving poor used in American politics?"
 - Please post discussion questions to the Sakai forum for your classmates to see: Sakai>Forums>General Discussion>Start a New Conversation. You should also bring them to class to help guide our discussion for that day.

- Discussion questions are due at noon. Questions turned in late will take points penalties; if turned in after the start of class, they will be awarded a zero.
- Reading quizzes
 - Five times a semester, I will administer a short quiz to check reading comprehension and completion. If you have done that day's reading, you should be able to ace these quizzes; they won't be trick questions or gotchas. Quizzes will be 2-3 questions long and questions will be multiple choice, fill in the blank, and true/false.
- Two exams: a midterm and a final. Exams will be comprised of multiple choice questions, short answers, and essay questions.
- Participation/attendance
 - This course requires your engagement and participation in each class meeting. Participation is earned by speaking up respectfully in class and by demonstrating your preparation for each session. If you are comfortable speaking up in class, please help others participate by engaging in dialogue and being mindful about letting others speak. If you are uncomfortable speaking up in class, please consider this section an opportunity to grow and push yourself to contribute to the discussion – and come chat with me in office hours if you are having trouble participating.
 - Halfway through the semester, I will ask you for a written self-evaluation of your class participation. Next, I will post a temporary midterm participation grade on Sakai. That will be a placeholder that will be replaced with your final participation grade at the end of the semester.
 - Your participation grade will rely on both subjective and objective measures. Objective measures include attendance, timeliness, and possession of readings. Subjective measures include my evaluation of your activity in the classroom, including:
 - asking questions and making observations which demonstrate that you have completed the reading assignments
 - asking questions and making observations which demonstrate that you are listening to others
 - charitably evaluating the strengths and weaknesses in others' arguments
 - recognizing one's own assumptions and biases
 - making positive contributions to help move the conversation forward
 - thoughtfully responding to the ideas offered by your classmates, the texts we read, and/or me
 - The environment of this course will be informed by principles of feminist pedagogy:
 - the recognition that knowledge is constructed collectively, meaning
 - the valuing of community and collaboration and
 - the acknowledgment of individual experiences within that community, which requires
 - us to recognize and challenge power dynamics within our classroom.
 - Lived experiences can help illuminate our subject at hand, but anecdotes do not equal universal trends or truth.
 - If a point brought up by a fellow classmate challenges you, I urge you to 1) always assume good rather than malicious intent and 2) ask yourself what it means for our society or world that an idea that seems to anathema to you is true to another person.

- If you feel discomfort about an idea presented by our readings or a classmate, I encourage you to lean into that feeling. Discomfort can be an important part of the learning process. You might reflect on why a particular topic is creating discomfort and use your insights from that reflection to deepen your learning.
- Attendance is mandatory and will be taken every meeting on Sakai. Except for a legitimate excuse caused by a personal, medical, or family emergency (for which I reserve the right to ask for documentation), your participation grade will be lowered by 10 points (out of 100) for each unexcused absence (after the first unexcused absence) at the end of the semester. This means if you miss class once for illness and have two unexcused absences, since the first unexcused absence is free, you will lose 1.5% of your final grade. Please arrive a few minutes early so that you are ready to participate fully in class on time. I reserve the right to count latecomers as absent.
- A note about expectations: this is a reading-intensive class that requires you to read lots of material, come prepared to class, and discuss the material in detail. You cannot coast by in this class and get an A, nor can you skip class (more than one unexcused absence) without a penalty.

Grading:

- Any late assignment will have a reduction of one grade level (ex. an A- becomes a B-) for that assignment. *Any incomplete paper or exam will mean failure of the course.*

I will be using the UNC grade definitions (<http://registrar.unc.edu/academic-services/grades/explanation-of-grading-system/>) and the following grading scale:

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

Grade Composition

- First paper 15%
- Second paper 20%
- Discussion questions one 5%
- Discussion questions two 5%
- Reading quizzes 5%
- Midterm exam 15%
- Final exam 20%
- Participation/attendance 15%

Reading

Most of our reading will be from the Kollman textbook, but I will also assign some extra readings throughout the semester. All non-textbook readings are available on Sakai under “Resources.” I expect you to come to class with the reading, having read and processed the materials marked under that day in the schedule. This should involve taking notes in the margins and/or highlighting/underlining important passages.

- Your options for bringing non-textbook readings to class are to print them out or to bring them digitally on a tablet (see the section on technology below). You may want to print all our semester’s readings at once so that you aren’t stuck with last-minute printer problems. To add value to your OneCard: <https://onecard.unc.edu/card-management/adding-value/>
- A note on note-taking, in class and while reading: you may want to put any comments/questions/critiques of your own in [brackets] so you know it’s your comment and not the author’s.

Reading is like grocery shopping: you’re not wandering aimlessly through the text; you’ve got a shopping list, a specific set of questions to answer and themes to note. Look through the motivating

questions and headers in the book chapters or the abstracts of articles before you start reading so you know what will be covered. After you're done reading, you should be able to summarize the reading to your roommate in plain English.

Technology

- *Laptops* will not be needed for this class, and I ask that you put them away. Studies show both that laptops and electronics detract from learning and participation and that the brain processes handwritten notes more easily.
- *Tablets and e-readers* will be allowed in class for reading PDFs of class readings and an eBook of the textbook, but not for answering emails or using the Internet.
- *Cell phones* should be silenced and out of reach for the entirety of class.

Honor Code

All of your work in this class must comply with the UNC Honor Code, which can be accessed at <http://honor.unc.edu>. It is each student's responsibility to understand the Honor Code and how it applies to this course. *I will immediately report any suspected cases of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty to the honor court, and the grade penalty I recommend will be an F for the course.* Two specific things to note are 1) when you quote or paraphrase someone else's specific idea you must include a page number citation and 2) that when you use someone else's words you should always use quotation marks – even in your own notetaking.

Communication

I am reachable at lbritt@unc.edu. I am generally responsive to email, but am slower on weekends and outside of the working day. If you have a longer question or many different questions, please visit my office hours or email me to meet outside of them. I enjoy talking about politics, so visit me if you have questions about the materials or an assignment. I may not be able to answer last-minute questions about papers, so take this as an incentive to write well in advance of due dates!

Accessibility

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. All accommodations are coordinated through the Accessibility Resources and Service Office. [See the ARS Website for contact information: accessibility.unc.edu](http://accessibility.unc.edu). Relevant policy documents as they relate to registration and accommodations determinations and the student registration form are available on the website.

Semester schedule:

1. Tuesday 8.21 - Introductions, Syllabus, Course Expectations
2. Thursday 8.23 – Introduction to our Concepts
 - Kollman Chapter 1
 - Matthews, Dylan. 2015. "Obama suggested making it illegal not to vote. Here's how that's worked in Australia," *Vox.com*. <https://www.vox.com/2014/11/11/7155285/australia-compulsory-voting-turnout-midterm>.

3. Tuesday 8.28 – Articles of Confederation, Constitution, Founding
 - Kollman Chapter 2, pp. 33-46
 - U.S. Constitution, U.S. Bill of Rights, in Kollman Appendix pp. A12-A34
4. Thursday 8.30 – Constitution and Founding
 - Kollman Chapter 2, pp. 46-68
 - Federalist 10, 51 in Kollman Appendix pp. A34-A43
5. Tuesday 9.4 – Federalism
 - Kollman Chapter 3, pp. 73-93, 96-99
 - Nelson, Libby. 2014. “Everything You Need to Know About the Common Core.” *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/cards/commoncore/what-is-the-common-core>.
6. Thursday 9.6 – Congress I (Institutions)
 - Kollman Chapter 5, pp. 147-151, 165-196
 - Short simulation in class
7. Tuesday 9.11 – Congress II (Representation)
 - Kollman Chapter 5, pp. 151-165
 - Mayhew, David. “Congress.” In Ken Kollman, Ed., *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*. Third Edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014. 155-167. Originally published in *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974).
8. Thursday 9.13 – class cancelled due to hurricane
9. Tuesday 9.18 – Presidency I (History and Institutions)
 - Kollman Chapter 6, pp. 199-218
 - Elving, Ron. 2017. “Trump Puts A Twist On The Meaning of ‘Bully Pulpit.’” *National Public Radio*. <https://www.npr.org/2017/07/04/535429508/trump-s-weekend-gives-twist-to-meaning-of-bully-pulpit>.
10. Thursday 9.20 – Presidency II (The Modern-Day Presidency)
 - Kollman Chapter 6, pp. 218-240
 - Graham, David A. 2018. “The Strangest Thing About Trump’s Approach to Presidential Power.” *The Atlantic*. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/06/the-strangest-thing-about-trumps-approach-to-presidential-power/562271/>.
11. Tuesday 9.25 – The Judiciary I (Federal Courts and SCOTUS)
 - Kollman Chapter 8, pp. 285-311
 - Federalist 78
 - Simulation roles for Tuesday distributed
12. Thursday 9.27 – The Judiciary II (SCOTUS)
 - Kollman Chapter 8, pp. 311-324
 - Prepare for in-class simulation by reading distributed materials

13. Tuesday 10.2 – Civil Rights and Liberties
 - Kollman Chapter 4
 - Listen to Manoush Zomorodi, “The Fourth Amendment Needs Your Attention,” *Note to Self* Podcast. <https://www.wnycstudios.org/story/fourth-amendment>. 23:59.
 14. Thursday 10.4 – Bureaucracy, Exam Review
 - Kollman Chapter 7
 - Midterm exam review in class
 - Midterm participation self-evaluation and midterm course evaluation in class
 15. Tuesday 10.9 – Midterm Exam
 - Midterm participation grades posted on Sakai
 16. Thursday 10.11 – Public Opinion I (Surveying Public Opinion)
 - Kollman Chapter 9, pp. 329-341
 - Silver, Nate. 2018. “The Polls are All Right.” *FiveThirtyEight*. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-polls-are-all-right/>.
 17. Tuesday 10.16 – Public Opinion II (Where Political Attitudes Come From)
 - Kollman Chapter 9, pp. 341-362, 364-370
 - Zaller, John and Stanley Feldman. 1992. “A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences.” *American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 36, No. 3: 579-616.
 - Read pages 579-589, 606 (“Summary”) -612
- Thursday 10.18 Fall Break
18. Tuesday 10.23 – Political Participation
 - Kollman Chapter 10
 - Herron, Michael C. and Daniel A. Smith. 2018. “If more states start using Ohio’s system, how many voters will be purged?” *Monkey Cage*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/17/if-every-u-s-state-used-ohios-system-how-many-voters-would-be-purged/?utm_term=.33c185d09fa4.
 - Lind, Dara. 2014. “Facebook’s ‘I Voted’ sticker was a secret experiment on its users.” *Vox*. <https://www.vox.com/2014/11/4/7154641/midterm-elections-2014-voted-facebook-friends-vote-polls>.
 19. Thursday 10.25 – Interest Groups and Social Movements
 - Kollman Chapter 11
 - Drutman, Lee. 2015. “What we get wrong about lobbying and corruption,” article from *The Monkey Cage*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/04/16/what-we-get-wrong-about-lobbying-and-corruption/?utm_term=.eb407faefb5f.
 20. Tuesday 10.30 – Political Parties

- Kollman Chapter 12, 447-482
21. Thursday 11.1 – Campaigns and Elections I
- Kollman Chapter 13, pp. 491-522
22. Tuesday 11.6 – class cancelled due to water outage
23. Thursday 11.8 – Campaigns and Elections II
- Kollman Chapter 13, pp. 522-531
 - Alberta, Tim. 2017. “Is the Electoral College Doomed?” *Politico*.
<https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/09/05/electoral-college-national-popular-vote-compact-215541>.
24. Tuesday 11.13 – Media
- Kollman Chapter 14, pp. 537-567
 - Gladstone, Brooke. 2011. “Objectivity.” From *The Influencing Machine: Brooke Gladstone on the Media*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company. 96-111. Excerpt from http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/culturebox/features/2011/the_influencing_machine/the_influencing_machine.html.
 - Second paper prompt distributed in class
25. Thursday 11.15 – Social Policy
- Kollman Chapter 16
 - Listen to Al Letson, “A Welfare check,” *Reveal* Podcast,
<https://www.revealnews.org/episodes/a-welfare-check/>. 53:57.
26. Tuesday 11.20 – Race and Politics
- Alexander, Michelle. 2010. “The New Jim Crow.” *The Nation*.
<https://www.thenation.com/article/new-jim-crow/>.
 - Bertrand, Marianne, and Sendhil Mullainathan. 2004. “Are Emily and Greg more employable than Lakisha and Jamal? A field experiment on labor market discrimination.” *The American Economic Review*. Vol. 94, No. 4: 991-1013.
 - Read pp. 991-998, 1006-1111 (“IV. Interpretation”)
 - Tesler, Michael. 2012. “The Spillover of Racialization into Health Care: How President Obama Polarized Public Opinion by Racial Attitudes and Race.” *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 56, No. 3: 690-704.
 - Please bring a computer, tablet, or smartphone to class today for an in-class independent Implicit Attitudes Test exercise
- Thursday 11.22 Thanksgiving Break
27. Tuesday 11.27 – Gender and Politics
- Murray, Rainbow. 2014. “Quotas for Men: Reframing Gender Quotas as a Means of Improving Representation for All.” *American Political Science Review*. Vol. 108, No. 3: 520-532.

- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*. Vol. 1989, Issue 1: 139-167.
- Course evaluations in class

28. Thursday 11.29 – Foreign Policy

- Kollman Chapter 17
- North Korea nuclear threat simulation in class

Friday 11.30 - final paper due 11:59pm on Sakai drop box

29. Tuesday 12.4 exam review

Thursday 12.13 Final Exam 4:00-7:00pm, our classroom