

PSC 101
Intro to American Politics
201 Natural Sciences
Office hours: TR 1–2 or by appt.

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This course is an introduction to the political life of the US. We will explore how Americans think about politics, how Americans organize themselves politically, and how American institutions govern us. We will cover these topics with an eye towards showing how political scientists have dealt with them, which can be rather different from civics-book notions of political life.

Requirements and grading:

There are four parts of the course grade:

- Three midterm examinations
- A non-cumulative final exam

The lowest score, including a missed exam, will be dropped. Otherwise, each exam counts equally (1/3) towards the course grade.

Attendance is not mandatory in the sense that I will not be checking up on it, but be aware that you *will not* be able to learn the material from the books. The readings are generally merely the base on which I build lectures, and poor attendance will create its own reward.

If you have a disability, contact ODS and they will determine the appropriate accommodation. Please let me know as soon as possible so that I can arrange testing through ODS if that is appropriate.

Readings:

- Bianco and Canon, *American Politics Today* (APT)
- Readings are to be done *before* the day listed. As I will generally not simply parrot the readings, this really does matter.

Make-up exams:

I will drop the lowest exam grade, including a zero from a missed exam. This is intended to deal with most missed exams. I will allow actual make-up exams only for official university-sponsored activities or the direst of emergencies (ie, you, personally, are hospitalized, jailed, or deployed).

Academic integrity

See the UB pages on academic integrity. Expect heavy retribution for misconduct, starting at an F in the course.

Decorum etc

Please show up on time and be ready to start taking notes at the beginning of class - we have a huge amount of material to get through and little time to do it. My general approach to cell phones ringing in class is public shame, but in the event that you are beyond shame, I will reduce your course grade.

Plan of the course

Note that this is not a contract. It is subject to change at my discretion.

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
August 31	Introduction	APT, Ch. 1
Sept 2	Problems in human interaction No class / APSA meeting	
Sept 7	The founding and Constitution	APT, Ch. 2 US Constitution US Declaration of Independence <i>Federalist</i> 10 and 51
Sept 9	No class / university holiday	
Sept 14 / 16	The founding and Constitution	
Sept 21 / 23	Public opinion	APT, Ch. 5
Sept 28 Sept 30	EXAM 1 Campaigns and elections, participation	APT, Ch. 8
Oct 5 / 7	Participation, voting	
Oct 12 / 14	Interest groups and parties	APT, Chs. 7, 9
Oct 19 Oct 21	Interest groups and parties EXAM 2	
Oct 26 / 28	Congress	APT, Ch. 10
Nov 2 Nov 4	Presidency Election preview Presidency Election results	APT, Ch. 11
Nov 9 / 11	Bureaucracy	APT, Ch. 12
Nov 16 Nov 18	Exam 3 Courts	APT, Ch. 13
Nov 23 Nov 25	Courts No class / university holiday	
Nov 30 / Dec 2	Civil liberties	APT, Ch. 4
Dec 7 / 9	Civil rights	APT, Ch. 14
TBA	Final Exam	