

# PSC 101LEC: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS

Registration #14908

Spring 2017

Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00am – 12:20pm

Knox 109

3 credits

## **Professor Antoine Yoshinaka**

E-mail: antoine@buffalo.edu

Office: 418 Park Hall

Office Hours: Tuesday, 2:00pm – 5:00pm, or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course offers an introduction to U.S. political institutions and processes. Students will learn *how* the U.S. government functions, *why* the U.S. government is set up the way it is, and the *effects* of these institutional arrangements for the conduct of politics in the United States. A central theme is that the “rules of the game” (e.g., the U.S. Constitution, congressional rules, election laws), affect the way political actors (e.g., voters, members of Congress, the President) behave in the political arena.

### IMPORTANT DATES:

- **February 21**: First exam
- **March 28**: Second exam
- **April 6**: No class
- **April 25**: Third exam
- **May 16**: Final exam, 11:45am – 2:45pm

### REQUIRED BOOK (available at the bookstore):

Bianco, William T., and David T. Canon. 2016. *American Politics Today*, Fifth Essentials Edition. New York: Norton.

-Please note that there are at least three “versions” for the fifth edition of this textbook. You need to purchase the FIFTH ESSENTIALS EDITION. You can find it at the bookstore or here:

**<http://books.wwnorton.com/books/webad.aspx?id=4294986053>**

-You should also check out Amazon.com, Coursesmart.com, BN.com, etc. for a lower price

-Formats include paperback, loose-leaf 3-punch holes, e-book. There is also the option to rent the book for the duration of the semester. Any of those formats is acceptable.

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENTS:**

Course Learning Outcome	Program Outcomes / Competencies	Instructional Method(s)	Assessment Method(s)
Know the basic organization and function of American political institutions and understand the ways in which they have changed over the years	UBGE, political science	Lecture, readings	Exams
Relate the institutions and behavior analyzed in the course to core concepts and persistent problems in political science	UBGE, political science	Lecture, readings	Exams
Understand the motivations of government officials, parties, interest groups, the media, and the public, as well as their role in affecting the political process	UBGE, political science	Lecture, readings	Exams
Begin to develop an understanding of political science as a discipline	UBGE, political science	Lecture, readings	Exams

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:** First, you must attend lectures and come prepared to class by doing all the assigned readings. I will post my notes online on UBlerns (<https://ublearns.buffalo.edu>) after each lecture. In my experience, the best note-taking strategy is to take general notes during lecture, especially information that isn't printed on a slide, and combine the written notes with the slides I upload on UBlerns. If there's one guarantee in this class, it is the following: my lecture slides are not sufficient to pass the class – you will need to take notes during lecture and stay on top of all the required readings.

There will be four, non-cumulative exams held on February 21, March 28, April 25, and May 16, respectively. Specifics about each exam will be discussed during the semester, but you should know that everything we cover in lecture, as well as all required readings, are subject to questions on the exams. Each exam will consist of multiple choice questions.

In computing your grade, I will average your three highest exam scores and weight them equally (1/3 each), thus dropping your lowest exam score.

At the end of the semester your grade will be assigned based on the following scale:

A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D (60-69); F (0-59). In determining your letter grade I will round decimals up to the next integer.

**READINGS:** Before each lecture, you will need to do the assigned readings, which will mostly be drawn from the Fifth Essentials Edition of Bianco and Canon's *American Politics Today* (see course outline below). The book is required. Any additional reading will be posted on UBlerns.

I will put a couple of copies of the textbook on reserve at the library. These will be available for short-term borrowing (i.e., 2 hours at a time). Given the large number of students in the class, I wouldn't count on these library copies being available when you need them, especially right before an exam.

POLICY FOR MAKE-UP EXAMS: All exams must be taken at the scheduled time. No make-up exams will be granted unless accompanied by a written justification. You must alert me of the need to reschedule an exam as soon as you are aware of the fact that you cannot take the exam at the scheduled time. In all cases, the reason must be documented (such as a doctor's letter on official letterhead for a serious illness). Light illness *will not* be a sufficient condition for a make-up exam. Students without a legitimate excuse will receive a 0 on the exam.

I will grant an incomplete (I) only in legitimate instances and you must discuss it with me before the final exam (see <http://undergrad-catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/grading/explanation.shtml#incomplete>)

ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES: If you require accommodations due to a disability, please contact Accessibility Resources, located at 60 Capen Hall. AR can be reached by phone at (716) 645-2608 or by email at [stu-accessibility@buffalo.edu](mailto:stu-accessibility@buffalo.edu). Please inform me as soon as possible about your needs so that we can coordinate your accommodations. For more information, visit <http://www.student-affairs.buffalo.edu/ods/>

UBLEARNS: All lecture notes and non-textbook readings will be available on Ublearns (<https://ublearns.buffalo.edu>). I may also post announcements, so please check it periodically.

COMMUNICATION POLICY: If I need to communicate with the class I will do so using Ublearns. It is therefore imperative that you check the email under which you are registered (i.e., your @buffalo.edu email).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: I expect students to refrain from cheating, plagiarizing, or engaging in any other type of academic misconduct. To find out more on academic regulations, please consult <http://catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/integrity.html>

Without exception, cases of academic misconduct will be dealt with according to University policy.

#### CLASS DECORUM

I fully expect students to refrain from engaging in any disruptive behavior such as – but not limited to – using cellphones, surfing the web, emailing, texting, taking pictures, videotaping lectures, using any sort of recording device, talking to classmates. I will not tolerate any disruptive behavior and will refer egregious cases to the appropriate entity on campus. For more details, please consult <http://catalog.buffalo.edu/policies/course/obstruction.html>.

#### TECHNOLOGY POLICY

The use of laptop computers, tablets, cellphones, smartphones, or any other electronic device is prohibited during lectures and exams. If I catch you using an electronic device during lecture, I will ask you to stop immediately. The second time I catch you, I may ask you to leave the room. This policy is in place because of the ample evidence that the use of electronic devices distracts not only the user, but those around him/her.

If you need to use electronic devices for medical or disability reasons, please contact me as soon as possible to make appropriate arrangements.

OTHER POLICIES: I do not offer any individual opportunities for extra credit.

CLASS OUTLINE: The following outline is NOT definitive. We may move more quickly than anticipated in some sections, and more slowly in others. Announcements regarding schedule changes will be made in class and on UBlerns. Students are responsible to stay abreast of these changes.

In addition to the readings below, I might occasionally post articles or book chapters on UBlerns. You will be notified of these additional readings and will be responsible for downloading and reading them.

Please note that “APT” refers to the Fifth Essentials Edition of Bianco and Canon’s *American Politics Today*

**Week 1 (January 31, February 2): Introduction**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
Course organization	NONE
Introduction	-APT, Ch. 1 -Strategy & Choice, pp. 3-13 (on UBlerns) -Federalist No. 10 and No. 51 (on UBlerns)

**Week 2 (February 7, 9): Collective action, The Constitution and the Founding**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
Collective action	Strategy & Choice, pp. 36-47 (on UBlerns)
The Constitution and the Founding	APT, Ch. 2

**Week 3 (February 14, 16): Federalism**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
Federalism	APT, Ch. 3 Federalist No. 39 (on UBlerns)

**Week 4 (February 21, 23): FIRST EXAM, Civil liberties**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
<b>February 21—FIRST EXAM</b>	
Civil Liberties	APT, Ch. 4

**Week 5 (February 28, March 2): Civil liberties (cont'd), Civil rights**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
Civil Liberties (cont'd)	APT, Ch. 4
Civil Rights	APT, Ch. 5

**Week 6 (March 7, 9): Civil rights (cont'd), Congress and representation**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
Civil Rights (cont'd)	APT, Ch. 5
Congress and representation	APT, Ch. 10 Mayhew, "Congress: The Electoral Connection" (on UBlerns) Fenno, "Home Style" (on UBlerns) Strategy & Choice, pp. 52-66 (on UBlerns)

**Week 7 (March 14, 16): Congress and representation (cont'd)**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
Congress and representation (cont'd)	APT, Ch. 10 Mayhew, "Congress: The Electoral Connection" (on UBlerns) Fenno, "Home Style" (on UBlerns) Strategy & Choice, pp. 52-66 (on UBlerns)

**Week 8 (March 21, 23): SPRING BREAK**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	

**Week 9 (March 28, 30): SECOND EXAM, The presidency**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
<b>March 28—SECOND EXAM</b>	
The presidency	APT, Ch. 11

**Week 10 (April 4, 6): The presidency (cont'd), CLASS CANCELED ON APRIL 6**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
The presidency (cont'd)	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 11
<b>April 6—NO CLASS</b>	

**Week 11 (April 11, 13): The bureaucracy, The courts**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
The bureaucracy	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 12 Strategy & Choice, pp. 159-173 (on Ublearns)
The courts	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 13

**Week 12 (April 18, 20): The courts (cont'd), Public opinion and the media**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
The courts	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 13
Public opinion and the media	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 6 Prior, "News vs. Entertainment" (on Ublearns)

**Week 13 (April 25, 27): THIRD EXAM, Public opinion and the media (cont'd),**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
<b>April 25—THIRD EXAM</b>	
Public opinion and the media (cont'd)	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 6 Prior, "News vs. Entertainment" (on Ublearns)

**Week 14 (May 2, 4): Voting and elections**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
Voting and elections	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 8 Strategy & Choice, pp. 69-77 and 91-106 (on Ublearns)

**Week 15 (May 9, 11): Political parties, Interest groups**

<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required readings</i>
Political parties	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 7 Aldrich, "Why Parties?" (on Ublearns) Cohen et al., "The Party Decides" (on Ublearns)
Interest groups	<i>APT</i> , Ch. 9 Wright, pp. 75-113 (on Ublearns)

**FINAL EXAM ON MAY 16, 11:45AM – 2:45PM**