

**POL 101: Introduction to American Government and Politics**  
**Spring 2013**  
**Syllabus**

**Time:** MWF 2:30-3:20

**Location:** B151

**Instructor:** Ñusta Carranza Ko

**Office:** Beering Hall 2245

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**Office Hours:**

MW: 3:30-4:30; T: 2:30-3:30

**Course Description and Objectives:**

The course is an introductory survey in American Government and Politics. It is designed to provide students with a familiarity for understanding the fundamental concepts, theories, debates, and behaviors of institutions and individuals in American politics. Students should gain an acquaintance with a wide variety of American government related topics that would serve as a jumping off point to further studies in the field.

Throughout the course, material covered will be related to history, economy, institutions, society, and the government, all relevant to the American political context. Emphasis will be placed on how to critically reflect and examine institutions, behaviors, and representation of American national government. Students will interact with topics mainly through their assigned readings, lectures, presentations, debates, and discussions.

**Required Materials:**

Thomas E. Patterson. 2011. *We the People: A Concise Introduction to American Politics*. 9<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. (from here on referred to as **WTP**)  
<material available at University Bookstores; you may use the latest 2012/3 edition>

On-line readings and referenced materials: the URLs are listed for each week.

Newspapers (any major national newspaper: The Washington Post, The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Los Angeles Times, The Chicago Tribune; or any major international newspaper that has a section for American politics: El Pais, The Globe and Mail, and BBC)

**Evaluation Procedures:**

The criteria for evaluation and the specified percentages to be used in the computation of each student's final course grade are:

<u>Criteria</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Participation	15%
Assignments	10%
Exam 1	20%
Exam 2	20%

**Grading Scale:** Grades will be assigned according to the scale below.

- A+ 100-97
- A 96-93
- A- 92-90
- B+ 89-87
- B 86-83
- B- 82-80
- C+ 79-77
- C 76-73
- C- 72-70
- D+ 69-67
- D 66-63
- D- 62-60
- F 59 and below

**Exams:**

The examination component of this course is divided into three exams (exam 1, 2, and a final). These will come in the form of a set of multiple choice, identification terms, short answer, and long answer (essay) blue book response to questions pertinent to the lectures and assigned readings. The final exam may or may not be cumulative of all the materials in the lecture, reading, and the discussions from the entire semester. Success on the exams will *almost certainly require* class attendance and keeping up with the weekly reading assignments.

**Assignments:**

(Grading scale: 5= outstanding work; 4= good work; 3= satisfactory; 2= some lack of clarity or slight misunderstanding; 1= misunderstanding or lack of effort that is so significant that you should talk with the professor; 0= assignment not submitted)

- I. Topic analysis-A: choose one of the editorials from the New York Times, Chicago Tribune, and other major national newspapers. (pick one that is the most interesting to you that has relevance to American politics)
  - a) Identify the argument/claim of the piece
  - b) Note whether it is primarily 'empirical' (facts based claims) or 'normative' (values: claims about preferred outcomes)
  - c) Give your own opinion of the editorial piece (you agree/disagree)  
\*no more than 1 page written: 12 font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins, and double spaced\*
- II. Fact checking-B: take the same editorial piece that you have chosen for Topic analysis-A

- a) Put yourself in the role of a “fact-checker”
- b) Identify how accurate the claim of the editorial is: how truthful is the information?
- c) Write down the results and explain your reasons
- d) \*no more than 1 page written: 12 font, Times New Roman, 1 inch margins, and double spaced\*

### **Participation and Attendance**

Attendance is required and students are expected to be present at all class meetings. Please *turn off your phones* and *refrain* from using your devices in class. Participation is *more* than class attendance. Active engagement in class discussions and an effective presentation of current events all count towards a student’s participation grade. To do so, students should do the assigned readings in advance and come ready to consider the main topics of the day.

For each class, 2-3 students will be assigned to present current events related to American Government and Politics. The students will be responsible to introduce 2 news materials to the class, citing the sources from where they obtained the information, and provide a question for the class (to discuss) at the end of their presentation. This will take no longer than 5 minutes.

During each class students, grouped in 2-4 people, will be handed a 2 x 4 index card. Students will be responsible for writing their names at the top right hand corner of the index card and to write down a 2-3 sentence response to a discussion question or questions that will be provided during class. The class will then hold a discussion. Unless the work is deficient, illegible, and incoherent, a completed discussion question will receive full credit. This requires the student to attend class to receive the question, discuss it openly in class, and to hand in the index card at the end of the class. Failure to come to class and to complete this index card will result in the devaluation of the participation grade.

### **Purdue’s Blackboard Learn:**

This course requires students to access Blackboard Learn. Useful information such as the course syllabus, announcements, and additional readings will be found here. I will occasionally send out notes using Blackboard and if class is canceled for whatever reason, this is how you will know ahead of time. <http://www.itap.purdue.edu/learning/tools/blackboard/>

### **Questions, Office Hours, and Outside Help**

Please ask questions at any time during class regarding material you find unclear, interesting, or requiring more explanation. Do not withhold questions because you are afraid that you are the only member of the class that does not understand a particular point. Studying a new field may often times be challenging and chances are others will be wondering the same things. I encourage you to view it as an opportunity to engage the material by discussing it with the instructor and with other classmates.

If you have any questions regarding course requirements and/or grading, please feel free to stop by my office, ask me before or after class, or via email.

### **Student Disability**

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability and have submitted the appropriate information to the proper University official, please see me even if the process has yet to be completed.

**Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism, cheating, etc: absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. All instances of academic dishonesty will be reported to the university. If you are unsure about plagiarism, please see me. With respect to the paper, it is highly likely that I will recognize or have read the source you are improperly citing, so if you have questions or concerns about your academic writing I would be happy to help. Additionally, the university runs a writing lab that can also provide consultation.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

**Emergency Statement:** In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. To get information about changes in *this* course, e-mail the course instructor.

### **Course Outline and Assigned Readings:**

The assigned readings that correspond with each section should be read before the class for that section. We will stick to this schedule as closely as possible. However, *expect readings to be added*; students are responsible for keeping up with changes in the assigned readings. A documentary film may also be shown to further the understanding of the weekly topic.

#### **1<sup>st</sup> week (January 7): Introduction to American Politics**

Reading: WTP Chapter 1-*Political Thinking: Becoming a Responsible Citizen*

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> week (January 14): Constitutional Foundations of American Politics**

Reading: WTP Chapter 2-*Constitutional Democracy: Promoting Liberty and Self-Government*  
*U.S. Constitution*: can be found at the back of your book or at

<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html>

#### **3<sup>rd</sup> week (January 23 (January 21 NO CLASS)): Federalism and its Debates I**

Reading: WTP Chapter 3-*Federalism: Forging a Nation*

*Federalist 10*: can be found at the end of your book or at

[http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_10.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_10.html)

*Federalist 51*: can be found at the end of your book or at

[http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_51.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_51.html)

**4<sup>th</sup> week (January 28): Federalism and its Debates II**

Reading: Reread

WTP Chapter 3-*Federalism: Forging a Nation*

*Federalist 10*: can be found at the end of your book or at

[http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_10.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_10.html)

*Federalist 51*: can be found at the end of your book or at

[http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed\\_51.html](http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_51.html)

**5<sup>th</sup> week (February 4): Citizen's Rights: Individual Rights**

Reading: WTP Chapter 4-*Civil Liberties: Protecting Individual Rights*

*Bill of Rights*: can be found at the end of your book or at

[http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill\\_of\\_rights\\_transcript.html](http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html)

<<Topic Analysis A-Assignment Due>>

**6<sup>th</sup> week (February 11-First Exam)**

**(February 13): Citizen's Rights: Equal Citizenry**

WTP Chapter 5-*Equal Rights: Struggling toward Fairness*

**7<sup>th</sup> week (February 18): Branches of Government: Congress I**

Reading: WTP Chapter 11-*Congress Balancing National Goals and Local Interests*

**8<sup>th</sup> week (February 25): Branches of Government: Congress II; Executive**

Reading: WTP Chapter 11-*Congress Balancing National Goals and Local Interests*

WTP Chapter 12-*The Presidency: Leading the Nation*

**9<sup>th</sup> week (March 4; class cancelled for March 8): Branches of Government: Executive II; Judiciary**

Reading: WTP Chapter 12-*The Presidency: Leading the Nation*

WTP Chapter 14-*The Federal Judicial System: Applying the Law*

**SPRING BREAK (March 11)**

**10<sup>th</sup> week (March 18-Second Exam)**

**(March 20): Branches of Government: Bureaucracy**

Reading: WTP Chapter 13-*The Federal Bureaucracy: Administering the Government*

**11<sup>th</sup> week (March 25): Public Opinion and Political Participation I**

Reading: WTP Chapter 6-*Public Opinion and Political Socialization: Shaping the People's Voice*

**12<sup>th</sup> week (April 1): Public Opinion and Political Participation II**

Reading: WTP Chapter 7-*Political Participation: Activating the Popular Will*

**13<sup>th</sup> week (April 8): Public Opinion and Political Participation II continued; III**

Reading: Reread WTP Chapter 7-*Political Participation: Activating the Popular Will*  
WTP Chapter 8-*Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns*

**14<sup>th</sup> week (April 15): Public Opinion and Political Participation III continued; Interest Groups**

Reading: WTP Chapter 8-*Political Parties, Candidates, and Campaigns*  
WTP Chapter 9-*Interest Groups: Organizing for Influence*

**15<sup>th</sup> week (April 22): Interest Groups continued**

Reading: Reread WTP Chapter 9-*Interest Groups: Organizing for Influence*

**16<sup>th</sup> week (April 29): Final Exams**