

Course Syllabus – POL 241

Political Science 241W American Political System Spring 2018, 3 Credits

Professor: Monica C. Schneider
Office: 124 Harrison
Phone: (513) 529-0257 (not a good way to reach me)
E-mail: mschneider@miamioh.edu
Office Hours: <https://profschneider.youcanbook.me/>

Course Description

This is an introductory course in U.S. politics, which is designed to promote understanding and evaluation of politics: the application of theory to real world examples. This class does not require prior knowledge or experience in political science, only an interest in understanding the world of government and politics and our role in it. This course is, for a large part, an active-learning experience. That is, you will be expected to come to class to work, learn, and actively engage in the material. You will be required to participate in groups and complete analytic activities. The course is designed around three main areas of American politics: governmental ideas and frameworks; political institutions; and the ways in which citizens are linked to the U.S. government. Throughout these sections of the course, you will participate in individual and group projects surrounding a specific public policy issue to apply themes and debates in political science to analyze how the concepts manifest themselves in current policy debates. Since this is also a writing-intensive course, you will be assigned different writing tasks for different audiences. You will be expected to revise and improve your work over the course of the semester.

- Through class discussion and activities, tweets, and short answer assignments, students will define and explain political science concepts, theories and approaches.
- Through the Issue Portfolio assignment, students will demonstrate skill in evidence-based reasoning from identifying the appropriate data or evidence necessary to construct a convincing argument to constructing and communicating that argument.
- Through the class discussion and activities as well as the Issue Portfolio assignments, students will apply political science knowledge to contemporary political issues and problems and be able to identify and evaluate alternative political-science based solutions.
- Given the final Issue Portfolio assignment, students will formulate, propose, and advocate possibilities for positive change in democratic society as engaged and informed citizens.
- Through the article critique assignment, students will identify the appropriate methodology, design, and analysis for a given problem.
- Given the Issue Portfolio and Article Critique assignments, students will write for a specialist audience critiquing an academic article and a non-specialist audience about current policy recommendations.

Course Policies

- The course policies for this course can be found online. **You must read these policies and get all the answers correct on the online quiz for this course.**

Course Assignments

Issue Portfolio (32.5%) Assignment 1: Define the Issue Assignment 2: Public opinion Assignment 3: Persuade Assignment 4: Participate! Issue Portfolio Revision Memo Issue Portfolio Revision	Points: 100 points (4 parts, 25 points/assignment) 5 points 25 points
Quizzes – 11.25%	45 points total, .5 points per question
Short Answer Assignments (27.5%) Assignments completed before class	110 points total, 10 points each (Lowest dropped)
In-Class Activities and Objectives Survey/Tweet (7.5%)	30 points total (2 points each) Randomly collected and graded
Article Critique (6.25%)	25 points
FINALE (15%)	60 points

Total Points Possible: = 400

Founding Principles

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
Week 1: 1/30	Course Introduction		
Week 1: 2/1	Issue Discussion/ Why Government?	1. Olson – Logic of Collective Action 2. How to Read in POL, p 1-2 3. Scott & Garrison, Ch 1	SA 1
Week 2: 2/6	What are the values that unite Americans?	1. DeTocqueville 2. Declaration of Independence 3. Elazar 4. Smith	SA 2
Week 2: 2/8	Memo Writing Citations Quiz 1	1. Scott & Garrison, Ch 2, 3 (skip 3.3), 5.4	
Week 3: 2/13	Why did America end up with this Constitution?	1. U.S Constitution (Arts. 1-3, 5, Bill of Rights)	Quiz 1

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
		2. Federalist 10, 51 Antifederalist 1	
Week 3: 2/15	How does Federalism play out in current political issues?	1. Federalist #39 3. Group readings	Quiz 2
Week 4: 2/20	Is American politics representative?	1. Bos, Nelson & vanDoorn, p 1-5 2. Mansbridge – highlighted text 2. Sapiro, p 701-705	SA 3
Week 4: 2/22	Memo Writing		IP 1
Week 5: 2/27	Political Science Research	1. How to Read in Political Science (2-end) 2. Scott & Garrison, Ch 6	SA 4
Week 5: 3/1	Political Science Research (Cont'd)	1. Teresi 2. Johnson et al	SA 5

The Role of the Public in American Politics

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
Week 6: 3/6	How do we measure public opinion?	1. Lepore – New Yorker article on polling 2. NY Times article on sampling 3. How Questionnaires are put together	
Week 6: 3/8		Asher – choose 1 section	Quiz 3
Week 7: 3/13	How does the media influence voters?	Media Chapter – read sections 1-3, 7	SA 6
Week 7: 3/15	Are Americans competent and sophisticated enough for democracy?	1. Delli Carpini & Keeter 2. No, we're not arguing from the same facts 3. Pew Report 4. Ignorance article	Article Critique Due
Week 8: 3/19	SPRING BREAK		

Institutions

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
Week 9: 3/27	How does Congress operate to make laws?	1. Mayhew 2. Farm Bill article 3. Timeline for Bill 4. I'm just a bill/ how a bill becomes a law video	Quiz 4
Week 9: 3/29	Writing Workshop IP #2		
Week 10: 4/3	Does the President have too much power?	1. Cameron – veto bargaining 2. Going Public 3. Norms	Quiz 5
Week 10: 4/5	Presidency (Cont'd) Writing a Persuasive Essay	1. Choose 1: WaPo Vetoes, Public opinion, Executive orders, Signing statements	IP #2

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
		2. Op Ed Examples 3. Scott & Garrison, pp 16-18	
Week 11: 4/10	How does a case get to the Supreme Court and how does it get decided?	1. Scalia and Breyer video 2. Vox video on how a case gets to the SC	Quiz 6

Key Questions in American Politics

Date	Topic	Readings	Due
Week 11: 4/12	(How) Does Race matter?	1. Sears et al pgs 1-15 2. Group 1: Housing activity 3. Group 2: Public opinion 4. Group 3: Voting Rights 5. Group 4: Education	SA 7
Week 12: 4/17	Race #2	1. Invisible Privilege 2. Obama – race speech 3. MLK Letter 4. NPR on BLM 5. The Federalist – Confederate Monuments	SA 8
Week 12: 4/19	Who should vote?		
Week 13: 4/24	Are elites polarized?	1. Asymmetric Polarization 2. What we know and don't know about our polarized politics	IP 3
Week 13: 4/26	Is the public polarized?	1. David Brooks – One Nation Slightly Divisible 2. Look how far we've come apart – NY Times	SA 9
Week 14: 5/1	Is inequality a problem?	1. Wealth and inequality in CQ Researcher 2. Inequality is not inevitable	
Week 14: 5/3	What role does money play in US politics?	Big Sky, Big Money	SA 10
Week 15: 5/8	Money #2/ What changes should be made to the Constitution?	1. Toobin 2. Levinson 3. Time Article	SA 11
Week 15: 5/10	Constitutional Convention & Final Prep		IP 4

Finals Week

Date	Time	Due
5/15	5pm	Final Issue Portfolio Revisions
5/17	12:45-2:45PM	FINALE