

Introduction to American Politics (post-Irma edition)

Class: Mondays and Thursdays, 2:00-3:20, ACE 102

Instructor: Jack Reilly

jreilly+ag@ncf.edu

Office: SSC 205

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-3 & by appointment (jacklireilly.youcanbook.me)

TA: Jack Belk

jack.belk15@ncf.edu

Syllabus Revision: September 19, 2017

Description: This course serves as an introduction to the systematic and rigorous study of American politics. We develop an understanding of the forces that influence the behavior of individuals and institutions in and around our national government. How well does the American political system live up to the ideals of a representative democracy? Answering this question means that we need to know something about how our government is supposed to work, where it fails to measure up, and why. This will put us in a position to evaluate proposals for reforming the system as well as defenses of the status quo. Topics include the Federalist papers, the Constitution, participation and voting behavior, elections and representation, political parties and factions, Congress, the Presidency, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and the formation of public policy.

Course Structure: This is a multi-mode introductory-level class. Class will consist of group discussions, talks, simulations, debates, and class discussions. We begin each day small group discussions. You must come to class prepared to participate every day.

Prerequisites: None. Strongly recommended **corequisite:** writing course.

Textbooks

- Ken Kollman, *The American Political System: Core Second Edition*. Norton. ("Text")
- Ken Kollman, *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*, 3rd Edition. ("Reader")
- Dahl, Robert. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Yale.
- Additional readings as assigned can be found in the course Google drive. ("Online")

Older editions of the textbook can be found cheaply online and are acceptable. I recommend the current version of the reader.

Course Requirements

1. Daily Preparation

1. Assigned reading
2. Discussion questions

2. Participation

1. Daily discussion
2. Discussion leadership
3. Debates and simulations

3. Tests

1. Core Exam
2. Behavior Exam
3. Linkage Exam
4. Final (Institutions) Exam

4. Final Paper

Participation and Readings: Successful participation requires both attendance and familiarity with the readings. By class each day, you should have completed the readings for that day. Students are not expected to have mastered the reading by class, but students are expected to be familiar enough that they may ask and answer questions about the material, both in small group discussion at the beginning of class and within the larger classroom context. As this is an introductory class with strong group discussion components, slides are not exhaustive and it is difficult to make up missed class time. If you must miss a class, make sure to complete the reading for the class and review the material with your fellow classmates or with the professor.

Discussion Questions: Submit discussion questions or points (broadly construed) to the professor's e-mail (jreilly+ag@ncf.edu), the TA's e-mail (jack.belk15@ncf.edu), and to your discussion group by noon on the day of class. This question (or set of questions) can be about anything from the reading: uncertainty on the analysis technique, a challenge of the author's theory, a question about the implications of a paper, etc. The idea is for your classmates and professor to get a feel for what you are thinking about the reading, and what you are having trouble with, so that we conduct class discussions accordingly. **Daily question e-mails should be titled as follows: AG Questions 1.1, AG Questions 1.2, AG Questions 2.1, etc.**

Discussion Leadership: Once during the quarter, every student will be responsible for being that day's "discussion leader." Being the day's discussion leader means spending a brief time introducing the readings (less than five minutes) and identifying two or three discussion questions that begin the group discussion phase of class. If you are unsure how to begin, do not hesitate to ask for help from the instructor.

Tests: There are three exams in this class. The course is cumulative, and each test will be comprehensive. Each test, however, will focus on the most recently covered material. **Test**

dates will not change¹ and may not be missed except for documented medical or family emergencies. If you are unable to attend class on one of the test days, contact me ASAP.

The **core exam** is on **October 9, 2017**.

The **behavior exam** is on **November 9, 2017**.

The **institutions exam** is on **December 7, 2017**.

Papers: The paper can be on any number of topics from the class (including a topic of your choosing, so long as you clear it with the instructor first.) Paper topics will be handed out a few weeks before the paper is due. I recommend taking your paper to the writing center once you have a rough draft and before you turn the paper in to the professor.

The **paper** is due **December 11, 2017**.

Conditions for Satisfactory Evaluation

To satisfactorily complete the course, you must satisfactorily complete all four course requirements: preparation, participation, tests, and the essay. Specifically:

1. Students with more than three unexcused class absences may not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.
2. Students who fail to submit more than three days worth of discussion questions may not receive a satisfactory course evaluation.
3. Students must participate in class (including debates), complete all four tests, and write the final paper to receive a satisfactory course evaluation.

Course Expectations

Course Etiquette: Students must be courteous to the professor and fellow students. This is a discussion-centric introductory course, not a pure lecture, so timely attendance is particularly important. Cell phones must be silent and out of sight: no text messaging, Internet browsing, etc.

Laptops: You will not need them in class. Do not bring them. Exceptions are made only in the case of documented medical necessity.

Office Hours, etc: I encourage you to stop by our office hours at any point if you have questions about the course, the readings, school, etc. In addition to formal office hours, I have an open-door policy: you are welcome to come in. If you want to be sure you can speak with me, setting up an appointment beforehand is always a good idea. You can do so by scheduling time at jacklireilly.youcanbook.me

¹ Except in the case of natural disasters (thank you, Irma).

E-mail: I'm happy to answer questions over e-mail. However, e-mail questions that require more than a two sentence response should be addressed in person in office hours. I clear my email about once a day, so students can expect a response to email within 36 hours.

A Note on Writing: This is not a course on writing. However, clear writing and argumentation is a critical element to success in the class. I strongly recommend exploring the options for writing (and revising!) assistance at the Writing Resource Center.

Students with Disabilities: (NCF Policy) "Students in need of academic accommodations for a disability may consult with the office of Students Disability Services (SDS) to arrange appropriate accommodations. Students are required to give reasonable notice prior to requesting an accommodation. Students may request an appointment with SDS in-person (HCL3), via phone at 941-487-4496, or via email at disabilityservices@ncf.edu."

Religious Observance: (NCF Policy) No student shall be compelled to attend class or sit for an examination at a day or time when s/he would normally be engaged in religious observance or on a day or time prohibited by his or her religious belief. Students are expected to notify their instructors if they intend to be absent for a class or announced examination, in accordance with the policy, prior to the scheduled meeting.

Academic Integrity: (NCF Policy) Any suspected instance of plagiarism will be handled in accordance with the College's policy on academic dishonesty. (More information is available through the NCF portal.)

Course Topics

Unit One: Foundations

- Model thinking: collective action issues, principle agent problems, prisoner's dilemmas
- Madison's Republic, Factions, and Self-Interest
- The Constitution
- Federalism and Sorting Models

Unit Two: Political Behavior

- Citizen Participation
- Public Opinion
- Elections and Vote Choice

Unit Three: Linkage Mechanisms

- Media
- Political Parties and Party Theory
- Pluralism

Unit Four: Political Institutions

- Micro-Representation

- Collective Representation
- Brick and Mortar Institutions: Congress, the Presidency, Judiciary, Bureaucracy

Course Schedule

| Week | Monday | Thursday |
|-------------------|--|--|
| 1 | Talk: Models and Science | APSA |
| 2 | LABOR DAY | IRMA |
| 3 | IRMA | IRMA |
| 4 | Simulation: Collective Action | Talk: Madison's Republic |
| 5 | Simulation: Principle-Agent Problems | Talk: Critique of the Republic |
| 6 | Simulation: Tiebout Sorting Models | Talk: Participation and Resource Bias |
| 7 | TEST: FOUNDATIONS | Talk: Public Opinion |
| FALL BREAK | | |
| 8 | Debate: Citizen Competence | Talk: Party Theory |
| 9 | Activity: Effects of the Spatial Model | Talk: Pluralism |
| 10 | Talk: Factions Revisited | TEST: BEHAVIOR |
| 11 | Debate: Madison, Party Theory, Pluralism | Talk: The Electoral Connection |
| 12 | Talk: Collective Representation | THANKSGIVING |
| 13 | Activity: More Effects of the Spatial Model | Talk: Collective Representation II |
| 14 | Debate: Democracy, America, Constitution | TEST: INSTITUTIONS |
| F | PAPER DUE (MONDAY) | |

A schedule of topics and readings may be found on the course google drive as a separate attachment to the syllabus. All readings can be found in the text, in the course reader, or as a PDF on our google drive.