

# Syllabus: Introduction to American Government

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COURSE INFORMATION	<i>Term:</i> Fall 2021 <i>Level:</i> Introductory <i>Meet:</i> Tues & Fri 2:30-3:50 <i>Room:</i> CHL 221 & Chickee Hut <i>Syllabus Revision:</i> August 26, 2021	<i>Instructor:</i> Jack Reilly <i>Office:</i> Social Sciences 205 <i>E-mail:</i> jreilly@ncf.edu <i>Office Hours:</i> Tues 10-11, Weds 1-3, by appt <i>Appointments:</i> jackreilly.com/appointments
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**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, and the formation of public policy.

Careful analysis of the political system in which we live is difficult. We must overcome partisan predispositions and other biases we may hold. The systematic study of politics is also clouded at times by powerful myths that can color our perceptions and assessments. This course gives students the tools they need to assess political behaviors, practices, and institutions based on theory and evidence.

Welcome to the class. I hope you enjoy it.

**PREREQUISITES** None. Recommended **co-requisite:** introductory writing course and/or introductory quantitative data course. First year students should strongly consider a SET SAIL course.

## Materials

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- BOOKS** **Required:**
- Stone and McCann, *Republic at Risk: Second Edition* Cambridge University Press. (Referred to as "Text".) Newest edition required.
  - Kollman, *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*. Norton. (Referred to as "Reader".) Newest edition is useful but not necessary.<sup>1</sup>
  - Additional readings as assigned can be found in the course Google drive.

## Course Requirements

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**OVERVIEW** Satisfactory completion of the course requires completion of the following:

1. Weekly Preparation & Participation

(a) Attendance

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<sup>1</sup>Older editions will have most but not all assigned readings; if you're able/willing to borrow from a friend occasionally or check out the library reserve copy you can get away with the fourth edition as opposed to the fifth.

- (b) Reading
  - (c) Discussion Questions
  - (d) Simulations
  - (e) Discussion Groups
2. Debates
    - (a) Foundations
    - (b) Behavior
    - (c) Representation
    - (d) Institutions
  3. Tests (2)

DEBATES	<p>The main work for the course involves participation in a series of four debates. There are two core components to each debate:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Preparation</i>, including developing and writing opening debate essays (“constructives”) as well as prep for the latter stages of the debate.</li> <li>2. The <i>debate</i> itself, including an oral presentation of the constructive essay, a rebuttal period, cross-examination, and a closing argument (“final focus”).</li> </ol>
TESTS	<p>There are two tests in the class, each covering two of the four course units. The course is cumulative, and each test will be comprehensive, but each exam will focus on material from the most recent units.</p>
EVALUATION	<p>To satisfactorily complete the course, you must satisfactorily complete all three course requirements: participation, debates, and tests.</p>

## Course Expectations & Guidelines

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ETIQUETTE & DECORUM	<p>A college course, especially a small one, is fundamentally a community. Be courteous to fellow students and the professor. Don't let yourself be distracted by your cell phone in class. If you disagree with something someone says, do so respectfully. Engage with each other and remember: your shared goal is to learn from each other as well as the professor.</p>
COVID19	<p>In keeping with the policies of the College, the Florida State University System, and the CDC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting fully vaccinated against COVID-19 is strongly recommended.</li> <li>• Wearing face coverings indoors and in crowded outdoor spaces is expected on our campus.</li> <li>• Stay home if you feel sick or if you have a positive COVID test (vaccinated or not). <i>If you have any covid symptoms (fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, congestion or runny nose, headache, muscle or body aches, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, or loss of taste or smell) immediately contact Student Health or <a href="mailto:welness@ncf.edu">welness@ncf.edu</a>.</i></li> <li>• Should you become sick or need to take a longer period of absence, I will happily work with you to ensure your success in the class.</li> </ul>

OFFICE &  
CONSULTATION  
HOURS,  
APPOINTMENTS

I encourage you to chat with me at any point if you have questions about the course, the readings, college, political science, data science, etc. You have a variety of options available to you to consult with me: in person, over zoom, or on the phone. (If you'd like to meet in person, but outdoors rather than indoors, please let me know and I will do my best to accommodate you.) For any of those options, you can go to my website here: <http://jacklreilly.com/appointments> and sign up for an appointment at your convenience. At minimum, I am always available Tuesdays, from 10-11, for appointments (and typically many other times, as well.)

Second, I maintain "drop-in" hours every Wednesday from 1-3 in my office, Social Sciences 205 (Social Sciences is the small pink building on Dort Promenade before you cross College Drive to get to College Hall) - for these, there is no need to schedule an appointment, just come by. And don't be bashful! Come say hi! I'd like to get the chance to get to know you.

For all in-person meetings, please observe college expectations regarding face coverings.

E-MAIL

Email is the best way to contact me. Students can generally expect a response to all e-mails within 24 hours (and typically sooner), excepting weekends. If your email requires a long response (more than two or three sentences), expect me to encourage you to schedule an appointment with me so that we can more effectively discuss the matter.

## Class Schedule

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OVERVIEW

**Topics Outline**

<b>W</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
1	Models and Science, FAQ, Startup	Five Useful Models of Politics
2	<i>Activity:</i> Collective Action Problems	<i>Activity:</i> Prisoner's Dilemmas
3	A Model of Governance: Madison's Republic	Critique of the Republic Model
4	<i>Activity:</i> Federalism & Sorting Models	Participation & Resource Bias
5	<i>Debate:</i> Foundations	Public Opinion & Media
6	<i>Activity:</i> Spatial Model & Party Behavior	Four Models of Vote Choice
7	<i>Debate:</i> Behavior	MIDTERM
FALL BREAK		
8	<i>Activity:</i> Principle-Agent Problems	Parties & Party Theory
9	Interest Groups & Pluralism	Political Equality & Diversity
10	<i>Debate:</i> Representation	Three Models of Congressional Behavior
11	<i>Activity:</i> The Policy Process	Congressional Macro-Representation
12	Two Models of the Presidency	Non-Representative Institutions
13	<i>Debate:</i> Democracy & Stability	THANKSGIVING
14	FINAL	READING DAYS
F	FINALS WEEK	

COURSE TOPICS

*By Unit:*

1. Foundations & Models of Politics: scientific & model thinking (collective action issues, principle agent problems, prisoner's dilemmas), public and private goods, Madison's republic (factions and self-interest), the constitution, federalism and sorting models, rights
2. Political Behavior: citizen participation, public opinion, rational abstention/ignorance, elections, vote choice, media
3. Representation: political parties, party theory, electoral systems, pluralism, interest groups
4. Political Institutions: micro-representation, macro/collective representation, brick and mortar institutions (congress, presidency, judiciary, bureaucracy), policy process

## Campus Academic Resources

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WRITING SKILLS	Clear writing and argumentation is a critical element to success in college (not to mention, life generally). That said, writing is hard, and students come to college with very different levels of preparation for college level and professional writing. Regardless of your skill and comfort with writing, I strongly recommend exploring the options for writing (and revising!) assistance at the Writing Resource Center. You can schedule an appointment through the writing center here: <a href="https://ncf.mywconline.com">https://ncf.mywconline.com</a>
QUANTITATIVE SKILLS	Like writing skills, quantitative literacy is an integral element to success in college (not to mention, life generally). That said, math is (also) hard, and students come to college with very different levels of preparation for college level and professional data literacy. While this course will cover many aspects of data literacy, should you desire additional support beyond what I and/or the course TA can provide, I recommend exploring the options for assistance at the Quantitative Resource Center. The QRC is located in the Academic Resource Center (ARC), located on the first floor of the Jane Bancroft Cook Library.
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER	Having trouble figuring out how to manage it all? In addition to your faculty mentor and professors, New College has peer to peer coaching and group workshops available at the Student Success Center. The SSC helps you develop the skills necessary for success in college. We offer one-on-one appointments with trained peer coaches, group study sessions, recurring appointments, workshops, printable resources, regular newsletters, and referrals to other campus services. You can find more information here: <a href="https://www.ncf.edu/academics/student-success-center/">https://www.ncf.edu/academics/student-success-center/</a>

## New College Academic Policies

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COVID19	<p>You can find the College's Covid19 response page here: <a href="https://www.ncf.edu/covid-19/">https://www.ncf.edu/covid-19/</a>.</p> <p>You can find the official State University System of Florida guidelines here: <a href="https://www.ncf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Fall-2021_SUS-Health-Policies-Final.pdf">https://www.ncf.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Fall-2021_SUS-Health-Policies-Final.pdf</a></p> <p>You can find the CDC's Covid recommendations here: <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html</a></p>
STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY	New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, you are encouraged to initiate a conversation with the office of Student Disability Services (SDS). SDS works with students with disabilities to identify reasonable accommodations and plans ways to implement these with your faculty members. Please visit their website for additional information: <a href="https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/">https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/</a> . You may also contact Student Disability in-person (HCL3), via phone at 941-487-4496 OR via email at <a href="mailto:disabilityservices@ncf.edu">disabilityservices@ncf.edu</a> . Students are welcome to discuss privately any concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. Students with accommodations are highly encouraged to meet with their primary or partner instructor as soon as possible.
TITLE IX	New College of Florida is committed to equal access to education pursuant to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972. The law protects all individuals on our campus from gender-based discrimination or exclusion or instances of sexual misconduct. All full-time

faculty, full-time staff, and resident advisors are Responsible Employees required to report any known instances of sexual misconduct or gender discrimination to the Title IX Coordinator. Please contact our Title IX coordinator ([titleix@ncf.edu](mailto:titleix@ncf.edu)) or see the website (<https://www.ncf.edu/campus-life/title-ix/>) for more information.

EQUITY,  
DIVERSITY, AND  
EQUAL  
OPPORTUNITY

New College's commitment to excellence can only be realized in a learning environment that is inclusive, characterized by openness to diverse perspectives, and marked by mutual respect. Anything short of this aspiration is inconsistent with our commitment. Equal access, and the opportunity to participate fully in all of our programs and facilities, without regard to race, color, creed, religion, political ideology, national origin, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation, is essential to that commitment and will be the standard to which we expect all members of our learning community to adhere.

ACADEMIC  
INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining a vibrant, healthy, and engaging learning environment for which we all must take responsibility. The New College faculty considers academic dishonesty to be a serious violation of community standards. Students are expected to refrain from acts of academic dishonesty, which may include:

1. cheating and/or plagiarism (such as: presenting the intellectual work of others as one's own; failing to cite sources; improper paraphrasing via failing to use own words even if a citation is given; partial, incomplete, or inaccurate citation of work of others);
2. unauthorized multiple submissions (submission of the same work for different academic activities, without the approval of the instructor);
3. false citation (false citation of a source or knowingly attributing work to a source from which the referenced material was not obtained);
4. falsifying data (fabricating or altering data to deliberately mislead; for example, changing data to get better experiment results is academically fraudulent);
5. falsifying information, signatures, or initials on official and academic forms.

If you are in doubt about what practices are permissible in an examination, you should consult the professor prior to sitting for the exam. If you lack understanding of how, in a paper or other presentation, to distinguish your thoughts from those of others, the faculty can refer you to standard guidelines and discuss specific questions.