

# Mini Class: Introduction to American Politics

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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 19, 2021	<i>Instructor:</i> Jack Reilly <i>Office:</i> Social Sciences 205 <i>E-mail:</i> <a href="mailto:jreilly@ncf.edu">jreilly@ncf.edu</a> <i>Office Hours:</i> Weds 1-3 (drop-in), Tues by appt <i>Appointments:</i> <a href="http://jacklireilly.com/appointments">jacklireilly.com/appointments</a>
DESCRIPTION	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Welcome to the class. I hope you enjoy it.</p>	
PREREQUISITES	None. Recommended <b>co-requisite:</b> introductory writing course and/or introductory quantitative data course. First year students should strongly consider a SET SAIL course.	
INTEREST FORM	<b>Want take this class? Great!!! Please let me know by filling out the survey accessible at <a href="http://www.jacklireilly.com/interest">www.jacklireilly.com/interest</a> - click "Interest Form" under to "Introduction to American Politics" and fill out the short list of questions.)</b> (Make sure that you're logged in to your NCF google account).	

## Materials

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BOOKS	<b>Required:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stone and McCann, <i>Republic at Risk: Second Edition</i> Cambridge. (Referred to as "text".)</li><li>• Kollman, <i>Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives</i>. (Referred to as "reader". Newest edition is useful.)</li><li>• Dahl, <i>How Democratic is the American Constitution?</i> Yale.</li><li>• Additional readings as assigned can be found in the course Google drive.</li></ul>
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## Course Requirements

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OVERVIEW	Satisfactory completion of the course requires completion of the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Weekly Preparation &amp; Participation</li> <li>2. Debates (4)</li> <li>3. Tests (2)</li> </ol>
TESTS	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.
EVALUATION	To satisfactorily complete the course, you must satisfactorily complete all three course requirements: participation, debates, and tests.

## Class Schedule

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

COURSE TOPICS	<p><i>By Unit:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Foundations &amp; Models of Politics: scientific &amp; 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</li> <li>2. Political Behavior: citizen participation, public opinion, rational abstention/ignorance, elections, vote choice, media</li> <li>3. Representation: political parties, party theory, electoral systems, pluralism, interest groups</li> <li>4. Political Institutions: micro-representation, macro/collective representation, brick and mortar institutions (congress, presidency, judiciary, bureaucracy), policy process</li> </ol>
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