

# Course # | Introduction to American Politics

## Description

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This course is designed to introduce students to classic, recent, and current scholarly writing on American politics. Its goal is to acquaint students with various lines of substantive inquiry in political science regarding politics in the United States, as well as the many frameworks and methods used to study American political activity, institutions, beliefs, and governance.

## Assignments

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- (1) *Reading Critique*: Sign up to write one 1,000-word critique of a reading sometime over the course of the semester. This should both summarize and evaluate the reading. While your evaluations should take a position on the reading—i.e., do you agree or disagree?—they should also attempt to situate the article in the wider context of both the course as a whole and the section we are studying at that time. A critique does not necessarily mean the same thing as criticism. Strong criticism can often stand in the way of subtlety and depth. If you decide to be strongly critical, you should be sure to be critical in a way that still does justice to the author’s argument. Moreover, although you are responsible for summarizing the reading, a summary is not the same thing as a “play-by-play” of the reading. A good summary should be able to convey the essence of the reading without giving all the details. Fill in details only insofar as it is necessary to explicate the essential points. The best way to approach these critiques is to think of yourself as the teacher. What should students know from your reading? What questions should they ask about it? Finally, your critique should introduce questions and topics that would be useful and important for the class as a whole to take up in discussion. On the day that we cover the reading you critiqued, you should also be prepared both to summarize the reading and to facilitate the class’s discussion of this material: you will actually become the teacher! Also, if writing on more than one reading, you should feel free either to concentrate entirely on one reading or to write an integrative analysis of all of them. This should be posted to the course site forty-eight hours before the class on which the reading is due to give those who will critique it time to write their critiques.
- (2) *Two Peer Critique Responses*: In order further to facilitate productive discussion in class, you will also be responsible for writing two 1-page critiques of your peers’ critiques over the course of the semester. These should evaluate and react to the main arguments that your classmate has made in their critiques. You should answer the following kinds of questions: Do they misunderstand the reading? Do they overstate the author’s case? Do they understate it? Is their disagreement justified? You should email me these critiques before the beginning of the class on which we will cover this reading. This should also be posted to angel for all to access.
- (3) *Midterm Exam*: A closed-book, open-note exam will be held in class on [Date]. The essay questions will focus on the material from the first half of the course.
- (4) *Final Exam*: A closed-book, open-note final exam will be held during the university’s exam period. It will consist of short essay questions covering the material of the course as a whole.

## Course Schedule

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### **Constitutional Design and Structure**

01.
  - The U.S. Constitution
  - Federalist Papers, No. 10, 11, 23, 39, 51.

### **Congress: Origins and Development**

02.
  - Federalist Papers, No. 52, 54, 62, 63.
  - Charles Stewart. 2011. “The Constitutional Origins of Congress” and “The History and Development of Congress,” *Analyzing Congress*. 2nd ed. The New Institutionalism in American Politics Series. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Chapters 2 and 3.

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**Congress: Lawmaking**

- 03.
  - David Mayhew. 2004. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press. Ch. 1.
  - Steven S. Smith, Jason M. Roberts, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. 2015. "The Rules of the Legislative Game." *The American Congress*. Ninth Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press: 219-248.
  - Charles Stewart. 2011. "Committees in Congress." *Analyzing Congress*. 2nd ed. The New Institutionalism in American Politics Series. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Chapter 8.

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**The President**

- 04.
  - Brandice Canes-Wrone, William G. Howell, and David E. Lewis. 2008. "Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power: A Reevaluation of the Two Presidencies Thesis." *The Journal of Politics* 70 (1): 1–16.
  - Richard Neustadt. 1991. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*. New York, NY: Free Press. Chapter 1.
  - Andrew Rudalevige. 2010. "The Presidency and Unilateral Power: A Taxonomy." In *The Presidency and the Political System*, edited by Michael Nelson, 9th ed, 463–88. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

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**The Administrative State**

- 05.
  - David Lewis and Terry Moe 2010. "The Presidency and the Bureaucracy: The Levers of Presidential Power," in Nelson, Michael, ed. *The Presidency and the Political System*. 9th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
  - Terry Moe. 1989. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure." In *Can the Government Govern?*, edited by John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson, 267–329. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.

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**The Courts**

- 06.
  - Federalist Papers, No. 78.
  - *Marbury v. Madison*.
  - Michael A. Bailey and Forrest Maltzman. 2011. *The Constrained Court: Law, Politics, and the Decisions Justices Make*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 3, 4, 6.

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**Political Parties**

- 07.
  - George Washington, "Farewell Address," Sept. 19, 1796
  - John Aldrich. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. 2nd ed. Chicago Studies in American Politics. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2.
  - Bawn et al. "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 3 (September 2012): 571–97.

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**Public Opinion and Media**

- 08.
  - Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-5, 9.

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**Partisanship and Ideology**

- 09.
  - Phillip Converse. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, David Apter, ed. Free Press.
  - Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams. 2008. "Political Polarization in the American Public." *Annual Review of Political Science* 11: 563-588.

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**Campaigns and Elections: Development**

- 10.
  - Federalist Papers, No. 14.
  - John Sides, Daron R. Shaw, Matthew Grossmann, and Keena Lipsitz, eds. 2014. “The Transformation of American Campaigns” and “Modern Campaign Strategies.” *Campaigns & Elections: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

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**Campaigns and Elections: Financing and Effects**

- 11.
  - John Sides, Daron R. Shaw, Matthew Grossmann, and Keena Lipsitz, eds. 2014. “Financing Campaigns,” “Voter Participation,” and “Voter Choice” in *Campaigns & Elections: Rules, Reality, Strategy, Choice*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

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**Inequality and Representation**

- 12.
  - Martin Gilens. 2005. “Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness.” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (5): 778-796.
  - Stuart N. Soroka and Christopher Wlezien. 2008. “On the Limits to Inequality in Representation.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 41 (2): 319-327.
  - Martin Gilens. 2009. “Preference Gaps and Inequality in Representation.” *PS: Political Science & Politics* 42 (2): 335-341.

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**Identity in Politics: Race**

- 13.
  - Martin Gilens. 2000. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5.

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**Identity in Politics: Gender and Immigration**

- 14.
  - Daniel Hopkins. 2010. “Politicized Places: Explaining Where and When Immigrants Provoke Local Opposition.” *American Political Science Review* 104 (1): 40-60.
  - Ebonya Washington. 2008. “Female Socialization: How Daughters Affect Their Legislator Fathers’ Voting on Women’s Issues.” *American Economic Review* 98 (1): 311-332.

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**States, Localities, and Federalism**

- 15.
    - Federalist Papers, No. 44, 45.
    - Nathan Kelly and Christopher Witko. 2012. “Federalism and American Inequality.” *Journal of Politics* 74 (2): 414-426.
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