

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS
Political Science 111
Fall 2011
Tuesday and Thursday, 9:00-10:00
MLB Aud 4

Contact Information

Professor: Chuck Shipan
Office: 5743 Haven Hall
Office Hours: Wed. 9:30-11:30

Email: cshipan@umich.edu
Phone: 763-3080

No appointments are necessary during office hours. If you have another course that meets on Wednesday during these office hours, I would be happy to meet with you at a different time. To set up an appointment, contact my assistant, Gwen Maes, at gmaes@umich.edu.

Graduate Student Instructors (GSIs):

Richard Anderson (richjand@umich.edu) Andrew Feher (afeher@umich.edu)
Kate Bradley (kvdbroek@umich.edu) Jeremy Gelman (jgelman@umich.edu)
David Cottrell (dcott@umich.edu)

One of the GSIs, Richard Anderson, will also serve as the Administrative Assistant (AA) for the course. You can talk to him if you have any questions about the logistics of the course (e.g., changing sections, making alternative arrangements for exams, etc.). His office hours are Wednesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 (or by appointment) in 6752 Haven Hall.

Course Description

In this course we will explore the workings of American government. We will use theories of politics, as well as historical and current events, to develop an understanding of the structures and processes of our government.

In addition to two lectures per week, you will meet twice a week in a discussion section led by a GSI. These sections are in many ways the most important part of the course, and it is important that you attend each section and participate regularly. In these sections you will have the opportunity to discuss the readings, ask any additional questions you might have about lectures, and address topics in more depth than the lectures permit. More generally, it's where you will get assistance and practice with achieving the goals set out below.

Learning Objectives and Goals

As the name of the class indicates, this is a course about American politics. Thus, one of the goals for the course is for you to learn about the essential components of politics in the U.S. At the same time, it is a *political science* course, which means that we will focus not merely on the learning and memorization of facts, but also on analysis. In fact, the emphasis – in lectures, in sections, and on exams – will be on analysis much more than on facts.

More generally, the objectives and goals of the course include the following:

- 1) Learn the basic **facts** about American politics – how the system is structured, how political institutions operate, how individuals interact with the government, and so on.
- 2) Understand and analyze the **connections** between various components of American politics. These connections occur *within* topics that we will explore (e.g., how do parties and committees in Congress interact?), and also *across* topics (e.g., what tools does the president have to influence the actions of Congress?).
- 3) Engage in **comparison** of politics in the U.S. and politics in other countries. This entails analyzing *how* politics differs between the U.S. and other countries, *why* it differs, and why the differences either do or do not *matter*.
- 4) Have the ability to **evaluate arguments** about U.S. government. Here I'm referring to *causal* arguments (i.e., X affects Y) and not arguments that consider whether Y is a good outcome (i.e., normative arguments). Thus, you will be able to analyze and evaluate claims such as “Presidential elections are almost completely determined by the state of the economy” or “Congress pays too little attention to public opinion.” In other words, we will emphasize *thinking analytically* about such statements by considering the logic of the argument and the evidence for or against them.
- 5) Be able to **construct arguments** of your own about politics and governmental processes in the U.S. This means that you should be able to conduct your own analysis, reach your own conclusions, and defend those conclusions with facts and arguments.

All aspects of this course – lectures and sections, assignments and exams – will focus on these learning objectives.

Books

The following books are available for purchase at Michigan Book & Supply, Ulrich's, and the Michigan Union Bookstore, and also are on reserve at Shapiro Undergraduate Library. You can also purchase them at used bookstores or online, of course; if you do, make sure to purchase the correct editions.

- *The American Anomaly*, 2nd edition. By Raymond A. Smith. Routledge Press.
- *Readings in American Politics*. By Ken Kollman. Norton Press.
- *Culture War?*, 3rd Edition. By Morris P. Fiorina. Longman Press.
- *System Under Stress*, 2nd Edition. By Donald Kettl. CQ Press.
- *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, 2nd Ed. By Robert A. Dahl. Yale Press.

Grading Policy

Your final grade will be determined by two midterm exams, a final exam, and your discussion

section grade, with the allocation as follows:

Midterm #1	20%
Midterm #2	20%
Final Exam	30%
Sections	30%

The discussion section part of your grade will be based on attendance, participation, and assignments. All three of the exams will be closed book and will consist of short and long essays. The final exam will be cumulative. The exam locations may be different from MLB Aud. 4 and will be announced prior to the exam.

If you need to reschedule an exam, you must provide a compelling reason for doing so (e.g., a note from a physician or a written statement from a coach). In addition, you must contact your GSI and the AA *prior* to missing the exam. Please note that the registrar's office has scheduled the final exam for Thursday, December 22 at 10:30 a.m. I will not give this exam at any other time. I cannot stress this enough: no exceptions will be made for family vacations, weddings, plane tickets that have already been purchased, and so on. Thus, if you know that you cannot take the final exam at that time, you should take this course during a different semester.

Grade Grievances

We will go to great lengths to make sure that the grading of exams is as fair and consistent across sections as possible. Still, on rare occasions you may find that you disagree with a grade that you received on an exam or other assignment. In such cases, you will have the opportunity to discuss and possibly contest this grade. If you choose to take advantage of this opportunity, there is a specific procedure that you must follow if you wish to contest the grade.

- 1) Wait 24 hours before contacting your GSI.
- 2) After the 24 hours waiting period, but no later than one week after the assignment is returned to you, you must provide your GSI with a *written* explanation of why you believe your grade is incorrect. This explanation must cite relevant sources from the texts or lecture in support of your grievance, and must be submitted to your GSI prior to your meeting with him or her.
- 3) Your GSI will review your complaint. If you are still dissatisfied after this review, you can meet with me and ask for your exam to be re-graded. The re-grading will be done anonymously by another GSI, whom I will choose at random. Please be aware, however, that the new grade may be lower than your original grade.

Schedule for Lectures and Readings

Your GSI will assign the specific dates for the Dahl, Kettl, and Fiorina books and will also tell you on which dates you'll be discussing the readings from the Kollman book. For the Smith book, the schedule below gives the approximate date or dates on which I will be talking about

the topics discussed in those chapters. My intent is to give lectures that complement, but do not duplicate, the readings. In general, I will not usually discuss the readings in detail in lecture. Instead, you will have the opportunity to talk about these readings, and ask questions about them, in discussion section. Thus, in order to do well in this class, you will need attend lectures, do the readings, and attend sections.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>	
		<i>Lectures (Smith book)</i>	<i>Sections (“K” indicates Kollman book)</i>
Sept. 6, 8	Introduction	Ch. 1; also skim charts 1 and 2	K 1.1
Sept. 13, 15	The Constitution	Chs. 2 and 4	K 2.1, 2.2, 2.3
Sept. 20	Federalism	Ch. 3	K 3.1, 3.2, 3.4
Sept. 22, 27	Civil Liberties/Civil Rights	pp. 172-179	K 4.2, 4.3, 4.4
Sept. 29, Oct. 4	Political Parties	Ch. 10	K 12.2; Finish Dahl book, all
Oct. 6	<i>First Midterm Exam</i> (9 a.m., locations TBA)		
Oct. 11, 13	Congress	Ch. 6	K 5.1, 5.2, 5.4
<i>Note: No class on Tuesday, October 18 (Fall Study Break)</i>			
Oct. 20, 25	The Presidency	pp. 61-71	K 6.1, 6.3, 6.5
Oct. 27, Nov. 1	The Bureaucracy	pp. 71-75	K 7.1, 7.2, 7.3
Nov. 3, 8	The Judiciary	Ch. 7	K 2.4, 8.1, 8.4; Finish Kettl book, all except Ch. 5
Nov. 10	<i>Second Midterm Exam</i> (9 a.m., locations TBA)		
Nov. 15, 17	Public Opinion	Ch. 11	K 9.1, 9.3
Nov. 22	Media		K 14.1, 14.2
<i>Note: No class on Thursday, November 24 (Give thanks!)</i>			
Nov. 29, Dec.1	Elections and Participation	Chs. 8 and 9	K 10.1, 10.2
Dec. 6, 8	Interest Groups	pp. 114-117	K 11.2
Dec. 13	Conclusion	pp. 197-202	Finish Fiorina book; all except Ch. 5
Dec. 22	<i>Final Exam</i> (will start at 10:30 a.m. and last 75 minutes; locations TBA)		

Miscellaneous Considerations

Course website: <http://ctools.umich.edu>

Attendance: Each student will be responsible for all announcements and materials covered in lectures and discussion sections.

Arrangements for Students with Disabilities: If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please contact your GSI **at least two weeks** prior to the time when the accommodation will be needed. As soon as you make us aware of your needs, we can work with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to help us determine appropriate academic accommodations. SSD typically recommends accommodations through a Verified Individualized Services and Accommodations (VISA) form. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. (You can contact SSD at 734-763-3000 or via their website (<http://www.umich.edu/sswd>)).

Plagiarism and Cheating: My experience at Michigan has been that the vast majority of students act honorably and with complete integrity during the course. Out of fairness to all of these students who are behaving ethically, I have absolutely no tolerance for any type of cheating, including plagiarism. Any student who is caught cheating on any test or assignment will **automatically fail this course**. You should read the university's statement on plagiarism; ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism does not provide an excuse or justification for plagiarizing.