

GOVERNMENT 110: POLITICS IN THE U.S.
American University, Fall 2023
Section 004

Instructor: Prof. Elizabeth Suhay, PhD

Time and Location: Monday & Thursday 4:05 – 5:20, Kerwin 4

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Office Hours: Monday & Thursday 5:30 – 6:30 & by appointment, Kerwin 212

Course Description

Government 110 offers a broad introduction to U.S. politics, examining the structure of the national government as well as the methods by which citizens influence it. Students will learn about the following specific topics: the nation's founding; federalism and the separation of powers; the principal institutions of the U.S. government, including the Presidency, federal bureaucracy, Congress, and Judiciary; civil rights and civil liberties; and democratic politics, including elections, political parties, public opinion, and media. The course will proceed with an eye to current events, particularly recent and upcoming elections.

Intended Student Learning Outcomes

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a basic understanding of the structure of our government, including its federal nature, the powers of each branch of government, the process of electing representatives, and the protections for civil rights and liberties in the Constitution
2. Use this understanding of the formal and informal institutions of American politics to explain how individuals, with and without authority, affect outcomes to their liking
3. Apply an understanding of politics to a controversial decision, election, or policy
4. Convey coherent analytical arguments about politics in the U.S. in writing and in speech
5. Locate and employ appropriate empirical evidence to evaluate claims and draw conclusions about phenomena in American politics

Academic Integrity

All students are required to follow the University's Academic Integrity Code. *Plagiarism, which includes the unacknowledged submission of AI generated text in assignments, is a violation of academic integrity.* If you have not already done so, please familiarize yourself with the standards and requirements of the University's Academic Code of Conduct. Violations of the Code of Conduct will not be tolerated and will be reported appropriately. You can find more information about the University's Academic Integrity Code here: <https://www.american.edu/policies/students/academic-integrity-code.cfm>.

Course Assignments and Expectations

Exams | 40% of grade

Midterm (20% of grade)

Final (20% of grade)

Note: Students must take exams at the designated time.

Paper | 20% of grade

Students will complete a paper, 6-7 pages in length, based on course readings and outside research.

Quizzes | 15% of grade

Students will complete a number of in-class quizzes to gauge their mastery of course content. Quizzes will be unannounced. Students with an unexcused absence on the day of a quiz will receive a zero; however, students may drop their lowest quiz grade from grade calculations.

Participation | 10% of grade

Students are expected to come to class having read and reflected on assigned readings. Students are graded on the quantity and quality of their in-class participation. A person engaging in high quality participation conveys knowledge of, and thoughtful reflections on, assigned readings; actively listens to lectures as well as perspectives of peers; and is respectful of others. Students are allowed one unexcused absence without penalty. With each additional unexcused absence, the participation grade falls by one letter-grade level (e.g., B+ to B).

Lab | 15% of grade

Please see separate lab syllabus.

Required Books (*either purchase or obtain via Bender Library reserves*)

1. Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, Stephen Ansolabehere, and Hahrie Han. 2022. *American Government: Power and Purpose, Seventeenth Edition*. W.W. Norton.
2. Adolph Reed. 2022. *The South: Jim Crow and Its Afterlives*. Verso.
3. John Sides, Chris Tausanovitch, and Lynn Vavreck. 2022. *The Bitter End: The 2020 Presidential Campaign and the Challenge to American Democracy*. Princeton University Press.

All other readings are available via Canvas or are publicly available on the Internet.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Monday, August 28: Introduction

- Lowi et al., Chapter 1: Five Principles of Politics

Thursday, August 31: Politics & Political Science

NO CLASS DUE TO APSA CONFERENCE

- Jane Mansbridge. 2014. What is Political Science For? *Perspectives on Politics* 12(1): 8-17.
- Canvas conversation

Monday, September 4

NO CLASS DUE TO LABOR DAY

Thursday, September 7: Foundations of American Government

- Lowi et al., Chapter 2: Constructing a Government: The Founding and the Constitution

Monday, September 11: Federalism & the Separation of Powers

- Lowi et al., Chapter 3: Federalism & the Separation of Powers

Thursday, September 14: Local Politics

- Sarah F. Anzia. 2021. Party and Ideology in American Local Government: An Appraisal. *Annual Review of Political Science* 24: 133-150.

Monday, September 18: Civil Liberties

- Lowi et al., Chapter 4: Civil Liberties

Thursday, September 21: Civil Rights

- Lowi et al., Chapter 5: Civil Rights

Monday, September 25: Freedom & Equality

- Don Herzog. 2020. *A Little Book of Political Mistakes*. <https://little-book-of-political-mistakes.pubpub.org>
 - More Laws, Less Freedom
 - Equality Against Liberty

Thursday, September 28: Race & the American South

- Adolph L. Reed, Jr. 2022. *The South: Jim Crow and Its Afterlives*. Verso.
 - Ch 1 Quotidian Life in the 1950s and 1960s
 - Ch 2 The Order in Flux and Being in Flux within the Order

Monday, October 2: Congress

- Lowi et al., Chapter 6: Congress: The First Branch

Thursday, October 5: Congress

- David Mayhew. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. Yale University Press.
 - Excerpted in Kollman's *Readings in American Politics, Third Edition*
- Ken Vogel. 2023. The Powerful Lobbyist Behind Kevin McCarthy. *New York Times*.

Monday, October 9: The Presidency

- Lowi et al., Chapter 7: The Presidency as an Institution

Thursday, October 12: The Executive Branch & Federal Bureaucracy

- Lowi et al., Chapter 8: The Executive Branch

Monday, October 16: The Federal Courts

- Lowi et al., Chapter 9: The Federal Courts

Thursday, October 19:

- Exam 1

Monday, October 23: Political Parties, Part 1

CLASS VIA ZOOM

- Lowi et al., Chapter 12: Political Parties
- Paper assignment introduced

Thursday, October 26: Political Parties, Part 2

- APSA Presidential Task Force on Political Parties. 2023. *More than Red and Blue: Political Parties and American Democracy*.
 - Foreword: The APSA Political Parties Task Force (Ishiyama)
 - Ch 6 Primaries, Polarization, and Party Control (Masket & Noel)
 - Ch 7 Protecting Democracy from State Level Threats in an Age of National Parties (Grumbach)
 - Ch 11 Encouraging Cooperation and Responsibility (Lublin & Reilly)
- Paper topics due

Monday, October 30: Groups & Organized Interests

- Lowi et al., Chapter 13: Groups and Organized Interests

Thursday, November 2: Groups, Organized Interests, & Inequality

CLASS VIA ZOOM

- Henderson, Hertel-Fernandez, Mildenerger, & Stokes. 2023. Conducting the Heavenly Chorus: Constituent Contact and Provoked Petitioning in Congress. *American Political Science Review* 21(1): 191-207.

Monday, November 6: Paper Workshop

- Detailed outline due – bring to class & upload to Canvas

Thursday, November 9: Public Opinion

- Lowi et al., Chapter 10: Public Opinion

Monday, November 13: Political Ideology

- Pew Research Center. 2021. Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology. **(Summary only)**
www.pewresearch.org/politics/2021/11/09/beyond-red-vs-blue-the-political-typology-2
- Paper due

Thursday, November 16: Elections

- Lowi et al., Chapter 11: Elections

Monday, November 20: Trumpism

CLASS VIA ZOOM

- Paul Pierson. 2017. American Hybrid: Donald Trump and the Strange Merger of Populism and Plutocracy. *The British Journal of Sociology* 68(S1): 105-119.

Thursday, November 23

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

Monday, November 27: The 2020 Election

- John Sides, Chris Tausanovitch, and Lynn Vavreck. 2022. *The Bitter End: The 2020 Presidential Campaign and the Challenge to American Democracy*. Princeton University Press.
 - Ch 1 The Storm is Here
 - Ch 8 Change (and More of the Same)

Thursday, November 30: The Media

- Lowi et al., Chapter 14: The Media

Monday, December 4: Fox News & Political Conservatism

- Reece Peck. 2019. *Fox Populism: Branding Conservatism as Working Class*. Cambridge University Press.
 - Ch 4 “The Makers and the Takers”: How Fox News Forges a Working-Class/Business-Class Political Alliance

Thursday, December 7

- Class wrap-up

FINAL EXAM (NOT CUMULATIVE) THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2:30 – 3:45

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY CAMPUS POLICIES & SUPPORT

Academic Support and Access Center

The Academic Support and Access Center supports the academic development and educational goals of all American University students and is committed to providing access for individuals with disabilities within the university's diverse community.

Location: Mary Graydon Center (MGC), Room 243, 202-885-3360, asac@american.edu

Hours: Mon – Thurs 9am – 7pm & Fri 9am – 5pm

Website: <http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/>

Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct

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If you experience any of the above, you have the option of filing a report with the:

Assistant Vice President for Equity and Title IX Officer, Office of Equity and Title IX

Phone: 202-885-8080

Email: TitleIX@american.edu for complaints and reports for sexual misconduct; and equityoffice@american.edu for complaints and reports for other discrimination.

- Please keep in mind that all faculty and staff – with the exception of counselors in the Counseling Center, staff in the Office of Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence, medical providers in the Student Health Center, and ordained clergy in the Kay Spiritual Life Center – who are aware of or witness this conduct are required to report this information to the university, regardless of the location of the incident.
- For more information, including a list of supportive resources on and off-campus, contact the Office of Advocacy Services for Interpersonal and Sexual Violence (OASIS), Health Promotion & Advocacy Center; 202-885-7070; OASIS@american.edu; www.american.edu/ocl/OASIS

Emergencies

In an emergency, AU will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail or Canvas, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (<http://www.american.edu/emergency/>) and the AU information line at 202-885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/college-specific information.