

POLITICAL SCIENCE 120 AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Professor David O'Connell
oconneld@dickinson.edu
717-254-8092
Denny Hall 13
Hours: M 4:15-5:15; F 2-4; By Appt.

Dickinson College
Fall 2016
MWF 8:30 – 9:20
Denny Hall 211

Course Overview

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to American political science. Readings and topics have been specifically selected to challenge some of the “conventional wisdom” about American politics. Over the course of the semester, you’ll also be exposed to the major methodologies of American politics research, ranging from experimental treatments to what is commonly called historical institutionalism. Political science has famously been called a “continuing debate,” and at the end of this class you’ll be able to join that conversation. You’ll have a sense of what political scientists know about American politics- and equally what we don’t.

The course has five main units. The first unit (8/31-9/14) will cover the foundational elements of American politics, the Constitution and the federal system. The second unit (9/16-10/14) will cover the country’s main political institutions. Next, we will turn to political behavior with a series of classes on public opinion and voting (10/19-11/9). The fourth unit (11/11-11/28) will focus on the extra-constitutional actors that play a major role in American politics: political parties, interest groups and the media. Finally, a fifth unit (11/30-12/7) will review public policy, with a special focus on healthcare and education.

Assignments

Tests (30%) – Two in-class tests are required. The first test will cover the Constitution, federalism and Congress and will be given on **September 23**. The second test will cover the presidency, the bureaucracy and the judiciary and will be given on **October 21**. All students must take the tests on these dates. A make-up will only be offered in the event of a family or medical emergency. Each test is worth 15% of your grade.

Empirical Data Presentation (10%) – The purpose of this assignment is to introduce you to some major sources of quantitative data in political science (i.e. voting scores, approval ratings, campaign spending figures, etc.) and to give you some experience presenting information in a visual format. Students will be asked to formulate a simple research question, to collect data on that question, and then to submit at least three (3) graphs, tables or charts that suggest something about the possible answer. More detailed instructions, including possible sources of data, will be distributed in class. This assignment will be due by the end of class on **September 30**.

Research Paper (25%) – Students will be expected to complete a **10 page** research paper on a subject of interest to scholars studying American politics. You have discretion when it comes to your research topic, but all topics must be approved by me in writing. You should email me an **informal one page overview of your paper no later than October 26**. Your overview should state your research question,

outline your anticipated argument, and identify some sources. *The overview is not graded, but should you not submit it, I will not accept your final paper and you will receive a zero for this part of your grade.*

Be advised that this is a research paper, not a take home exam. Your sources should be scholarly books and articles that you have independently located and not the materials found on the syllabus.

All papers should be double-spaced, be written in a font equivalent to 12 pt Times New Roman, and have standard one inch margins. It is my preference that you use the Chicago in-text author-date citation style that is common to political science research. The library's guide to Chicago style is linked on the course webpage.

The paper will be due in class on **November 18**. Late papers will be penalized one grade (i.e. an A becomes an A-) for every day past the deadline.

Final Exam (25%) – A final exam will be administered during the College's exam days. The exam is scheduled for **December 12 at 9:00 AM**. The exam will be limited to material from after the second test, although an essay section will ask you to consider what you have learned over the entire course. Again, a make-up will only be offered in the event of a family or medical emergency.

Participation and Attendance (10%) – Attendance will be taken at the start of each class by means of a sign-in sheet. It is your responsibility to sign-in. This is the official record of your attendance. Absences will be excused only in the event of my prior approval or due to a family/medical emergency.

This specific part of your grade will be calculated as follows: The ten points is evenly divided between participation and attendance. First, your participation will be judged as to whether it is of high, average, or low quality (be aware that *quality* does not necessarily mean *quantity*). High quality participation is worth 5 points, average participation is worth 4 points, and low quality participation is worth 3 points. Students who never participate will receive 2 points. For the attendance half of the grade, two (2) unexcused absences will be forgiven over the course of the semester. After that, each additional absence will result in a 1 point deduction.

For example, imagine a student who excels in class but who has four unexcused absences. This student will receive an "8" for attendance and participation (5 for participation and a 2 point deduction for the four absences).

Learning Goals

After completing this course, students should:

- Be familiar with the main methods of American politics research.
- Know how to critically read and evaluate the theory and evidence behind a piece of political science research.
- Understand the "nuts and bolts" of American politics- meaning the basic Constitutional provisions, laws, and empirical findings that help us understand how the U.S. system operates.

- Have gained useful skills for conducting research. Students should be more prepared to formulate research questions, locate sources of quantitative data, present information in a visual format, and write a persuasive argument in the style of a social scientist.

Clickers

This class will make use of TurningPoint ResponseCards. Periodically I will ask a question to the group and you will submit your answer using your clicker. Results will immediately be tallied in the PowerPoint presentation. These questions will be used to assess whether the class is grasping important concepts, as well as to prompt discussion. Your individual responses will not be tracked.

Students will be given a clicker at the start of each class. **It is imperative that you return your clicker to me before you leave the room.**

Accommodating Students With Disabilities

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Dana Hall, Suite 106. Because classes change every semester, eligible students must obtain a new accommodation letter from Director Marni Jones every semester and review this letter with their professors so the accommodations can be implemented.

The Director of ODS is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have. ODS proctoring is managed by Susan Frommer (717-254-8107 or proctoring@dickinson.edu). Address general inquiries to 717-245-1734 or e-mail disabilityservices@dickinson.edu. For more information, go to www.dickinson.edu/ODS.

Movie Series

We will be screening three movies over the course of the semester.

September 14

Charlie Wilson's War (2007) – Tom Hanks, Julia Roberts, Philip Seymour Hoffman

October 3

The American President (1995) – Michael Douglas, Annette Bening, Michael J. Fox, Martin Sheen

November 28

State of Play (2009) – Russell Crowe, Ben Affleck, Rachel McAdams

The specific time and location for each movie will be announced later. After watching the movie, we will have a brief discussion about how the film relates to what we have learned in class.

Attendance at these movies is optional. However, for each movie you attend you will earn an additional half point on top of your final course average (up to 1.5 points in total). Snacks will also be provided.

Election Events

Students will be required to attend the following mandatory Clarke Forum event. This talk will build nicely on our discussion of female representation during the unit on Congress.

Wednesday, October 5

Women on the Run: Why Women Don't Run for Office and What Happens When They Do
Jennifer Lawless, American University

Students are also encouraged to attend a campus wide viewing of the first presidential debate. If you attend this event, you can earn an additional half point on top of your final course average.

September 26

9:00 – 10:30 PM

Dana 110

There will be additional opportunities to attend viewings of the second and third debates, should you be interested. Further information about a campus wide election night party will be forthcoming later in the semester.

Take a Dickinsonian to Lunch and Food for Thought Programs

In an effort to encourage interaction between students and college faculty, the Office of Leadership & Campus Engagement and the Student Senate have made vouchers available for use at various local restaurants. Vouchers can be picked up in the Student Life Office on the lower level of the HUB, weekdays from 8:30am - 4:30pm and are valued at \$8 per person. Participating restaurants include: Back Door Cafe, Dickinson College Cafeteria, Dickinson College Union Station, Issei Noodle, Market Cross Pub, Miseno's II, Mt. Fuji, North Hanover Grill, Redd's Smokehouse, and the White Elephant.

Additionally, the Food for Thought program provides faculty with tickets to share breakfast, lunch or dinner with students in the Dining Hall.

I make an effort to get to know each student who takes a class with me. I encourage you to take advantage of one of these initiatives, or at least to make use of my office hours at some point.

Course Outline

The purchase of the following text is required:

- Wilson, James Q. 2000. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. New Edition. New York: Basic Books.

Other than the selections from Wilson, all readings will be found in PDF format on the class' Moodle website. These readings are marked with a **(M)** on the outline.

Students are expected to complete all readings prior to the class for which they are assigned.

Introduction

August 29

The Constitution

August 31

- Beeman, Richard. 2009. *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the American Constitution*. New York: Random House (M 3-21; 58-68; 72-79)
- James Madison, *Federalist #10* (M)
- James Madison, *Federalist #51* (M)

September 2

- Roche, John P. 1961. "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action." *The American Political Science Review* 55 (December): 799-816 (M)

Federalism and State Politics

September 5

Instructions Distributed for Empirical Data Presentation

- Article IV of the United States Constitution (M)
- James Madison, *Federalist #45* (M)

September 7

- Glick, Henry R. and Scott P. Hays. 1991. "Innovation and Reinvention in State Policymaking: Theory and the Evolution of Living Will Laws." *The Journal of Politics* 53 (August): 835-850 (M)

September 9

- Derthick, Martha. 2007. "Where Federalism Didn't Fail." *Public Administration Review* 67 (December): 36-47 (M)

September 12

- Lewis, Michael. 2011. "California and Bust." *Vanity Fair*, November (M)

September 14

- Hajnal, Zoltan L., Elisabeth R. Gerber and Hugh Louch. 2002. "Minorities and Direct Legislation: Evidence from California Ballot Proposition Elections." *Journal of Politics* 64 (February): 154-177 (M)
- **Movie Screening: *Charlie Wilson's War***

Congress

September 16

- Article I of the United States Constitution (M)
- Brooks, Deborah Jordan. 2013. *He Runs, She Runs*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (M 1-14; 46-55; 110-115; 120-126; 127-131; 181-182)

September 19

- Sinclair, Barbara. 2006. *Party Wars: Polarization and the Politics of National Policymaking*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press (M 344-369)

September 21

- Mayhew, David R. 2005. *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946-2002*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale University Press (M 1-7; 34-80)

September 23

*** **First Test** ***

Presidency

September 26

- Article II of the United States Constitution (M)
- Neustadt, Richard E. 1960. *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership*. New York: John Wiley and Sons (M 33-64; 86-93)
- **First Presidential Debate Viewing**

September 28

- Edwards III, George C. 1989. *At the Margins: Presidential Leadership of Congress*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press (M 167-212)

September 30

*****Empirical Data Presentation Due*****

- Edwards III, George C. 2003. *On Deaf Ears: The Limits of the Bully Pulpit*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press (M 3-8; 28-34; 49-75; 187-198; 206-208)

Bureaucracy

October 3

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 1-49
- **Movie Screening: The American President**

October 5

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 90-136
- **Mandatory Clarke Forum Event With Jennifer Lawless**

October 7

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 315-345

Judiciary and Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

October 10

- Article III of the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights (M)
- Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist #78* (M)

- Rosenberg, Gerald N. 1991. *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (M 1-4; 35-36; 42-71)

October 12

- Segal, Jeffrey A. and Harold J. Spaeth. 1996. "The Influence of *Stare Decisis* on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices." *American Journal of Political Science* 40 (November): 971-1003 (M)

October 14

- Scalia, Antonin. 1995. "Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System: The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws." *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values*. Princeton University. Princeton, NJ. March 8 and March 9 (M 79-85; 111-121)
- Strauss, David A. 2010. *The Living Constitution*. New York: Oxford University Press (M 7-49)

October 14-19

*** **Fall Break** ***

Public Opinion

October 19

- Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (M 1-3; 14-23; 45-50; 90-94; 100-104)

October 21

*** **Second Test** ***

October 24

- Fiorina, Morris P. 2006. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Pearson Longman (M 1-56)

Voting and Elections

October 26

*** **Research Paper Overview Due** ***

- Green, Donald P. and Alan S. Gerber. 2008. *Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press (M 1-11; 15-18; 35-45; 49-54; 60-73; 82-96; 100-107)

October 28

- Ansolabehere, Stephen. 2009. "Effects of Identification Requirements on Voting: Evidence from the Experiences of Voters on Election Day." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 42 (January): 127-130 (M)

October 31

- Sides, John. 2012. "Do Presidential Debates Really Matter?" *Washington Monthly*, September/October (M)

November 2

- Wattenberg, Martin P. 2012. *Is Voting for Young People?* 3rd ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson (M 169-190)

November 4

- Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *The American Political Science Review* 88 (March): 63-76 (M)

November 7

- Geer, John G. 2006. *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (M 1-14; 25-36; 60-70; 136-145)

November 8

*** **Election Day** ***

November 9

- Jacobson, Gary C. 2013. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. 8th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson (M 51-59)

Political Parties and Interest Groups

November 11

- Kaufmann, Karen M., John R. Petrocik and Daron R. Shaw. 2008. *Unconventional Wisdom: Facts and Myths About American Voters*. New York: Oxford University Press (M 19-29)

November 14

- Ansolabehere, Stephen and James M. Snyder, Jr. 2011. "Weak Tea." *Boston Review*, March/April (M)

November 16

- Baumgartner, Frank R., Jeffrey M. Berry, Marie Hojnacki, David C. Kimball, and Beth L. Leech. 2009. *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (M 1-6; 190-214)

The Media

November 18

*** **Research Paper Due** ***

- Hamilton, James T. 2004. *All the News That's Fit to Sell: How the Market Transforms Information Into News*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (M 71-84; 160-189)

November 21

- Hindman, Matthew. 2009. *The Myth of Digital Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (M 60-66; 82-91; 113-125)

November 22-28

*** **Thanksgiving Break** ***

November 28

- Groseclose, Tim. 2011. *Left Turn: How Liberal Media Bias Distorts the American Mind*. New York: St. Martin's Press (M 1-17; 26-27; 36-40; 99-110; 151-160)
- **Movie Screening: *State of Play***

Public Policy

November 30

- Gilens, Martin. 1999. *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (M 1-4; 24-29; 60-72)

December 2

- Marche, Stephen. 2012. "The War Against Youth." *Esquire*, April (M)
- Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2003. *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Political Activism and the American Welfare State*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (M 1-3; 14-37; 65-92)

December 5

- Arum, Richard and Josipa Roksa. 2011. *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press (M 19-26; 33-37; 59-81; 136-142)

December 7

- No Reading

The Improbable But Possible Uselessness of Political Science

December 9

- Lindblom, Charles. 1997. "Political Science in the 1940s and 1950s." *Daedalus* 126: 225-252 (M)

December 12 *** **Final Exam at 9:00 AM*****