

## POLITICAL SCIENCE 120 AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

---

Professor David O'Connell  
oconneld@dickinson.edu  
717-254-8092  
Denny Hall 13  
Hours: M 3:00 – 4:00; F 2:00 – 4:00; By Appt.

Dickinson College  
Fall 2019  
MWF 9:30 – 10:20  
Denny Hall 313

### 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 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 (9/4-9/18) will cover the foundational elements of American politics, the Constitution and the federal system. The second unit (9/20-10/18) 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 (10/23-11/15). The fourth unit (11/18-12/4) 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 (12/6-12/11) 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 27**. The second test will cover the presidency, the bureaucracy and the judiciary and will be given on **October 25**. All students must take the tests on these dates. A make-up will only be offered in the event of a documented 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 **October 9**.

**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 November 1**. 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 25**. 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 17 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 documented 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 values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to [www.dickinson.edu/access](http://www.dickinson.edu/access), email [access@dickinson.edu](mailto:access@dickinson.edu), call (717)245-1734, or go to ADS in Old West (lower level), Room 005.

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can meet to review your Accommodation Letter and complete your Blue Forms. If you will need test proctoring from ADS, remember that you will need to provide them with at least one week's notice.

## Documentary Film Series

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

### November 13

***Running With Beto*** – *This behind-the-scenes documentary follows Beto O'Rourke's rise from virtual unknown to national political sensation through his bold attempt to unseat Ted Cruz in the US Senate. Embedded with Beto for the final twelve months of his campaign, the film follows his journey in real time through intimate access to O'Rourke, his family, and a team of political newcomers who champion a new way of getting to know a candidate – one Texas county at a time. The film reveals the challenges and triumphs of an unconventional campaign as Beto navigates an onslaught of negative advertising, inevitable strain on his family, and the pressure of delivering for legions of supporters. This film is creatively and financially independent from Beto O'Rourke and his campaign (2019, 1 hr, 34 mins)*

## December 4

**Best of Enemies** – In the summer of 1968, television news changed forever. Dead last in the ratings, ABC hired two towering public intellectuals to debate each other during the Democratic and Republican national conventions. William F. Buckley, Jr. was a leading light of the new conservative movement. A Democrat and cousin to Jackie Onassis, Gore Vidal was a leftist novelist and polemicist. Armed with deep-seated distrust and enmity, Vidal and Buckley believed each other's political ideologies were dangerous for America. Like rounds in a heavyweight battle, they pummeled out policy and personal insult-cementing their opposing political positions. Their explosive exchanges devolved into vitriolic name-calling. It was unlike anything TV had ever broadcast, and all the more shocking because it was live and unscripted. Viewers were riveted. ABC News' ratings skyrocketed. And a new era in public discourse was born - a highbrow blood sport that marked the dawn of pundit television as we know it today (2015, 1 hr, 27 mins)

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 points in total). Snacks will also be provided.

### **Take a Dickinsonian to Lunch Program**

In an effort to encourage small group interaction between students and college faculty/staff, students and college employees can request vouchers to take each other out to lunch at various local restaurants, the Union Station or the college cafeteria. This program is funded by the Student Senate and administered by the Office of Leadership & Campus Engagement. 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 \$10 per person.

Participating restaurants include: Grazery, Dickinson College Cafeteria, Dickinson College Union Station, Helena's Chocolate Cafe, Market Cross Pub, Miseno's II, Mt. Fuji, North Hanover Grill, Redd's Smokehouse, Spoons Cafe, Carlisle Thai, Denim Coffee, PB's Italian Kitchen, and Pizza Grille.

I make an effort to get to know each student who takes a class with me. I encourage you to take advantage of this initiative, 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

September 2

## The Constitution

September 4

- 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 6

- 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 9

### \*\*\*Instructions Distributed for Empirical Data Presentation\*\*\*

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

September 11

- 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 13

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

September 16

- Hopkins, Daniel J. 2018. *The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (M 88-91; 98-104; 108-112; 117-123)

September 18

- 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)

## Congress

September 20

- 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 23

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

September 25

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

September 27

**\*\*\* First Test \*\*\***

## **Presidency**

September 30

- 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)

October 2

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

October 4

- 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 7

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 1-49

October 9

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

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 90-136

October 11

- Wilson, *Bureaucracy*, 315-345

## **Judiciary and Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

October 14

- 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 16

- 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 18

- 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 18-23

\*\*\* **Fall Break** \*\*\*

## Public Opinion

October 23

- Prior, Markus and Lori D. Bougher. 2018. "Like They've Never, Ever Seen In This Country?" Political Interest and Voter Engagement in 2016." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 82: 236-256 (M)

October 25

\*\*\* **Second Test** \*\*\*

October 28

- 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 30

- Fiorina, Morris P. 2017. *Unstable Majorities: Polarization, Party Sorting & Political Stalemate*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press (M 17-42)

## Voting and Elections

November 1

\*\*\* **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)

November 4

- 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)

November 6

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

November 8

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

November 11

- 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 13

- 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)
- **Movie Screening: *Running With Beto***

November 15

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

### **Political Parties and Interest Groups**

November 18

- 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 20

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

November 22

- 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 25

**\*\*\* 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 26-December 2

**\*\*\* Thanksgiving Break \*\*\***

December 2

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



December 4

- 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: *Best of Enemies***

## Public Policy

December 6

- 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 9

- 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 11

- Caplan, Bryan. 2018. *The Case Against Education: Why the Education System is a Waste of Time and Money*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press (M 1-7; 14-19; 31-38; 102-108; 200-207; 213-215; 287-290)

## The Improbable But Possible Uselessness of Political Science

December 13

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

December 17 \*\*\* **Final Exam at 9:00 AM**\*\*\*