

Political Science 201
INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Fall 2023

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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2-3; and by appointment

Course Description

This course introduces students to the workings of American Government. We will learn not only about American political institutions, such as the presidency, Congress, and the Supreme Court, but we will also learn about how the average American participates in government by covering topics such as voting, public opinion, and the media. We will explore why Americans seem to have increasing dissatisfaction with their government and attempt to explore the role that you as U.S. citizens and residents can take in improving democracy in America.

This course also fulfills the university's General Education Program (GEP) and therefore seeks to impart the following objectives for a GEP Social Science course: Students should be able to: 1) understand at least one of the following: human behavior, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes; and, 2) understand how social scientific methods may be applied to the study of human behavior, mental processes, organizational processes, or institutional processes; and, 3) use theories or concepts of the social sciences to understand real-world problems, including the underlying origins of such problems.

Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to...

- *1) Explain how individual behaviors and political institutions interact to create political outcomes
- *2) Properly use and critically evaluate political science data such as election returns and/or public opinion poll results
- *3) Analyze the actions of contemporary political actors (including ordinary citizens) using key course concepts
- 4) Explain and define the roles that key political actors, e.g., the president, members of Congress, Judges, the voting public, play in American democracy
- 5) Interpret how America's unique history, Constitutional structure, and political culture contribute to the state of contemporary American democracy

*GEP outcomes

Readings

We the People, 14th Essentials Edition, by Ginsberg et al. (WTP)

On-line reserve readings available through NCSU library (marked by *)

The New York Times (affordable college-rate subscriptions are available)

We the People will serve as the primary text for this course. The class lectures and the text are intended to complement one another. In order to get the most out of the class it is important that you do the assigned reading prior to the appropriate class period. You are expected to read the *New York Times* (or Washington Post) on a daily basis in order to be able to apply course concepts to contemporary events in government and politics. **Good performance on exams will require a thorough knowledge of current events.**

Requirements and Grading

- Two Midterm Exams and Non-cumulative Final Exam (20% each)
- Discussion Section PS201L & Norton Inquizitive (15%)
- Ideological Autobiography paper (10%)
- Misunderstanding American Politics paper (15%)

Grading will be on the following scale: A+≥97.0%; A≥93.0%; A-≥90.0%; B+≥87.0%; B≥83.0%; B-≥ 80.0%; C+≥77.0%; C≥73.0%; C-≥70.0%; D+≥67.0%; D≥63.0%; D-≥60.0%; F<60.0%

Discussion Sections

Enrollment in a discussion section/lab, PS 201L, is a basic requirement of the course. This class will be in the format of lectures on Monday and Wednesday and a discussion section led by a teaching assistant on Friday. Participation is expected from all students in the class. At minimum, this means good attendance in discussion sections. In accordance with university policy, a record of student attendance will be kept and count towards your grade in the section. The discussion sections will focus on the reserve readings, current events, and selected topics from lectures to be explored in greater depth. You will be graded on your **active participation** in discussion sections and **demonstrated knowledge of assigned readings**. Your grade will also include knowledge and effort on in-class writing assignments. Approximately 1/3 of your discussion section grade will be based on weekly Norton Inquizitive assignments for the assigned book chapter.

Assignments

Ideological Autobiography. Outline your personal political beliefs in major areas of government and public opinion. Are you liberal or conservative? Why? What aspects of the larger political environment as well as your personal environment have helped you form these beliefs? Be sure to use concepts you have learned about in this class to explain your ideology. You are responsible for the complete details of the assignment at:

<http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201/AboutPaper1.htm> **Due September 22. 4 pages maximum.**

Misunderstanding American politics. Based on what you have learned in PS 201 this semester, what would you say is the most important concept for better understanding how government/politics works that is, in fact, widely misunderstood by the American public. Explain the reality of this concept versus how it is commonly misused/misunderstood. *You will need to cite research to make your case.* How might American democracy work better if more people actually properly understood this concept? Lastly, consider what you might have gotten wrong in your argument. You are responsible for the complete details of the assignment at: <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201/AboutPaper2.htm>. **Due November 17. 5 pages maximum.**

Complete policies regarding all paper assignments can be found at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201/AllPaperGuidelines.htm>. You are expected to read these guidelines before submitting your paper.

Late Policy

It is expected that exams will be taken and assignments turned in when they are scheduled on the syllabus. There will be a 20-point penalty for failure to take an exam at the required time and a 1/3 letter grade per day penalty for written assignments. If you miss an exam, the re-scheduling must take place at the convenience of the instructor/teaching assistant. Written assignments are due at the *beginning* of class. To avoid penalties you need to let the instructor know of valid, exigent circumstances *before* the assigned time.

Class Website

The class website at <http://faculty.chass.ncsu.edu/shgreene/PS201> is an additional resource designed to assist you in the class. It will contain important announcements and archived lecture outlines as well as basic course information. I will enter grades on Moodle, but be sure to go here for key information.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to complete their assignments with due regard to academic integrity. In order to do so they should familiarize themselves with the relevant sections of the student code of conduct, especially with regards to plagiarism (Sections 7-13). By signing, all work submitted on paper, or by identifying themselves in work submitted electronically, students affirm that they neither gave nor received unauthorized aid. Collaboration on assignments among students may only occur when explicitly authorized by an instructor. AI may assist in improving student writing, but original writing by an AI should not be presented as student-created work.

Disability

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation 02.20.1 <http://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-02-20-01>

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Assigned Readings (Fall 2023)

August 21	Course Introduction Klein, “How politics makes us stupid” [*] Matthews, “The book that changed how I think about thinking” [*] Inskip, “A Finder’s Guide to Facts” [*] Hidden Brain, “The Double Standard” [^]
August 23 – 28	The Constitution and Federalism <i>WTP</i> , chapters 2 & 3 Rosen, “What If We Wrote the Constitution Today?” [*] Carey, “Did Trump prove that governments with presidents...” [*] Wegman, “Thomas Jefferson Gave the Constitution 19 Years...” [*] (Sep 1)
August 30	Political Culture <i>WTP</i> , chapter 1 Rank and Eppard, “The ‘American Dream’ of upward mobility...” [*] Brooks, “Despite Everything You Think You Know, America...” [*]
September 6 – 13 (no class September 4)	Public Opinion <i>WTP</i> , chapter 6 Weir, “Politics is Personal” [*] Pew, “Political Typology Quiz” [*] (take the quiz) Pew, “Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology (Intro)” [*] (Sep 15) Klein, “A new theory for why Republicans and Democrats see...” [*] (Sep 15) Kennedy, “Key things to know about election polling...” [*] (Sep 15)
September 18 – 20	Mass Media <i>WTP</i> , chapter 7 Leonhardt, “The six forms of media bias” [*] Klein, “Why the media is so polarized — and how it polarizes us” [*] Menand, “When Americans lost faith in the news” [*] Lewis-Kraus, “How harmful is social media?” [*] <i>Paper #1 due in September 22</i> discussion section
September 25	Political Participation <i>WTP</i> , chapter 9 (pp 250-267) Edsall, “This Is One Republican Strategy That Isn’t Paying Off” [*] Symonds, “Why Don’t Young People Vote, and What Can Be Done...?” [*] Vigdor, “Republicans Face Setbacks in Push to Tighten Voting Laws...” [^]
September 27	Midterm Exam I
October 2 – 4	Political Parties <i>WTP</i> , chapter 8 (pp. 212-232) Vox, “How the Republican Party went from Lincoln to Trump” [*] Vox, “From white supremacy to Barack Obama...” [*] Chinoy, “Let Us Predict Whether You’re a Democrat or a Republican” [*] Koerth, “Our Radicalized Republic” [*] Drutman, “A healthy democracy requires healthy political parties” [*]

October 9	No Class: Fall Break
October 11 – 18	Campaigns & Elections <i>WTP</i> , chapter 9 (pp. 267-287) Wegman “What if We Just Counted Up All the Votes for President...”* Wegman, “Gerrymander, USA”* Brownstein, “Is Gen Z Coming for the GOP?”* (Oct 20) Brownstein, “The demographic makeup of the country’s voters...”* (Oct 20) Bronner, “Advantage, GOP”* (Oct 20) Matthews, “The Great Money in Politics Myth”* (Oct 20)
October 23 – 25	Congress <i>WTP</i> , chapter 10 Klein, “The Senate Has Become a Dadaist Nightmare”* Friedersdorf, “What Should Congress Be?”*
October 25 – 30	Presidency <i>WTP</i> , chapter 11 Nyhan, “Joe Biden and ‘The Green Lantern Theory’...”* (Nov 3) Dickerson, “The Hardest Job in the World”* (Nov 3)
November 1	Midterm Exam II
November 6 – 8	The Judiciary <i>WTP</i> , chapter 13 Bokat-Lindell, “Three Paths for Reforming the Supreme Court”* Serwer, “The Lie About the Supreme Court Everyone Pretends...”*
November 8 – 13	Bureaucracy and Interest Groups <i>WTP</i> , chapter 12 and chapter 8 (pp. 232-246) Drutman, “What we get wrong about lobbying and corruption”* (Nov 17) Davidson, “Money, Power, and Deer Urine”* (Nov 17)
November 15, 20, 27 (No class Nov 22 -24)	Civil Liberties and Civil Rights <i>WTP</i> , chapters 4-5 Horton, “How far have African-Americans come since the 1960s?”* (Dec 1) Kahlenberg, “The Affirmative Action That Colleges Really Need”* (Dec 1) Rothstein, “The Problem With Wealth-Based Affirmative Action”* (Dec 1) <i>Paper #2 due November 17</i>
November 29– Dec 4	Public Policy <i>WTP</i> , chapter 14 Scott, “9 things Americans need to learn from the rest of the world...”* Demsas, “The Abortion Policy Most Americans Want”* Abrimitzky, “Five Myths about U.S. Immigration...”* Lopez, “Why you can’t blame mass incarceration on the war on drugs”*
December 11, 10-11am	FINAL EXAM