

**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS
POLITICAL SCIENCE 20100
CROSS LISTED AS POLS 10100/ HESB 20000
SPRING 2009**

Contact information

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Office hours

Mondays: 10:30 AM – Noon Wednesdays: 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM
(or by appointment)

Lectures: Mondays and Wednesdays 9:35 AM – 10: 25 AM, 126 DeBartolo Hall

Discussion sections: Fridays @ various locations, various times

Teaching Assistants

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Description

This course is fundamentally about democracy – how we know one when we see one. We will take the United States as an extended case study, the lens through which we will examine the challenges that accompany democratic governance. We will thus explore American politics from both the top down (the institutional landscape that shapes the way American government operates) and the bottom up (the attitudes and behavior of individual Americans). Along the way, we will be guided by the central question of whether America has too much democracy, or too little. Or perhaps it has just the right amount.

The course has five learning goals. Students in this course will:

- Critically evaluate America's form of democracy
- Learn the fundamentals of Americans' political behavior
- Learn the fundamentals of how America's major political institutions operate
- Advance and defend your own opinions on how America's political system should work
- Be introduced to the various methods used in the contemporary study of political science

Requirements

1. Come to class

The best reason to attend each and every class is that the quality of our collective learning experience rests on the willingness of everyone to be engaged in rigorous discussion. If that is not enough of an incentive, be warned that the exams will not only cover material from the assigned reading, but also from the lectures and discussion sections. As yet another incentive, attendance will be taken in every discussion section, and periodically in the lectures. Plus, on some days there will be treats, and you would not want to miss those.

Missing class will result in unpleasantness for everyone involved. I will have the unpleasant experience of assigning you a lowered participation grade, and you will experience the unpleasantness of receiving it.

In short, come to class. Every time.

(If you really, really have to miss class, be sure to tell me or your TA ahead of time. Good reasons to miss class include a subpoena, jury duty, surgery, birth of a baby, an *American Idol* callback—you know, important things).

2. Do the reading

Coming to class is necessary but not sufficient to succeed in this course. The assigned readings raise provocative questions, which we will discuss in class. The discussion will be really lame, however, if you have not done the reading. Thus, to encourage you to do the readings each week students will

- Submit a short thought paper on the question of the week, based on that week's assigned reading. These mini-papers will be a maximum of 250 words, and will be submitted to your teaching assistant by e-mail 24 hours before your section meets. The papers will be graded, but their purpose is primarily to give you an opportunity to take a stand on that week's topic. Your TAs will use these papers in their preparation for each week's discussion.
- Take a short quiz at the beginning of each discussion section. Quiz questions will be drawn from the assigned reading in the textbook and material covered in the lectures. Note that quizzes are only given verbally in section. Past quizzes are not distributed as study aids.

In short, do the reading. All of it. Every time.

3. Do your own work

As members of the academic community, we each have a responsibility to uphold rigorous standards of integrity. Every student is thus expected to abide by Notre Dame's Academic Code of Honor. The Code of Honor can be found at:

<http://www.nd.edu/~hnr/code/docs/index.htm>.

Plagiarism (using the ideas, words, or work of others without attribution) will result in failing the course and, typically, even more serious consequences. If you have any questions about the Code of Honor, plagiarism, or academic honesty, please contact me.

In short, do your own work. All of it. Every time.

4. Pay attention

Good citizenship in the classroom calls for everyone to devote their full attention to the lectures and ensuing discussion. That means all cell phones must be silenced during class. It also means no texting, no checking e-mail, no updating your Facebook page, no surfing the web, no twittering—you get the idea. Not only is such behavior rather rude, it will cause you to miss stuff that will appear on exams. Plus you might miss the jokes.

In short, pay attention. All of the time.

Evaluation

Your evaluation in the course will have five components:

1. Paper on American Democracy	15%
2. Midterm Exam 1	15%
3. Midterm Exam 2	15%
4. Paper on the Media	15%
4. Final Exam	25%
5. Participation, attendance, thought papers, quizzes	15%

The final exam will be held from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM on Monday, May 4th. This date is set by the University (aka "The Man"), and the instructor is not able to change it, nor grant exceptions. So don't even ask.

Readings

The course uses the following books, all of which are available at the Notre Dame bookstore.

Morris Fiorina, Paul E. Peterson, D. Stephen Voss, Bertram Johnson, and William Mayer. *America's New Democracy*, 5th edition. (Pearson/Longman)

Morris Fiorina. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 2nd edition. (Pearson/Longman)

Robert Dahl. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, 2nd edition. (Yale University Press)

James Surowiecki. *The Wisdom of Crowds*. (Anchor Books)

“Big Media” Meets the “Bloggers”: Coverage of Trent Lott’s Remarks at Strom Thurmond’s Birthday Party. Kennedy School of Government Case Program.

There will also be a number of readings available on e-reserves (identified as “ER” in the course schedule).

Periodically course material, including any slides shown during the lectures, will be posted on Concourse. You are encouraged to check Concourse regularly.

Because much of what we will discuss in class will be drawn from current political happenings, students are strongly encouraged to read one of the following newspapers regularly: *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or *Wall Street Journal*. Sorry, the *Observer* does not count.

Teaching Assistants

As a PhD student in political science, your TA is a valuable resource. You will meet with your TA during Friday discussion sections, which are integral to the course. Your TA should also be your first stop for help in the course, particularly when preparing for exams and papers.

Occasionally, a student will be unhappy with a grade awarded by a TA. If so, you can appeal your grade to Professor Campbell. Be warned, however, that I fancy myself to be like the Supreme Court (although without the nifty robe)—my verdict is final.

Schedule (subject to change)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Readings</i>
1/14	What is democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 1, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • Start reading <i>The Wisdom of Crowds</i>
1/16	SECTION: Procedures	
1/19	What Americans Do, and Don't, Know About Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep reading <i>The Wisdom of Crowds</i>
1/21	More on Political Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish reading <i>The Wisdom of Crowds</i> • Larry Bartels, "The Irrational Electorate" [ER]
1/23	SECTION: Can democracy work?	
1/26	The Constitution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 2, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • Introduction, Chs. 1-2, Appendix, <i>How Democratic is the American Constitution?</i> • Federalist Papers #10, #51 (pp. 472-481 of <i>America's New Democracy</i>)
1/28	Federalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 3, <i>America's New Democracy</i>
1/30	SECTION: How democratic <i>is</i> the Constitution? How democratic <i>should</i> it be?	

2/02	Direct Democracy	
2/04	American Political Culture PAPER 1 DUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 4, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • Sven Steinmo, "American Exceptionalism Reconsidered: Culture or Institutions?" [ER]
2/06	SECTION: Which came first, culture or institutions?	
2/09	Civic Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone" [ER]
2/11	Political Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 7, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • Arend Lijphart, "Unequal Participation: Democracy's Unresolved Dilemma" [ER]
2/13	SECTION: Should voting be mandatory?	
2/16	Interest Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 9, <i>America's New Democracy</i>
2/18	Political Parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morris Fiorina, "The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics" [ER]
2/20	SECTION: Are strong parties essential to democracy?	
2/23	Polarization (?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Culture War</i>, Chs. 1-3
2/25	Polarization continued	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Culture War</i>, Chs. 4-6
2/27	SECTION: Is America polarized? Is polarization good or bad?	
3/02	Culture War (revisited)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Campbell, "A House Divided: What Social Science Has To Say About the Culture War" [ER]

3/04	MIDTERM EXAM	
3/06	NO SECTION	
3/09 - 3/13	SPRING BREAK	
3/16	Congress In Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 10, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • Matthew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz, "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms" [ER]
3/18	Congressional Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anthony King, "Running Scared" [ER]
3/20	SECTION: Should members of the House of Representatives have longer terms?	
3/23	Presidency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch.11, <i>America's New Democracy</i>
3/25	Presidential Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch.8, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • Ch. 4, <i>How Democratic is the American Constitution?</i>
3/27	SECTION: Should the Electoral College be abolished?	
3/30	Bureaucracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch.12, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • James Q. Wilson, <i>Bureaucracy</i>, chapter 17 [ER]
4/01	MIDTERM EXAM	
4/03	NO SECTION	
4/06	Public Opinion: How We Know What We Know About It	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 5, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • Scott Keeter, "Poll Power"
4/08	The Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ch. 6, <i>America's New Democracy</i> • Kennedy School of Government Case, "Big Media" Meets the "Bloggers"
4/10	GOOD FRIDAY (NO SECTION)	
4/15	Courts PAPER 2 DUE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federalist Paper #78 [ER]

4/17	SECTION: Should we elect judges?	
4/20	Civil Rights/Civil Liberties	• Chs.14 & 15, <i>America's New Democracy</i>
4/22	Church and State	• Noah Feldman, "A Church-State Solution" [ER]
4/24	SECTION: Where should we draw the line between church and state?	
4/27	Public Policy	• Ch. 16, <i>America's New Democracy</i>
4/29	Final Assessment	• Chs. 5-7, <i>How Democratic is the American Constitution?</i>
5/04	FINAL EXAM @ 8:00 AM	