Introduction to American Government

POLS 1101
The University of Georgia
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Instructor Info

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Syllabus is on the website.

Course Description

This course is intended to provide students with a broad understanding of American government. Throughout the semester we will examine the origins, development and functions of the executive, judicial and legislative branches of government. In addition to highlighting how these branches operate independently, attention will be given to their interactions with one another. The course will also discuss the role federalism, the media, public opinion, elections and voting play in the American political system.

Why Study American Government?

Better Understand Policy Change

Characterizing Policy Change

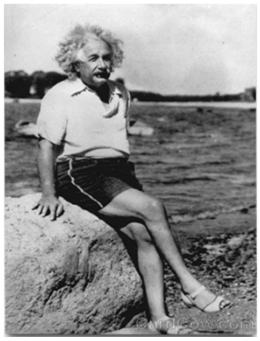
- Slow, contentious, frustrating…

Why?

It's complicated…

"Politics is more complicated than physics." – Albert Einstein

Few quick fixes and easy answers.



Institutions Are Important

How they are designed, how and why they evolved…

- We will spend a great deal of time talking about evolution.

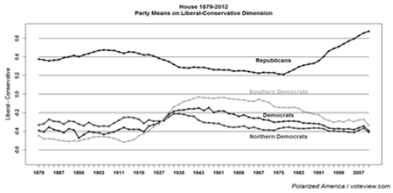
Institutions Are Important…

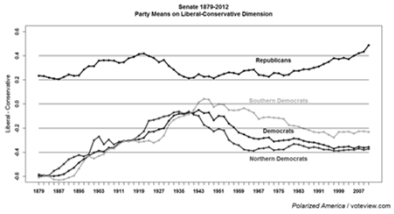
"I think we can stipulate once again for the umpteenth time that matters that have any level of controversy about it in the Senate will require 60 votes." *– Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-KY)*

Course Goals…

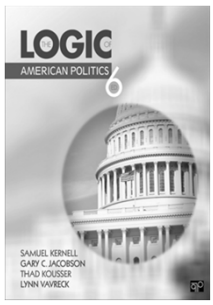
The primary goal of this course is to provide students with a conceptual background they can use to understand and critically analyze what is written in the newspaper or said in the news today, tomorrow, and in the more distant future.

Analyzing Contemporary Politics…





Readings



- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser and Lynn Vavreck. 2013. *The Logic of American Politics*, 6th Edition. CQ Press.
- Newspaper
- Political blogs?

  CNN, Drudge Report, Five Thirty Eight, Political wire, Politics1, The Monkey Cage, Vox, the Upshot

News

Republicans are increasingly concerned about Georgia's Senate race, where a crowded primary threatens to produce a flawed candidate who could put at risk a seat in a Republican-leaning state. Recent polling shows the two candidates Republicans are most anxious about — Reps. Phil Gingrey (R-Ga.) and Paul Broun (R-Ga.) — leading the pack. Whoever emerges from the clown-car primary, with seven candidates and counting, will face a candidate Democrats are high on in a state where shifting demographics benefit their party.

Sen. Mitch McConnell's (R-KY) reelection bid may be the first Senate contest to crest the $100 million mark, the Washington Post reports. "Races in recent years have come close to breaching the $100 million mark. The Massachusetts Senate race between Scott Brown (R) and Elizabeth Warren (D) carried an $82 million price tag, making it the most expensive contest in Senate history. (The massive spending in that race is all the more remarkable when you consider that neither Brown nor Warren had significant personal money to spend on it.) For more than a decade before the Massachusetts race, the 2000 New York Senate fight between Hillary Clinton (D) and Rick Lazio (R)held the record for spending at $70 million."

Donald Trump told Jon Karl of ABC News that he'd spend whatever money necessary if and when he decided to run for president in 2016.

National Journal: "Immigration-reform activists aren't supposed to talk publicly about a "Plan B." They can't, or won't, answer questions from the media about what they will do if no bill passes this year to legalize the undocumented population. But as August wears on and there is no clear sense of what the House will do on immigration, some are starting to speak out."

Grades

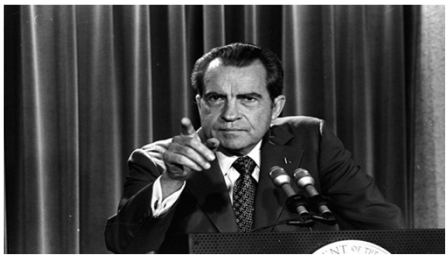
- **Class Attendance/Participation (10% of final grade**): One of the goals for this class is for students to become comfortable discussing political institutions, issues and events. Hence, they will be encouraged to attend and participate in course discussions. More than two absences will result in a lowering of a student's discussion section grade. A students' participation grade may also include several small quizzes or assignments.

Exams

Midterm Exams (60% of final grade): Three midterm examinations (worth 20% each) will be given throughout the course. The dates are listed on the syllabus as **May 15**, **May 22**, and **May 29**. These exams will consist of multiple choice and short answer questions. The midterm examinations will be non-cumulative. If a student is unable to take one of the exams on the scheduled date, they should contact the course instructor beforehand. Missed exams will only be excused for a documented illness (documentation must be provided by a physician) or a death in the family. If you are excused from an exam, your final exam will be weighted accordingly.

Final Exam (30% of final grade): The final exam is scheduled for Wednesday, **June 3**, from 9:30am to 12:05 pm in the regular classroom. Like the midterms, it will feature a mix of multiple choice and short answer questions. The final exam will be cumulative, covering all materials from readings and lectures.

Exams



DO NOT MISS AN EXAM DATE!

The Test - Matching

1. Tet Offensive_____
2. Alan Trammell____
3. Huey Lewis_____
4. Newton_____

a) The 1984 Detroit Tigers
b) Vietnam War
c) force and balance
d) The News

The Test – Multiple Choice

1. The Equal Rights Amendment
   a) was never passed by Congress
   b) was passed by Congress but not ratified by enough states to become law
   c) was passed by Congress and ratified by enough states to become law
   d) was written in response to the Supreme Court's 1924 ruling in *Hogan v. Savage*

2. Which founding father was mentioned in class for attempting to outlaw slavery?
   a) George Washington
   b) Alexander Hamilton
   c) Steve Perry
   d) Ben Franklin

The Test – Short Answer

1. Imagine the semester has just ended. You and some buddies have decided to blow-off some steam and can think of no better way to do so than to reenact the Constitutional Convention. You randomly draw the role of James Madison. What are some of your key proposals for a new Constitution? How do you convince your fellow historical recreationists that adopting your proposals is the right way to go? What evidence do you cite to in arguing that the Articles of Confederation are deficient?

Classroom/Section Behavior

Students should behave professionally throughout the course. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes cell phone usage, excessive talking and derogatory or offensive comments made during discussion. Students will be held responsible for all material discussed or assigned.

Classroom Behavior

Again…Politics is complicated.

Be respectful of opposing viewpoints.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Will not be tolerated. Further information regarding academic honesty can be found at http://www.uga.edu/honesty/.

[INSERT ANGRY WIKIPEDIA RANT HERE]

Conclusion

Read Chapter 1.