



POLITICAL SCIENCE 2052

HONORS AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Louisiana State University, Spring 2021
Asynchronous Online Instruction
Modeled on a Tuesday & Thursday class
Lectures posted 2x per week (late Mondays & Wednesdays)

Instructor: **Prof. Nathan P. Kalmoe**

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Office Hours: Zoom on Tuesdays & Thursdays, from 9 to 10 a.m., and by appointment

Teaching Assistants: Mr. Justin Weng & Ms. Cole Catherine Dunnam

Course Description

This course provides an introductory tour of American government and politics. We will use theories of politics, as well as historical and current events, to develop an understanding of the structures and processes of our government and the behaviors of leaders and citizens. The focus will be on national politics.

Through lectures, readings, videos, discussion, and activities, this course helps you learn how American politics works, what's happening now, and major issues facing the nation, all while honing analytical & advocacy skills.

Most of what I present in class is from a social science perspective—the systematic study of political science to develop knowledge. However, consistent with the institutional values of LSU, I teach the course in a way that affirms basic democratic principles, that values facts and the search for truth over partisan talking points, and that recognizes the value of Black lives. Some of our readings are opinion pieces illustrating important perspectives, particularly those that express commitments to democracy in various forms. Those are marked “**op**” in the reading schedule below.

POLS 2052 is an Integrated Learning course. These allow students to make simple connections among ideas and experiences and across disciplines and perspectives. The LSU Integrative Learning Core (ILC) curriculum is designed to develop student abilities to transfer their learning to new situations, and demonstrate a sense of self as a learner. A fundamental goal of the ILC is to foster students' practical and intellectual capacities associated with integrative learning in preparation for high competence and functionality in their post-baccalaureate careers. This course fulfills the BOR Area of *Social/Behavioral Sciences* and provides students experience with the ILC proficiency of *Inquiry and Analysis*, including existing knowledge/research, analysis, and conclusions. I'll assess these with questions on American politics research, questions about the strategies and outcomes in the games we play, and the social science methods that inform election analysis.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- 1) Explain key terms, basic concepts & theories, and the significance of historical & contemporary American politics.
- 2) Explain foundational aspects of American democracy in institutions, organizations, liberties, and rights.
- 3) Analyze how political fundamentals shape current events, government action, and the election process.
- 4) Understand & describe journalistic & economic practices in the creation & dissemination of political discourse.
- 5) Identify strategies used in elite & mass political action.
- 6) Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- 7) Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to American politics.
- 8) Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- 9) Think critically, creatively and independently.

Preparation for Class

The learning material for this course will be covered in video lectures and assigned readings. I recommend you start each week by familiarizing yourself with the study guide, then do assigned readings, and finish by watching the lecture. Most weeks have a quiz at the end, and you'll have some written responses and very short assignments too.

Since this course is three credit hours, you should expect to spend roughly **9 hours in an average week** on reading, watching video lectures, writing, thinking, and studying for class.

Moodle Course Website

All students registered for the course can access the course's **Moodle page**. The Moodle page includes a course syllabus, study tips, readings, lecture slides, assignments, discussion modules, quizzes, exams, and all other relevant course material.

Required Readings

There is a substantial amount of reading for this class – around **50-70 pages per week**. **You won't succeed in this class without carefully reading assigned material.** You are required to acquire one book (buy new/used, rent, borrow). The other is available for free through the LSU library:

1) Kernell et al. (2019). *The Logic of American Politics*. **9th Edition**. (8th edition is 95% similar, if you can find it cheaper online, but you're accountable for 9th edition content.)

Textbook website: practice quizzes, chapter summaries, flashcards
(<https://edge.sagepub.com/kernell9e>).

2) John Sides, Michael Tesler, & Lynn Vavreck. (2018). *Identity Crisis: The 2016 Presidential Campaign and the Battle for the Meaning of America*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. **Available for free through LSU library!**

In addition, we'll read a few short **news/blog articles** on current events, listed with links.

Lastly, I recommend you regularly **read news** about U.S. and Louisiana politics. To be most informed, I recommend newspapers that are also available online. *The Washington Post* is probably best for national politics. Unfortunately, some of the best sources have paywalls (\$5/month for *Washington Post*, for example). However, you may be able to access them through LSU's library log-ins. Here are some decent news options:

National News:	<i>Washington Post</i> <i>New York Times</i> <i>National Public Radio</i>	www.washingtonpost.com www.nytimes.com www.npr.org
Local/Regional News:	<i>The Advocate</i> (BR) <i>The Daily Reveille</i> (LSU)	http://www.theadvocate.com/ http://www.lsunow.com/daily/
Politics News & Blogs:	Monkey Cage Mischiefs of Faction FiveThirtyEight Vox Upshot	http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/ http://www.mischiefsoffaction.com/ http://fivethirtyeight.com/ http://www.vox.com/ https://www.nytimes.com/section/upshot
Insightful Twitter:	Julia Azari Matt Grossman Seth Masket Brendan Nyhan Hakeem Jefferson Jay Rosen Jamila Michener Pew Research Center Kevin Kruse Charles Franklin	@julia_azari @MattGrossman @smotus @BrendanNyhan @hakeemjefferson @jayrosen_nyu @povertyscholar @pewresearch @KevinMKruse @PollsAndVotes political science & communication political science & communication party politics politics & media research & commentary politics & race journalism & media public policy & politics public opinion & trends history & politics public opinion, elections, & polling

Requirements

Your overall course grade will be determined by the following:

Talking Points	10%
Weekly Quizzes (10)	20% total
Exams (3)	40% total
1 Brief Essay	15%
Activities	10%
MEL studies	5%

“Talking” Points (10%) – Answer questions in 8 discussion modules

Your participation grade requires respectful responses to questions posed in lecture, informed by class materials and your own experiences and learning. You'll post your responses in modules on Moodle just below the lecture video link. You are **not required to respond to every lecture's questions. 100% credit** for the whole semester equals **responses to 8 sets of discussion questions.** (Most lectures have 2 or 3 questions – you should answer all of them in the module when you do respond.) To stay on track for 100% credit, you should aim for responding to 2 sets of questions every 3 weeks. Doing more than 8 can earn you some extra credit, up to 110%.

Please **ask questions**, challenge the assumptions in the reading and politely disagree with your classmates or me if you wish. I'm interested in hearing how your life experiences and knowledge intersect with topics we're covering in class. Please share your perspectives!

Partisan perspectives are appropriate in some discussions, but they must be expressed in an appropriate manner that is respectful of others and that takes into account the academic study of the topic. There is no place in this class for the vitriol or distortions commonly seen in political communication today. Some of our discussions will be analytical rather than partisan, but I'll also ask you to consider larger normative questions about what is best for society.

Weekly Reading Quizzes (20%)

To prep you for the content and style of exams—and to help keep you accountably on track for assigned readings—we will have **10 brief quizzes** throughout the semester. Each will cover reading and lecture material since the previous quiz. Usually that will just mean all the content from that week. **Use quiz study guides!**

Quizzes will take place online through Moodle. Quizzes will be **open all day Friday and close Saturday at noon.** Multiple choice format, 5 questions. You'll have 6 minutes to complete the quiz, but you can take it at any time on the day it is given. **You may use your notes and readings**, but the short time will make it difficult to comb through readings. **You may not work with others** on quizzes, and you will be reported for academic dishonesty if you do. **Let me know immediately if you run into any technical problems with Moodle** and we'll work it out. And let me know at least one week prior if you have testing accommodations you'd like to use.

Every quiz is required – BUT – your lowest FOUR quiz scores will be dropped. If you choose not to take a quiz, it will count as a zero and be dropped (up to four). However, your best strategy would be to at least guess the answers, and you'll probably do better than zero.

Exams (40% total)

We'll have **three exams** given online through Moodle, covering half the semester each. Not cumulative. Multiple choice and short answer. Use quiz study guides and other class materials to prepare. If you do at least **5% better on your next exam**, I'll **add 5% to your prior score.** You may take the exam at any time on the day that it is given, but you will have a time limit once you start. Exams may only be rescheduled for excused absences, which you must arrange with me in advance, if possible.

I follow the LSU-wide policy on excused absences for exams. If you know you will miss an exam with an excused absence, please let me know well ahead of time. Religious holidays are excused **with prior notification.** **Let me know immediately if you run into any technical problems with Moodle** and we'll work it out. And let me know at least one week prior if you have testing accommodations you'd like to use.

Media Effects Lab Participation – Online Studies (5%)

This course draws on research conducted here at LSU and beyond, and part of this course involves learning to be an informed
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consumer of research. Firsthand experience is invaluable. Therefore, you will earn course credit worth 5% of your final grade by participating in ongoing research in the Media Effects Lab [MEL], or by completing an alternate assignment in lieu of a research participation opportunity (<https://lsu-manship.sona-systems.com>).

For full credit, you must earn three (3) MEL points, which equals three hours. You should plan to have at least 1 MEL point (1 hour) completed by the midterm exam to stay on track. All MEL studies will be conducted online this semester. Psst: You're reading this carefully and I appreciate that. Please email me a picture of a rock climber in exchange for a few bonus participation points so I know of your diligence.

1 SHORT ESSAY (15%)

You will write ONE short paper of 700-800 words analyzing politics & advocating your views on a big question in class. I'll post instructions on the class Moodle page. Late papers are penalized 10 percent per day. Choose one of these topics: Constitutional amendments, when U.S. became a democracy; 2024 election predictions, or predicting the nature of American parties in 20 years. First two are due the day of Exam 1, last two are due at the end of Week 15.

The purpose of the papers and in-class discussions is to encourage critical reflection on the readings & class content. As long as your contributions meet modest standards (please proofread & spell-check!), I will not base evaluations on eloquence of writing or speaking. I *will* evaluate them on evidence that you completed *all* of the readings, as well as evidence that you reflected critically upon them, the quality of those reflections, and adherence to instructions.

ACTIVITIES (10%)

I'll post a handful of class activities on Moodle that help to illustrate key concepts and processes from lecture and readings about the logic of politics.

Grading

A's are reserved for excellent & exceptional work, B's suggest your work is very good, C's are for satisfactory work.

96.5 and above A+	73.50–76.49 C
93.50 – 96.49 A	70.00–73.49 C-
90.00–93.49 A-	66.50–69.99 D+
86.50–89.99 B+	63.50–66.49 D
83.50–86.49 B	60.00–63.49 D-
80.00–83.49 B-	59.99 and below F
76.50–79.99 C+	

Contact Info

Email is the best way to reach me. I will make every effort to respond within 12-24 hours, but usually much sooner. Please **include "American Politics" in the subject line** so I can be sure to prioritize your emails. In chats and by email, **please address me as "Professor Kalmoe."**

I am a resource for you. **If you have questions** about reading material, lecture content, quizzes, quizzes, or exams, I encourage you to **(safely) talk with other students, come to Zoom office hours, and/or make an appointment with me.** This class will challenge you, but I will help you meet the challenge.

I will use your email address listed in Moodle for announcements, so be sure your email account in Moodle is up-to-date, and regularly check your in-box.

Accessibility Resources

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students who have a physical, cognitive, systemic, learning or psychiatric disability registered with LSU's Office of Disabilities Services. Please contact me by e-mail, during office hours, or after class during the first two weeks of school to discuss accommodations (or at least one week in advance of when you would like them to begin). For more information, please check out the LSU's Disability Services website and office:

<http://students.lsu.edu/disability>.

Writing Center

Check out LSU's writing center and one-on-one writing tutoring for improving your written work in classes.

<https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/cxc/studios/studio151/writing/>

Counseling Services

LSU's Counseling Services assist students on personal, social, career, and study problems that may interfere with academic progress & success. All services are free & can include individual & group counseling, crisis consultations, & wellness groups. The website: <http://www.shc.lsu.edu/counseling.html>. In an emergency, please immediately call 911 & campus security.

Statement of Academic Integrity

Students are bound to uphold LSU's Code of Academic Integrity. All students are expected to read & be familiar with the Code, found online at www.lsu.edu/saa. It is your responsibility to know & understand the academic standards for our community. Students who are suspected of violating the Code will be referred to the office of Student Advocacy & Accountability. A first academic violation could result in a zero grade on the assignment or failing the class and disciplinary probation until graduation. A second academic violation could result in suspension from LSU. Ignorance of these guidelines is not an acceptable excuse for failure to comply.

State Ethics Laws

Students occasionally think of giving a gift to their professor at the end of the year, as they did for teachers in high school and earlier. Although we appreciate the thought very much, Louisiana state ethics laws prohibit LSU faculty and staff from accepting gifts from you of any kind (e.g. money, gift cards, trinkets, other things of value). The purpose is to avoid any impression of favoritism or impropriety related to the performance of our duties as public servants, even after grades are in.

Title IX: Protections for Students Experiencing Pregnancy and/or Sexual Misconduct

Louisiana State University recognizes the inherent dignity of all individuals and promotes respect for all people. In accordance with Title IX, LSU prohibits sex-based discrimination, including discrimination toward pregnant students. Title IX provides protections greater than PS-22 for pregnancy related absences. If you are an expecting student, you may contact a pregnancy advocate to answer questions and guide you throughout your pregnancy.

As faculty, we want to support your academic career amidst the life challenges that often occur for students. Most conversations with you are 100% confidential by law—we cannot disclose anything about your academic record outside usual administrative channels (e.g. grades, disciplinary issues) without your permission.

However, please know that I, as an instructor, am not a confidential source and am required to report the Title IX Coordinator concerns regarding sexual misconduct, harassment, or domestic abuse shared with me. If you are experiencing or have experienced sexual misconduct, including sexual harassment, there are resources available for reporting, assistance, and support. <https://www.lsu.edu/studentaffairs/sexualmisconduct.php>

After a report, the university is required to contact you for more information. Please know you are **not** required to give more info if you would prefer not to do so. But if you're willing and able, I encourage you to report any harm you've experienced or learned about to seek justice, to protect you, and to protect the broader campus community. I am more than willing to help direct you to the appropriate LSU professionals & resources, with or without details.

Sadly, gendered violence and harassment are common on college campuses and beyond. If this happens to you, please know it is not your fault. I hope you will seek whatever support you need from friends, family, and professional resources.

Diversity Statement

The pledge of LSU is to establish an intellectually diverse environment and an educational experience designed to cope with and improve an interconnected, modern world.

Through its students, faculty, curriculum, and culture, the school will create, maintain and support a supportive climate for learning and working among faculty, students and staff who are diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, age, spirituality, socio-economic status, disability, family status, experiences, opinions, and ideas.

STUDENTS: We will develop a diverse student body that brings a broad range of backgrounds, goals, points of view, and
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learning objectives to the program.

FACULTY: We will actively seek out, hire, and support a faculty with strong academic and professional credentials with an emphasis on diversity.

CURRICULUM: We will facilitate conversations about diversity both inside and outside the classroom to further an understanding and tolerance among students, faculty and staff.

CULTURE: We will establish a culture of diversity to supplement and inform the LSU curriculum and personnel.

A Personal Note

As you continue to learn and explore in college and life, please take care of yourself and your friends, and always be considerate to others. By supporting each other and looking out for one another, we can make college better for everyone.

This is especially true in the midst of a pandemic. Please adhere closely to all requirements and recommendations for masks, social distancing, handwashing, and restrictions on social gatherings to do your part to reduce the massive death toll. Unfortunately, LSU has brought students back to campus, which is deeply unwise. You can do your part to keep their poor choices (and the bad choices of government) from killing and injuring thousands more people.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Topic by Week	Reading	Notable Dates
PART 1: AMERICAN IDEALS		
Week 1: Jan 11 Intro & The Logic What key concepts help us make sense of politics?	Tues: Syllabus Thurs: Logic Ch. 1 (36 pgs), Preface, Note to Students <i>Optional:</i> " Covid " (3 pgs)	
Week 2: Jan 19 American Democracy in Crisis What is democracy? Where have we stood, and where do we stand now? <i>Optional:</i> Sasse " Statement " (3 pgs)	Tues: Azari " Legitimate opposition " (3 pgs) BLW " Democracy Health 2017 " (8 pgs, skip app.) Pepinsky " Authoritarianism is boring " (3 pgs) Nyhan " Norms " (3 pgs) Thurs: Miller " False claims & violence " (8 pgs) Norris " Election legitimacy " (3 pgs) Azari " Insurrection " (3 pgs) Wasow " Who we are " (3 pgs) Michel " Putting down insurrections "	Friday: Quiz 1
Week 3: Jan 25 The Constitution Where did it come from, and how does it shape our politics?	Tues: Logic Ch. 2 (50 pgs) Thurs: Toobin " Broken Constitution " (18 pgs)	Friday: Quiz 2 <i>Optional: Constitution, Bill of Rights</i>
Week 4: Feb 1 Federalism How do divided powers work?	Tues: Logic Ch. 3 (38 pgs) Thurs: Wolbrecht " 19th Amend " (4 pgs) Thomson-DeVeaux " Women candidates " (4 pgs)	Friday: Quiz 3
Week 5: Feb 8 Civil Rights Have we reached civic equality?	Tues: Logic Ch. 4 (46 pgs) Thurs: Hannah-Jones " Black Democracy " (op, 10 pgs)	Friday: Quiz 4

<i>Optional: 1619 podcast; House testimony</i>	Server " Against reconciliation " (20 pgs)	
Week 6: Feb 15	NO CLASS due to weather	
Week 7: Feb 22 Finishing Civil Rights Liberties	Tues: Coates " Reparations " (op, 28 pgs) Collins " Systemic racism, explained " (10 pgs) Thurs: Logic Ch. 5 (40 pgs) Nossel " 5 free speech myths " (3 pgs)	Thurs-Sat: Exam 1
PART 2: AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS		Paper due (if 1 st set of topics)
Week 8: Mar 1 The Congress What role does Congress play?	Tues: Logic Ch. 6 (58 pgs) Thurs: Binder " Police Reforms " (3 pgs) Masket " 2022 Midterms " (3 pgs)	Friday: Quiz 5
Week 9: Mar 8 The Presidency What are the president's powers?	Tues: Logic Ch. 7 (40 pgs) Thurs: Rucker " Rule of One " (5 pgs) Hohmann " Article II " (3 pgs) Chafetz " Impeachment " (3 pgs) Klein " Trump vs. the media " (4 pgs)	Friday: Quiz 6
Week 10: Mar 15 The Bureaucracy How do agencies work?	Tues: Logic Ch. 8 (38 pgs) Thurs: Kiel " IRS audits " (3 pgs)	Friday: Quiz 7
Week 11: Mar 22 The Judiciary How do the courts work?	Tues: Logic Ch. 9 (40 pgs) Thurs: Binder " Confirmations " (3 pgs)	Friday: Quiz 8
Week 12: Mar 29 Parties & Interest Groups Why parties & interest groups?	Tues: Logic Ch. 12 (44 pgs) Thurs: Logic Ch. 13 (36 pgs)	Exam review Friday: Exam, 2
PART 3: AMERICAN POLITICAL BEHAVIOR		Paper due (if 2 nd set of topics)
Week 13: Apr 5 Elections & Public Opinion Week 14: Apr 12 Elections & Public Opinion How do elections work? How do the people decide?	Tues: Logic Ch. 11 (36 pgs) Bouie " Electoral College " (op, 3 pgs) Thurs: IC Chs. 1-3 (pgs. 1-46): Fundamentals Tues: IC Chs. 4-5 (pgs. 47-96): Nominations Azari " Let elites decide " (op, 3 pgs) Thurs: IC Chs. 6 (pgs. 96-129): Nominations	Friday: Quiz 9
Week 15: Apr 19 Elections & Public Opinion Conclusions	Tues: IC Chs. 7-8 (pgs. 130-200): Gen. Election Thurs: IC Ch. 9 Soul of a Nation (20 pgs) <i>Optional: Noel "10 Things" (14 pgs)</i> <i>BLW "Democracy in 2020" (5 pgs)</i>	Friday: Quiz 10 Exam Review Paper due (if last topics)
EXAM 3	Finals Week	

Syllabus Revisions: This syllabus is subject to revision by the instructor with written notice.