

FALL 2002

MWF 9-9:50 A.M. 210 GARDNER

# INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

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300 HAMILTON

This course is designed to introduce you to the structure and operation of the American system of government, which includes not only the institutions of government that we are familiar with such as Congress and the Presidency, but also the roles that average citizens hold. The focus is on the questions and theories that interest academic political scientists – not simply knowing current affairs, but finding the explanations that will help us understand politics in a larger context. Key to the course will be considering how well government achieves what it is designed to do – how people see politics as well as how government responds to citizens.

## CONTACTING ME

**BY E-MAIL:** e-mail is a fine way to contact me: wolak@email.unc.edu

### OFFICE HOURS :

- Please feel free to come chat during my office hours if you have questions about the class, or if you just want to dish about things like political science as a major or graduate school as an endeavor.
- My office hours are held in 300 Hamilton Hall on **Mondays 10 a.m. to noon**, and **Wednesdays 10-11 a.m.** If these office hours conflict with your schedule, I am happy to set up other meeting times.

## OBJECTIVES

Whether you're taking the class because you are a POLI major or because Advanced Bowling was full when you registered, this class should be a fun and informative way to think a little more critically about the political world around us. How well do citizens fulfill their roles in a democracy? How do government institutions translate public preferences into policy outcomes? And how well does our government do in producing the outcomes we would like to see?

## BLACKBOARD IS YOUR FRIEND

I will regularly update class information on the website for the class at [blackboard.unc.edu](http://blackboard.unc.edu). This syllabus will be posted there, as well as links to reading assignments and other exciting material.

## READING MATERIAL

Class readings will be drawn from three sources:

1. The introductory American government text:

Kernell, Samuel, and Gary Jacobson. 2002. *The Logic of American Politics*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

2. Assorted other articles and book chapters:

Some of these readings are assigned material, while other readings are supplemental pieces to serve as fodder for short response papers. See the course outline for more details. All of these readings are available online – either on the library's Electronic Reserves or through other websites. Paper versions of most selections are also available for you to photocopy at the Reserves Section of the Undergraduate Library.

3. An example of politics at work:

Waldman, Steven. 1996. *The Bill: How Legislation Really Becomes Law: A Case Study of the National Service Bill*. New York: Penguin Books.

## REQUIREMENTS

It is important to keep up with class readings and you should generally aim to complete the readings listed for a given day before the scheduled class meeting. In addition to the readings, you will also be responsible for the following:

1. Two short response papers: (*each is worth 10% of your final grade*) At the beginning of the course, you will be asked to choose two topics that interest you from a list of supplemental readings. These topics, including subjects such as civic engagement, the media, and presidential persuasion, reflect material covered in class, but in closer detail. For each topic, you will read two 'bonus' book chapters or short articles, responding to what you read in a two to three page essay. Papers should not be simply summaries of the readings, but should instead discuss a little more critically the issues at hand. Additional guidelines are detailed in a separate handout.
2. Longer paper: (*worth 15% of your final grade*) In addition to the short response papers, you will also be asked to synthesize across a range of issues covered in class in a longer and more comprehensive four to five page paper. Paper topics, guidelines, and additional details will be forthcoming later in the semester.
3. Two midterm exams: (*each midterm is worth 20% of your final grade*)
4. Final exam: (*worth 20% of your final grade*)
5. Quizzes and homeworks and participation: (*worth 5% of your final grade*)

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you are not familiar with the rules of citing sources in written work or what constitutes plagiarism, you should contact me or refer to the Student Judicial System website ([www.unc.edu/depts/honor/](http://www.unc.edu/depts/honor/)).
- All papers are expected to be original work, not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course (unless prior approval of all instructors involved is obtained).

## RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

All students who are enrolled in POLI 41 are required to participate in research studies conducted in the Political Science Department. Studies will likely begin in late September.

- The website to sign up for research studies is [www.unc.edu/depts/pspp](http://www.unc.edu/depts/pspp) (I will alert you when this semester's studies are posted).
- The total time commitment should not exceed 3 hours (and will usually be much less than this).
- Students who object to participating in these studies will have the opportunity to satisfy the research participation requirement in another way.
- Failure to complete the requirement will result in a grade of I (*Incomplete*).

# CLASS SCHEDULE

## POLI 41 – INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT – FALL 2002

### PART I : HOW PEOPLE APPROACH POLITICS

#### PUBLIC OPINION

- W: August 21 First class  
F: August 23 What do people know about politics? What is public opinion?  
M: August 26 How do people organize their political beliefs?  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 10: Public Opinion (p. 355-425)  
W: August 28 How do we measure opinion?  
F: August 30 Who influences opinion and how?  
M: September 2 *No class – Labor Day holiday*  
W: September 4 So how do people make do with low information and weak ideology?

#### CAMPAIGNS THROUGH THE EYES OF CITIZENS

- F: September 6 Partisanship  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 11: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections (p. 389-405)  
M: September 9 Other influences on the vote  
W: September 11 Vote strategies  
F: September 13 Turnout and political participation

#### CAMPAIGNS AND ELECTIONS AS PROCESSES

- M: September 16 Political parties  
W: September 18 Presidential selection  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 11: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections (p. 405-425)  
**READ:** Seib, Gerald F. and John Harwood. 2000. "What Seems Like a Good Idea Haunts the GOP Establishment." *Wall Street Journal* Feb 16, 2000.  
F: September 20 Congressional campaigns  
M: September 23 Congressional election dynamics, Review  
W: September 25 **MIDTERM 1**

### PART II : AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

#### CONSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

- F: September 27 Collective action and constitutional design  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 1: The Logic of American Politics (p. 3-28)  
**START READING:** *The Bill*  
M: September 30 Consequences of design

#### CONGRESS

- W: October 2 Types of representation  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 6: Congress (p. 187-204)  
**READ:** Crile, George. 1975. "The Best Congressman." *Harper's Magazine* p.60-66.  
F: October 4 A day in the life of a member of Congress  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 6: Congress (p. 204-236)  
M: October 7 Congressional organization; role of parties  
**FINISH READING:** *The Bill*  
W: October 9 What (and who) influences members  
F: October 11 The policy process; discussion of *The Bill*

## INTEREST GROUPS

- M: October 14 Collective action and obstacles to group formation  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 13: Interest Groups (p. 468-501)
- W: October 16 Strategies of influence, consequences of interest groups
- F: October 18 *No class – Fall break*

## PRESIDENCY

- M: October 21 Presidential selection; presidential power  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 7: The Presidency (p. 238-277)
- W: October 23 Presidential influence
- F: October 25 The President and the public

## MEDIA

- M: October 28 Media as an institution; politicians and the press  
**READ:** Jamieson, Kathleen Hall, and Veronica Davison. 2000. "Is the Press Biased?"  
In Kathleen Hall Jamieson, ed. *Everything You Think You Know About  
Politics...and Why You're Wrong*. New York: Basic Books. (p.187-195).  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 14: The News Media (p. 502-535)
- W: October 30 Politicians and the press, Review

- F: November 1 **MIDTERM 2**

## JUDICIARY

- M: November 4 Structure of the judiciary
- W: November 6 Judicial decision-making  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 9: The Federal Judiciary (p. 319-352)
- F: November 8 Public opinion and the courts

## BUREAUCRACY

- M: November 11 Bureaucratic control, principal-agent problems  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 8: The Bureaucracy (p. 279-317)
- W: November 13 Roles and responsibilities of government agencies

## PART III : REPRESENTATION & GOVERNMENT OUTPUTS

### PUBLIC POLICY

- F: November 15 Policy making responsibilities; federalism
- M: November 18 Interaction between policymakers; policy examples; more on *The Bill*
- W: November 20 Government and the economy

### REPRESENTATION AND MACRO OUTCOMES

- F: November 22 What do people want from government?
- M: November 25 Consequences of public opinion on governance
- W: November 27 Government outputs, the challenges of reforming government
- F: November 29 *No class – Thanksgiving holiday*

### CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND ROLES

- M: December 2 Civil liberties and civil rights  
**READ:** JK: Chapter 5: Civil Liberties (p. 142-185)
- W: December 4 More on civil liberties and civil rights; Review
- F: December 6 **FINAL EXAM**