

American Democracy in Changing Times
POLI 100
MWF 10:10 – 11:00 AM
Hanes Hall 130

Instructor	Colin Case
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Office	312 Hamilton Hall
Office Hours	Monday 11:30 – 1:00 & Wednesday 1:00 – 2:30

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to American politics at the college level that is intended to serve both majors and non-majors. In this course we will discuss the origins of the current governmental system in America and how theories of American government apply to current events and problems the government and citizens face today. We will work toward understanding our complicated and contentious political environment by exploring the system from two perspectives: political institutions, or the structure of the United States' government, and political behavior, or the actions and motivations of political actors — both politicians and the general public.

It is my hope that you leave the semester knowing more about American government and politics, able to think critically about political interactions in contemporary American politics. Furthermore, I hope that this course inspires greater engagement in public affairs by connecting political science to live questions in American politics.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Kollman, Ken. 2018. *American Political System: Core Third Edition, 2018 Election Update*. 3rd Edition. W.W. Norton & Company (online copy on Canvas).
- Additional readings posted on Canvas (Denoted with **C** on the reading schedule).

EXPECTATIONS

Unlike most introductory courses at UNC, this course is taking place in a “smaller” classroom setting. To that end, classes will contain a mix of lecture, active learning, and discussion. Students are expected to take an active role in their learning by completing readings before class, coming to class ready to participate directly with classmates, and asking questions as they arise, either from readings or the lecture material. You will be held responsible for all

material from the readings and lectures, even if you miss a class.

We will frequently engage in group discussions about course content and current events. American politics is full of “hot topics” that you and your classmates may have strong opinions about. Our aim in this course and recitation section is not to discuss the merits of our beliefs. Rather, we will focus on discussing how theories and concepts apply to current events from an analytical perspective. I encourage you to engage with viewpoints that differ from your own. I require that you do so in a respectful and productive way. An open environment will allow us to approach the ideas presented in the course as analytical, critical thinkers so that we can form, challenge, and develop theories and evidence about the issues we discuss.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Grades will be calculated as follows:

A 93.00-100
A- 90.00-92.99
B+ 87.00-89.99
B 84.00-86.99
B- 80.00-83.99
C+ 77.00-79.99
C 74.00-76.99
C- 70.00-73.99
D+ 65.00-69.99
D 64.99-60.00
F 59.99-0

The following components will make up your final grade:

3 Exams (20% Each)

Exams will be taken in class and consist of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. The first exam will be taken in class on Friday, February 10th. The second exam will be taken in class on Monday, March 27th. The last exam will be taken during the final-exam period, which is scheduled for Friday, May 5th at 8:00 AM. None of the exams are cumulative, and each is worth 20% of your final grade.

Current Events Paper (10%)

For your first paper, you will pick a concept we have learned about in class and a corresponding news article written after January 1, 2023. You will be tasked with explaining the concept or theory we have learned in class, summarizing the event discussed in the article, and using the concept or theory to help provide an explanation for what happened in the news article. This paper can be turned in at any time but is due on April 28th by 5:00 PM. This assignment will be graded a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis. Should you get a grade of Unsatisfactory, you may resubmit your assignment once before the final day

of class. Please note, if you submit on the last day, you will NOT have the opportunity to re-do the assignment. For full assignment details, please see the information on Canvas.

Research Paper (20%)

In the second half of a semester, you will complete a research paper. Each student will be assigned a congressional election race from the 2022 midterm elections. For the paper, you will be responsible for discussing the dynamics of the race and using this information to explain why the candidate won the race. As a part of this assignment, you will be completing the paper in steps. This is meant to help you learn the process of writing a research paper, as well as producing a better final paper. The following will make up the components of the paper (see Canvas for full assignment details):

1. Sources (15% of Paper Grade): Due April 5th at 5:00 PM
2. Outline (15% of Paper Grade): Due April 14th at 5:00 PM
3. Final Paper (70% of Paper Grade): Due April 28th at 5:00 PM

In-Class Participation (10%)

As this grade indicates, a successful student will not only be present at every class meeting, but come prepared to engage with the material. I cannot make you come to class, pay attention, or participate in discussion. What you get out of this class (and your entire UNC education) is up to you. To gauge participation, we will utilize Poll Everywhere through your smart device. These questions are to be done in class.

Poll Everywhere Instructions

This course will utilize Poll Everywhere through your smart device. I prefer you use a smart phone for ease, but a laptop or tablet will work, too. This device needs to be enabled for UNC wireless and Poll Everywhere access. Instructions on how to register for poll everywhere can be found here: <https://poll.unc.edu>. Please have your Poll Everywhere user name match the name on your One Card. This ensures that you get credited for your participation. You must register to have your poll responses count towards your grade! Please note that you may not rely on cellular service and must have your device connected to UNC Wireless. Be sure to do this for any devices you might use in class before the first day. See <http://help.unc.edu> for more instructions.

Poll Everywhere Grading

For Poll Everywhere, you will be graded on 12 unannounced quizzes randomly given throughout the semester. I will drop your two lowest scores to accommodate occasional absence, technology problems, athletic travel, lateness, etc. Please do not email me to tell me you were absent or your smart device was not working, we will have so many opportunities for participation that missing one or two days in the semester will not affect your Poll Everywhere participation grade. If you have many absences due to extended illness or other documented reasons, we will address this at the end of the semester with the necessary documentation.

We will utilize two types of Poll Everywhere questions: 1) reading-assessment polls and 2) thought/activity polls. Reading-assessment questions are intended to assess the extent to which students have read and understand the course material. These questions will be structured similarly to those that will be on the exams, so they serve as good multiple-choice practice. Reading-assessment polls will be graded as follows: 100% if you answered the question correctly; 50% if you answered the question incorrectly; and 0% if you did not answer the question/a response was not recorded. For thought and activity polls, these questions are meant to help you engage with the material and present current events. There is not necessarily a right answer to these questions. They will be graded as follows: 100% if you answered the question and 0% if you did not. We will do a practice Poll Everywhere quiz on January 18th that will not count towards your grade. Starting with class on January 25th, Poll Everywhere quizzes given in class will count.

Research Requirement

Students enrolled in Poli 100 are required to participate in the Department of Political Science research activities as part of their course requirement. A principal goal of the requirement is for students to gain an appreciation of how political science research works, while simultaneously acquiring new knowledge about areas of the discipline that they may not encounter in their Poli courses.

The research requirement is administered by the Political Science Subject Pool (PSSP) Administrators. To satisfy the research requirement, you must complete 8 credits of research by participating in actual political science research studies. Research studies are typically research experiments or surveys. Typically, each study's completion satisfies 1 credit towards the requirement; occasionally, a study will count for more than one credit. The research requirement is fulfilled when 8 credits are earned. Students can participate in research studies and track their requirement fulfillment status by logging into the PSSP Portal (<https://tarheels.live/psspparticipants/>) using their UNC Onyen and password. (The Portal will become active in February.)

Students can also fulfill the research requirement by writing a 800-word research-oriented reaction paper. The specifications for completing the PSSP requirement in this way will be described on the website above.

The total time commitment to complete the research requirement should not exceed 3 hours. The research requirement does not substitute for other course requirements, nor does it generate extra credit. Failure to satisfy the research requirement will result in an incomplete grade (IN) that will be removed only upon satisfaction of the requirement. For additional information and contacts, please email pssp@unc.edu.

COMMUNICATION

I am very happy to meet with students outside of class time. Whether it be to discuss concerns about the course, questions about the material, or simply to engage further with the topic, please feel free to come to office hours. I will be holding office hours in Hamilton 312.

If you are unable to meet during my office hours, which are listed at the top of this syllabus, please email me to set up an alternative time. Office hours are an important resource that should be utilized to improve understanding of material or ask more personalized questions. Office hours before an exam will be held at regular times and, unless noted by me, no additional office hours will be held – so plan accordingly. Prior to writing assignment due dates, I will be available during office hours to read over paper outlines or talk through ideas and provide feedback. Please do not bring completed papers and, be advised, office hours before paper deadlines may be busy.

Outside of office hours, e-mail is the easiest way to contact me. Please include “Poli 100” in the subject line of the e-mail. I will typically respond to email within 24 hours. If I do not respond to your email in this time frame, please send a follow up. If you have extensive questions that require a longer conversation, please come to my office hours or stay after class. I will frequently send emails relating to the course material, upcoming assignments or activities, and general reminders. I expect that you are checking your UNC email regularly to stay on top of these updates.

GENERAL CURRICULUM REQUIREMENTS

This course meets the Ethical and Civic Values Focus Capacity through its substantive focus on a selection of crucial texts in the history of American political thought, its use of debates around the nation’s founding, and through assignments that require students to systematically reflect on the Founders’ tradition of political thought.

Ethical and Civic Values

Students develop their capacity to think carefully and critically about how to make and justify private and public decisions.

Questions for students:

1. Can people think fruitfully (individually and together) about how they should live their lives?
2. What is required to judge a standard or value as worthy of support?
3. How should we distinguish between prejudices and reasonable grounds for value judgments?
4. What considerations, stories, reasons, testimony, documents, data, etc. can justify our values and commitments, whether personal or social?

Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain the contexts in which questions of justification arise.
2. Assess ethical values in terms of reasons offered.

3. Recognize different ethical perspectives and the distinctive approaches these perspectives bring to questions of value, evaluating ethical justifications for different ways of organizing civic and political communities.
4. Analyze the differences between personal ethical decisions and those bearing on the public and civic spheres.

Recurring Capacities

Focus capacity classes sustain the recurring capacities of inquiry that guide the general education mission. As appropriate to the course's topic, each class should:

- Pose problems and questions that require systematic thinking about evidence, argument, and uncertainty;
- Consider its content in the context of human difference between and within societies, the full range of legitimate debate in its field, and/or change over time; and
- Require writing totaling at least ten pages in length, or the intellectual equivalent; presenting material to the class, small groups, or the public through oral presentations, webpages, or other means that enable corroboration of fact and argument; and collaborating in pairs or groups to learn, design, solve, create, build, and/or research.

ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES AND SERVICES

UNC facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability, or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs, and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. If you have an accommodation related to testing procedures, please let me know ASAP so I can provide you with the accommodation at the outset of class. For more information visit <https://ars.unc.edu> or email ars@unc.edu.

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. Visit their website <https://caps.unc.edu/> or their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more.

TITLE IX RESOURCES

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at <https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/>. Additional resources are available at safe.unc.edu.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic dishonesty — including cheating, plagiarism, or any instance of taking credit for work that is not your own — will not be tolerated in this course. Any cases of academic dishonesty will be prosecuted to the fullest extent allowable under UNC guidelines, which can be found here: honor.unc.edu.

REQUIRED READINGS

Jan 9	Introduction: The State of American Politics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Syllabus C
Jan 11	Concepts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kollman Ch. 1
Jan 13	No Class (SPSA Conference)
Jan 16	No Class (MLK Day)
Jan 18	Constitution I: Origins (Poll Everywhere Starts) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Constitution of the United States</i> C• Kollman Ch. 2 (pp. 33-46)
Jan 20	Constitution II: Institutional Design <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Federalist 10</i> C• <i>Federalist 51</i> C• Kollman Ch. 2 (pp. 46-68)
Jan 23	Federalism I: The Basics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kollman Ch. 3 (pp. 71 - 85)
Jan 25	Federalism II: Financing and State/Local Governments <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kollman Ch. 3 (pp. 85 - 106)
Jan 27	Federalism III: Election Administration (Class Selected Federalism Case Studies) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Horton, Jake “US midterms: How will new voting laws affect the election?” C• Grumbach, Jake. <i>Laboratories Against Democracy</i> ch 7. (skim) C• Grumbach, Jake. <i>Laboratories Against Democracy</i> ch 1-3. (optional) C
Jan 30	Congress I: Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kollman Ch. 5 (pp. 147 - 165)
Feb 1	Congress II: Gerrymandering (Class Selected Congressional Topic) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Piper, Jessica and Ally Mutnick. “How redistricting shaped the midterms.” C• Chen, Jowei and Dave Cottrell. “Evaluating partisan gains from Congressional gerrymandering: Using computer simulations to estimate the effect of gerrymandering in the U.S. House.” (skim) C

Feb 3	<p>Congress III: Internal Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 5 (165-173) • Glassman, Matt. “My notes for talking to reporters about Speakership elections.” C
Feb 6	<p>Congress IV: Lawmaking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 5 (176-197) • Glassman, Matt. “Legislative procedure isn’t really hard.” C
Feb 8	<p>Congress V: Polarization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curry, James M. and Frances Lee. “Congress is far more bipartisan than headlines suggest.” C • Theriault, Sean. “Polarization we can live with. Partisan warfare is the problem.” C • <i>Politico</i>. “How To Fix Polarization.” https://www.politico.com/interactives/2019/how-to-fix-politics-in-america/polarization/
Feb 10	Exam I
Feb 13	No Class (Wellness Day)
Feb 15	<p>Presidency I: Presidential Power</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 6 (pp. 198–215)
Feb 17	<p>Presidency II: Today’s Powerful Presidency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 6 (pp. 215-237) • Gladstone, Brooke “Joe Biden and ‘The Green Lantern Theory of The Presidency.’” C
Feb 20	<p>Bureaucracy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 7
Feb 22	<p>Economic Policy I: Econ Primer/Fiscal and Monetary Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 15 (3rd Edition; pp. 585-601) C
Feb 24	<p>Economic Policy II: Appropriations, Debt and Deficit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 15 (3rd Edition; pp. 602-604) C • Andolfatto, David. “Does the National Debt Matter?” C
Feb 27	<p>Supreme Court I: The Institution</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 8 (pp. 285–313)

Mar 1	<p>Supreme Court II: Politics and the Court</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 8 (pp. 313-325) • Gerstein, Josh. “How Justice Kagan lost her battle as a consensus builder.” C
Mar 3	<p>Civil Rights I: Origins and the Courts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 4 (pp. 107-125)
Mar 6	<p>Civil Rights II: The 14th Amendment and Incorporation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 4 (pp. 126-144)
Mar 8	<p>Civil Rights III: Case Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liptak, Adam. “In Narrow Decision, Supreme Court Sides With Baker Who Turned Away Gay Couple.” C
Mar 10	<p>Current Events Q&A</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A
Mar 13-17	No Class (Spring Break)
Mar 20	<p>Public Opinion I: The Basics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 9 (pp. 327-341)
Mar 22	<p>Public Opinion II: Polling and Election Forecasting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rutenberg, Jim, Ken Bensinger, and Steve Eder. “The ‘Red Wave’ Washout: How Skewed Polls Fed a False Election Narrative.” C • Morris, G Elliot. “How to read the polls like a nerd.” C
Mar 24	<p>Public Opinion III: Political Attitudes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 9 (pp. 341-371)
Mar 27	Exam II
Mar 29	<p>Public Opinion IV: Misinformation (Class Selected Public Opinion Topic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisher, Max. “‘Belonging Is Stronger Than Facts’: The Age of Misinformation” • Porter, Ethan and Thomas J. Wood. “Political Misinformation and Factual Corrections on the Facebook News Feed: Experimental Evidence.” (skim) C • Jerit, Jennifer and Yangzi Zhao. “Political Misinformation.” (optional) C
Mar 31	<p>Elections I: Institutional Basics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 13 (pp. 491-507)
Apr 3	<p>Elections II: Campaigns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 13 (pp. 507-531)

Apr 5	<p>Elections III: The Electoral College (Paper Sources Due)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Epps, Garrett. “The Electoral College Wasn’t Meant to Overturn Elections.” C • DeMuth, Christopher. “The Electoral College Saved the Election.” C
Apr 7	No Class (Wellness Day)
Apr 10	<p>Participation I: Why Vote?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 10 (pp. 373–389)
Apr 12	<p>Participation II: Patterns and the Right to Vote</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 10 (pp. 389–409)
Apr 14	No Class (MPSA Conference; Paper Outline Due)
Apr 17	<p>Special Interests and Social Movements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 11
Apr 19	<p>Political Parties I: Why Parties?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 12 (pp. 447–463)
Apr 21	<p>Political Parties II: Party History</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 12 (pp. 464–482)
Apr 24	<p>Political Parties III: Campaign Finance (Class Selected Political Parties Topic)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Secrets Election Overview https://www.opensecrets.org/elections-overview (read through sub-headers on left side). • Hassell, Hans. “Party Elite Engagement and Coordination in House Primary Elections: A Test of Theories of Parties” (skim) C • Bonica, Adam and Jake Grumbach. “Old Money: Campaign Finance and Gerontocracy in the United States” (optional) C
Apr 26	<p>Media I: Mass Media and Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 14 (pp. 535 - 555)
Apr 28	<p>Media II: Media and Polarization (Research Paper Due; Current Events Paper Due)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman Ch. 14 (pp. 556 - 570) • Wemple, Erik. “Study: CNN, MSNBC took sharp left turns during Trump’s presidency.” C
May 5	Final Exam