

PSC 101-001: Introduction to American Politics

Fall 2016
TR 9:30 – 10:45am
TH 125

Contact information

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Description of Course

- Survey of the principles, political institutions, and practices of American national, state, and local politics.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- Understand the roles and responsibilities of the different institutions of US government, particularly as they relate to policymaking.
- Understand the evolving nature of democracy.
- Understand how the electoral system operates in the United States compared to other industrialized democracies and how our system affects politics and policymaking.
- Describe contemporary representation in Congress and why it matters.

Required Text and Technology

- Greenberg, Edward S., and Benjamin I. Page. 2016. *The Struggle for Democracy: 2014 Elections and Updates Edition*. Pearson. ISBN: 978-0-13-391474-0

Course Requirements

Blackboard

- Announcements regarding the course will be posted in Blackboard and sent to your Crimson email address. It is your responsibility to either regularly check your Crimson email for communication from me about the course, or regularly check Bb Announcements.

Attendance

- I expect you to attend class. I will occasionally take attendance and will award bonus points on those days. There are no excused absences. Please do not email me when you are going to miss class. Please do not email me if you miss class and later hear I took attendance on that day. Attendance is not part of your formal grade.

Email

- Email me at ghawley@ua.edu. Please do not use the Mail function in Bb.

Reading

- You should plan to devote a significant amount of time to carefully reading the assigned material. You will likely fail the course if you do not carefully read all the material.
- *I strongly recommend you read the material PRIOR to lecture.*
- I do NOT cover everything from the reading material in lecture.

Exams

- There will be two exams worth 25% each. The format will be multiple choice. You must bring your Action Card to class on exam day.

Chapter Quizzes

- There will be weekly multiple choice chapter quizzes you will take in Revel. They are worth 50% of your final grade.

Policy Regarding Make-Up Exams

- You qualify for a make-up exam if you have a University-approved travel excuse, there is a death in your family, or you are seriously ill.
- Documentation is required for all three. University-approved travel is a form from your coach or adviser. I require notification from the Student Affairs Office for a death excuse. You must have a doctor's note saying you are too sick to attend class if you miss an exam due to illness.

Extra Credit

- I do not anticipate offering any extra credit. If I do, it will be offered to the entire class, so please do not email me asking if you can write a paper for extra credit.

Bonus Points

- Attending class will help your grade in two ways. Students who regularly attend class learn more and perform better on exams, on average, than students who do not regularly attend class. I will occasionally take attendance and will award bonus points to students who are present.

Policy on Academic Misconduct

- All students in attendance at the University of Alabama are expected to be honorable and to observe standards of conduct appropriate to a community of scholars. The University expects from its students a higher standard of conduct than the minimum required to avoid discipline. Academic misconduct includes all acts of dishonesty in any academically related matter and any knowing or intentional help or attempt to help, or conspiracy to help, another student. [The Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Policy](#) will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

Disability Statement

- If you are registered with the Office of Disability Services, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss any course accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability, but have not contacted the Office of Disability

Services, please call 348-4285 or visit 133-B Martha Parham Hall East to register for services. Students with disabilities must be registered with the Office of Disability Services, 133-B Martha Parham Hall East, before receiving academic adjustments.

Severe Weather Protocol

- In the case of a tornado warning (tornado has been sighted or detected by radar; sirens activated), all university activities are automatically suspended, including all classes and laboratories. If you are in a building, please move immediately to the lowest level and toward the center of the building away from windows (interior classrooms, offices, or corridors) and remain there until the tornado warning has expired. Classes in session when the tornado warning is issued can resume immediately after the warning has expired at the discretion of the instructor. Classes that have not yet begun will resume 30 minutes after the tornado warning has expired provided at least half of the class period remains.
- UA is a residential campus with many students living on or near campus. In general classes will remain in session until the National Weather Service issues safety warnings for the city of Tuscaloosa. Clearly, some students and faculty commute from adjacent counties. These counties may experience weather related problems not encountered in Tuscaloosa. Individuals should follow the advice of the National Weather Service for that area taking the necessary precautions to ensure personal safety. Whenever the National Weather Service and the Emergency Management Agency issue a warning, people in the path of the storm (tornado or severe thunderstorm) should take immediate life-saving actions.

When West Alabama is under a severe weather advisory, conditions can change rapidly. It is imperative to get to where you can receive information from the [National Weather Service](#) and to follow the instructions provided. Personal safety should dictate the actions that faculty, staff and students take. The Office of Public Relations will disseminate the latest information regarding conditions on campus in the following ways:

- Weather advisory posted on the UA homepage
- Weather advisory sent out through Connect-ED--faculty, staff and students ([sign up at myBama](#))
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA at 90.7 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over Alabama Public Radio (WUAL) at 91.5 FM
- Weather advisory broadcast over WVUA 7. WVUA 7 Storm Watch provides a free service you can subscribe to that allows you to receive weather warnings for Tuscaloosa via e-mail, pager or cell phone. Check <http://www.wvua7.com/stormwatch.html> for details.

UAct

- The University of Alabama is committed to an ethical, inclusive community defined by respect and civility. The UAct website (www.ua.edu/uact) provides extensive information on how to report or obtain assistance with a variety of issues, including issues related to

dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual assault, sexual violence or other Title IX violations, illegal discrimination, harassment, child abuse or neglect, hazing, threat assessment, retaliation, and ethical violations or fraud.

Grading Summary

Midterm Exam	25%
Final Exam	25%
Chapter Quizzes	50%

Final Grade Calculation

A+	99-100	B+	88-89	C+	78-79	D+	68-69	F	<60
A	92-98	B	82-87	C	72-77	D	62-67		
A-	90-91	B-	80-81	C-	70-71	D-	60-61		

Reading Schedule

The reading schedule may be modified as we move through the semester. If the schedule is modified, an updated syllabus will be posted in Bb and students will be notified via Announcements in Bb and via Crimson e-mail.

Week 1: August 24

Introduction to the Course

Week 2: August 29 & 31

Chapter 1: Democracy and American Politics

Chapter 2: The Constitution

Chapter 1 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on September 1.

Chapter 2 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on September 1.

Week 3: September 5 & 7

Chapter 3: Federalism: States and Nation

Chapter 4: The Structural Foundations of American Government and Politics

Chapter 3 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on September 8.

Chapter 4 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on September 8.

Recommended Activity: Federal and State Powers Venn Diagram

<http://aohs.ua.edu/cm/psc101/Learning%20Objects/PSC%20101/Federal%20and%20State%20Venn%20Diagram/index.html>

Week 4: September 12 & 14

Chapter 5: Public Opinion

Chapter 5 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on September 15.

Recommended Activity: The Political Compass

<https://www.politicalcompass.org/>

Take the online survey by clicking the 'Take the test' link at the bottom of the page.

You will receive your classification on the economic left-right scale (similar to the textbook's classification of economic liberals and economic conservatives) and the libertarians-authoritarian scale (roughly similar to the book's classification of social liberals and social conservatives).

Week 5: September 19 & 21

Chapter 6: The News Media

Chapter 7: Interest Groups and Business Corporations

Chapter 6 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on September 22.

Chapter 7 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on September 22.

Recommended Activity: Go to this website: <https://www.opensecrets.org/pres16/> and explore the role of money in the Presidential campaign. You can also look at money in elections in general at <https://www.opensecrets.org/elections/>

Week 6: September 26 & 28

MIDTERM EXAM ON SEPTEMBER 26

Chapter 8: Social Movements

Chapter 8 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on September 29.

Recommended Activity: Choose some of the social movements from this list to explore themes from the book chapter and/or lecture. For example, think about tactics and consciousness raising.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_social_movements As is often true, Wikipedia is not completely right – there are some “movements” listed here that are not social movements. Be sure to think about the definition of a social movement and focus on real social movements.

Week 7: October 3 & 5

Chapter 9: Political Parties

Chapter 9 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on October 6.

Recommended Activity: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/nomination.php>

Before the 1930s, it was not customary for Presidential candidates to appear at their party's conventions. They would accept their nominations from Washington or their hometown by letter or telegram. But in the last seventy years, the Presidential nomination acceptance speech has become one of the highlights of the party conventions. Many consider it the official “kickoff” of the Presidential general election campaign, and the speeches contain the major themes and ideas the presidential candidates will be using as they lead their respective parties into the campaign.

Explore the link above and read/watch some of the nomination acceptance letters/speeches.

Week 8: October 10 & 12

Chapter 10: Voting, Campaigns, and Elections

Chapter 10 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on October 13.

Recommended Activity: <http://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/>

Week 9: October 17 & 19

Chapter 11: Congress

Chapter 11 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on October 20.

Recommended Activity: Members of the House and Senate cast hundreds of votes each year. Most them are relatively “easy”---the people back home, the member’s party leaders, and the interest group on both sides all seem to point the member toward a “yes” or “no”. Sometimes, members know how to vote in a way that makes all the relevant people happy, without even thinking about it. However, once in a while, members are called upon to cast a difficult vote---one that is closely watched by the media and interest groups, and one in which the member feels pressure in both directions. Participate in this activity:

<http://centeroncongress.org/sites/default/files/modules/vote/main.html>

Week 10: October 24

Chapter 11: Congress, continued and catch-up

No Class on the 26th – FALL BREAK

No Quiz this week – FALL BREAK

Week 11: October 31 & November 2

Chapter 12: The Presidency

Chapter 12 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on November 3.

Recommended Activity: Below are links to the Bill Clinton (served from 1993-2001) and George W. Bush (served from 2001-2009) Presidential Libraries, where you will find images of actual daily schedules for these presidents. Explore one or both of these websites and find a single daily schedule, for either President Clinton or President Bush, which seems fairly typical (not a vacation day, or a day when the President is traveling to other countries). Many of the schedules are partially or totally missing due to containing classified or personal information, so it may take some hunting around different days to find a schedule that is complete and fairly normal-looking.

<http://www.georgewbushlibrary.smu.edu/Research/Digital%20Library/2014-0098-F%20Digitized.aspx>

http://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/browse?collection=39&sort_field=Dublin+Core%2CDate&sort_dir=a

Week 13: November 7 & 9

Chapter 14: The Courts

Chapter 14 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on November 10.

Recommended Activity: Considering how powerful they are and how important their decisions can be for the U.S., Supreme Court Justices appear very rarely in the media. Below are links to some video clips of Supreme Court Justices discussing their lives, views, and work. Watch them and see if Justices act and speak like you might expect them to, and if their conversation is similar or dissimilar to that of politicians who appear frequently in the news.

Watch the following videos (or parts of them – some are quite long):

<http://www.scotusblog.com/media/justices-talk-budgets-prisons-and-public-engagement-with-house-members/>

<http://www.scotusblog.com/media/justice-scalia-on-60-minutes-part-1/>

<http://www.scotusblog.com/media/interview-with-justice-samuel-alito/>

<http://www.scotusblog.com/media/an-afternoon-with-justice-sonia-sotomayor/>

<http://www.scotusblog.com/media/conversation-with-justice-thomas/>

Week 14: November 14 & 16

Chapter 15: Civil Liberties

Chapter 15 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on November 17.

Recommended Activity: Read The New Yorker: So Are We Living in 1984? <http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/so-are-we-living-in-1984>

Suppose the government suspects you of terrorist activity. Should the following activities be allowed?

- Search your home without a warrant
- Tap any telephones you use
- Keep your computer under surveillance
- Put you in prison indefinitely without specific charges while it looks for evidence
- Listen in on your conversations with your lawyer
- Use hearsay evidence against you in your trial
- Prevent you from appealing the decision

Now try to think if it were your neighbor the government suspects of terrorist activity. Should those activities by government be allowed? What about “someone” in your city? How does our perspective change about civil liberties depending who is “suspected”?

Week 15: November 21 & 23

No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 16: November 28 & 30

Chapter 16: Civil Rights

Chapter 16 Quiz Due by 11:59pm on December 1.

Week 17: December 5 & 7

Chapter 17: Domestic Policies

Final Exam: TBA