

# PS 100: Power and Politics in America

Instructor: Stephen Schneider

Summer 2017 Second Session: July 10 – August 10

Class Held: T/TR 5:30 PM – 9:20 PM

Classroom: CBA 140

Email: [stphnschndr@huskers.unl.com](mailto:stphnschndr@huskers.unl.com)

Office Hours: T/TR 4:00 PM – 5:15 PM or by Appointment in Oldfather 829

## Course Overview

Let's face it, a lot of people hate politics, and even more people hate the government. But why? In order to answer this question, and many others, we must first understand how the government works and how ordinary people perceive the government. This course will push you to think critically about some fundamental aspects of American Government through the lens of political science. You will be introduced to ongoing debates within government *and* political science and invited to draw your own conclusions about what does and does not work. The course is designed to be lively and engaging. While there will be some lecturing, most of the class time will be spent on interactive exercises that will hopefully keep you awake and entertained.

## Required Text

Bond, Jon R. and Kevin B. Smith. 2016. *Analyzing American Democracy: Politics and Political Science*.

Miroff, Bruce, Raymond Seidelman, and Todd Swanstrom. 2012. *Debating Democracy: A Reader in American Politics*.

There are two books required for this course. Due to the course design we will regularly be using these books during class. In addition, many of the quiz and exam questions will come from information in these books. Therefore, you **MUST** purchase the books and bring them to class. I do not care where you buy it, and I encourage you to find the best deal.

Throughout the course readings will be posted to Blackboard. Mostly these readings will be for our in-class exercises, but these readings will be fair game for quizzes and exams.

We will also be using iClicker in this class. If you have an IOS or Android device, you can download the iClicker app. The iClicker app allows you to use the app for free for the first week of class. After the first week, you will need to purchase a semester long plan for \$14.99. For those of you who do not have an IOS or Android phone or tablet, you need to purchase an iClicker remote from the bookstore. More information about iClicker will be provided on the first day of class.

## Grades

Assignment	Number of Assignments	Points Per Assignment	Total Points
Attendance	10	5	50
Participation (iClicker)	10	3	30
In-Class Exercises	8	10	80
Midterm Paper	1	50	50
Final Exam	1	50	50
Weekly Quiz	4	10	40
			300

### Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Points Needed
A+	291-300
A	279-290
A-	270-278
B+	261-269
B	249-260
B-	240-248
C+	231-239
C	219-230
C-	210-218
D+	201-209
D	189-200
D-	180-188
F	179 or Lower

### Assignments

#### *Attendance/Participation*

OK. This one is simple. Show up to class and participate. If you do this, you will receive all 80 points. Given the condensed nature of this course, it is important that you show up to every class. Every class you do not show up to will result in a five point deduction per missed class (up to 50 points). In addition to this deduction, if you miss class, you will not be able to make up any in-class exercises and/or participation points.

Tardiness is not acceptable. If you are more than five minutes late, you will lose two points. If you are more than 15 minutes late, you will lose three points.

The remaining thirty points are reserved for in-class participation (three points per class). These points are very easy to get and very hard to lose. Basically, if you participate in 75% of iClicker polls in a class period, you get the three participation points for that class. I reserve the right to give extra points for extraordinary participation.

### ***In-Class Exercises***

Throughout the course there will be eight in-class exercises. These exercises will take place every night except for the first and last nights of the course. The exercises will be group based projects which will require you to work with your group to research and develop arguments based on that night's problem. At the end of each class, each group will present their findings and/or debate another group. Your groups will be given 1 hour to prepare the argument and 15 minutes to make the presentation.

As I will oftentimes assign each group a position to take, these exercises may require you to make an argument you do not agree with. While making an argument you do not agree with may be difficult, it is an important part of the learning process.

### ***Weekly Quizzes***

There will be four weekly quizzes given first thing on Tuesday night's class. The quizzes will be 10 questions long (Multiple Choice and True/False questions) and will cover the material from the previous week. The quizzes will not be designed to be difficult. Instead, these quizzes are simply to ensure you have been paying attention. Material from the readings and lectures will be covered in the quizzes. These quizzes cannot be made up.

### ***Midterm Paper***

Instead of a traditional in-class midterm, you will be required to write a 4-5 page midterm paper. The details of this paper will be announced later in the semester, and you will have one week to complete it. The paper will not require you to utilize any outside materials. Unlike most midterms, you will have a chance to redo it, if you do not like the grade you received.

## ***Final Exam***

Yes, there is a final exam. This final exam will be comprehensive and consist of 50 multiple choice and true/false questions. We will have a study session, and I will provide a study guide. The final exam will be completed in-class during the final class period.

## **Course Policies**

### ***Excused Absences***

Your attendance is important (see *Attendance/Participation*). Absences will only be excused under extraordinary circumstances. If an absence is excused, you will not lose any attendance points, and you will be able to make up any quizzes or exercises. In order for an absence to be excused, you will need to bring in documentation. Even if you have documentation, you are not guaranteed an excused absence. Contagious disease (Ebola, etc.), severe injury (lost limb, etc.), and a death in the family can all potentially be excused.

### ***Classroom Behavior***

I think we should all understand what proper classroom behavior entails. Be respectful to all. Do not interrupt others. Do not talk during the lecture or presentations (unless you are presenting, of course). If you need to use the restroom or leave the classroom for any reason, do so quietly. Essentially, treat others as you would like to be treated. It's simple, really. If you are overly disruptive (I am the final judge on this), you will be asked to leave class.

### ***Electronics***

You are encouraged to bring a laptop or tablet (iPad, Android, etc.) to class, as they will come in handy with the in-class exercises. I realize your friends are probably posting some really great selfies on Instagram, and who knows if SOMEONE is going to do something crazy on Twitter while we're in class, BUT I will ask you to refrain from checking these distractions during class. There is a difference between somebody using their computer to take notes and somebody using their computer to ignore class, and I know it. If I suspect you are using your computer improperly, I will ask you to put it away. If the behavior continues, you may be asked to leave class.

This warning goes for phones as well. You can have phones in class as long as they are on silent or vibrate, and you are not using them to text your BFF while class is in session. Do not try to convince me that you are taking notes on your phone. Please do not answer the phone while class is in session. Once again, if I suspect you are using your phone improperly, I will ask you to put it away. If the behavior continues, you may be asked to leave class.

All I am asking is that you respect me and the others in class. There will be plenty of breaks throughout the night, and you are more than free to use your computers and phones to your heart's desire during that time.

### ***Plagiarism/Academic Dishonesty***

Don't plagiarize or be academically dishonest. Plagiarism and academic dishonesty make me sad, and when I get sad, I get mad. If you are caught plagiarizing or being academically dishonest, you will fail the course, and I will report you to the university officials for disciplinary action. The University guidelines on plagiarism and academic dishonesty can be found in section 4.2 of the Student Code of Conduct.

Here is a link to the website: <http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three.shtml>.

### ***Contacting Me***

I encourage you to contact me throughout the course if you are having ANY issues. Obviously, if I do not know about a problem, I cannot solve that problem. Feel free to contact me via email or by showing up to my office hours. If I am not in my office (Oldfather 829) during office hours, check Oldfather 507, as I will likely be there. If I am not in either of those locations, wait about five minutes outside my office. If I am not anywhere to be found after those five minutes, gather a search party, as I was likely kidnapped by pirates or something.

I am more than happy to set up office hours by appointment if my regular office hours conflict with your schedule.

### ***Contacting You***

I will use the Canvas's email system to contact you of any changes of plans or assignments. Check your email associated with Canvas regularly, as "I didn't get the email" is not a valid excuse. If you are unfamiliar with Canvas, see me so we can get that straightened out.

### ***Students with Disabilities***

Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact me for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

### ***Syllabus Revisions***

I reserve the right to make revisions to the syllabus. Likely, these revisions will not be drastic. For instance, time constraints may require us to drop a chapter of reading, or I may find one or two extra readings to add to a week's load. I will notify you of any such revisions.

### ***Tentative Course Outline***

## **Week 1: The Science of American Government**

July 16<sup>th</sup>: Introduction to the Course; What is Political Science Anyway?  
Readings: Chapter 1 (pages 27-32 only)

July 18<sup>th</sup>: America: The Lecture  
Readings: Chapters 1-3  
In-Class Exercise: National Supremacy or States' Rights?

## **Week 2: We The People**

July 23<sup>rd</sup>: Maybe We Are All A Little Ideological  
Readings: Chapter 9  
In-Class Exercise: Are You a Political Animal?

July 25<sup>th</sup>: Maybe We've Just Been Lied To  
Midterm Paper Handed Out.  
Readings: Chapters 6-8  
In-Class Exercise: How Divided Are We?

## **Week 3: The People Speak; Does Anyone Listen?**

July 30<sup>th</sup>: Didn't We *Just* Have An Election?  
Readings: Chapters 10 and 11  
In-Class Exercise: Electoral College Dropout?

August 1<sup>st</sup>: Who is Representing Who?  
Midterm Paper Due  
Readings: Chapter 12  
In-Class Exercise: How Do We Get The Bums Out?

## **Week 4: Bureaucrats and Other Creatures of the Underworld**

August 6<sup>th</sup>: Executive Indecision  
Midterm Paper Handed Back.  
Readings: Chapters 13 and 14  
In-Class Exercise: Can He Do That?

August 8<sup>th</sup>: The Nine People Nobody Remembers  
Midterm Revisions Due.  
Readings: Chapter 15  
In-Class Exercise: Who Are The Activists?

## **Week 5: Your Rights, Liberties, and a Final**

August 13<sup>th</sup>: The Right to Remain Silent  
Readings: Chapters 4 and 5  
In-Class Exercise: Final Exam Study Session

August 15<sup>th</sup>: The Final Exam  
Readings: The Final Exam  
In-Class Exercise: The Final Exam (and maybe eating a cookie).

### **Important Dates**

July 12<sup>th</sup>: Last Day To Drop With Full Refund

July 14<sup>th</sup>: Last Day To Drop to Remove Course From Student Records

July 21<sup>st</sup>: Last Day To Drop With Partial Refund

July 25<sup>th</sup>: Last Day To Change Registration To Or From “Pass/No Pass”

August 2<sup>nd</sup>: Last Day To Drop