

POSC 104: American People and Politics

Fall 2020, On-Line Only

POSC 104.05 - Mo/Th 8-9:50am

POSC 104.06 - Mo/We 4-5:50pm



Instructor: Dr. Ajax Peris

Office Hours: M/W 11am-12pm, T 9am-10am

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Purpose of the Course

This course is an introduction to American national political institutions, the factors that motivate Americans' political behavior, and the constraints that shape these things. The course makes use of a number of political science theories. Topics to be covered include the American Constitution, civil rights, civil liberties, the presidency, Congress, political parties, elections, public opinion, the media, advertising, and political polling.

We will focus on how American political institutions are designed to solve coordination and collective action problems, and why this means political change is often slow. The course is designed to make you think about the logic of the institutions of our government and the consequences – both intended and unintended – of these institutions on the political behavior of citizens, legislators, and other political leaders and activists.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

General Education Learning Outcomes

This course fulfills part of the GE American Experience requirement and aligns with the following General Education Learning Outcomes:

1. Students identify and explain significant political and historical developments that have shaped America's democracy and its diverse society in the context of the discipline of political science.
2. Students apply their knowledge by developing a personal vision regarding diversity.

Political Science Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

This course, as part of the Political Science major, aligns directly with the following Program Learning Outcomes:

A student who graduates with a major in Political Science should be able to:

PLO #1: Demonstrate knowledge and analytical proficiency across the political science subfields.

PLO #2: Use writing skills to communicate theoretical perspectives, findings, and interpretations of political issues.

PLO #3: Apply theoretical perspectives and research methods to generate positions about contemporary political issues and/or explanations of political phenomena.

PLO #4: Utilize critical thinking skills to assess political ideas and events.

PLO #5: Identify opportunities for civic engagement and participation in political processes.

PLO #6: Integrate political knowledge with faith, ethnic, race, and/or gender identities.

Course SLOs and alignment with PLOs

At the end of this course you will be able to:

- Explain why we have government (aligns with PLO 1, GE PLO 1)
- Summarize the philosophical and historical origins of the American political system (aligns with PLO 1, GE PLO 1)
- Describe the major elements of the American political system (aligns with PLO 1, GE PLO 1)
- Explain the consequences of the ways the system works (aligns with PLO 1, GE PLO 1)
- Describe current events in American politics (aligns with PLO 1, GE PLO 1)
- Identify the main positions citizens hold on important political issues (aligns with PLO 1, GE PLO 1, 2)
- Evaluate the arguments supporting positions on important political issues (aligns with PLO 1, 3, GE PLO 1)
- Specify our democratic responsibilities in the context of a diverse public (aligns with PLO 1, 5, GE PLO 1)
- Identify and evaluate ethical and moral elements of our political engagement (aligns with PLO 1, 6, GE PLO 1, 2)

Course Textbook and Reading Materials

Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2020. *The Logic of American Politics*, 9th Edition. CQ Press.

Additional readings will be distributed as PDF documents or hyperlinks via the course webpage. You are responsible for having the appropriate software to view these materials.

Grading

This course will have weekly online discussion requirements, nine optional quizzes, two midterm exams, and a final exam. Your grade will be determined by weighing each assignment as follows:

	Without Quizzes	With Quizzes
• Midterm Exam 1	25%	20%
• Midterm Exam 2	25%	20%
• Final Exam	25%	20%
• Quizzes (6)	NA	20%
• Participation (In-class/Online)	25%	20%

Final letter grades will be assigned as follows:

	94.0–100% = A	90.0–93.9 = A-
87.0–89.9 = B+	84.0–86.9 = B	80.0–83.9 = B-
77.0–79.9 = C+	74.0–76.9 = C	70.0–73.9 = C-
67.0–69.9 = D+	64.0–66.9 = D	60.0–63.9 = D-
	Below 60 = F	

University and Seaver College Mission

Pepperdine is a Christian university committed to the highest standards of academic excellence and Christian values, where students are strengthened for lives of purpose, service, and leadership. I am committed to my pursuit of academic excellence, and I expect that you will be as well. Together we will seek truth and understanding of ourselves, our neighbors, our communities, and our nation. Our exploration of our responsibilities to our neighbors as citizens will help us understand more clearly how to love our neighbor as ourselves. Thus, this course will help us to fulfill what Jesus described as the greatest commandments: To love God with all our heart, strength, and mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves, helping us to live a life of purpose, service, and learning.

Course Policies

Attendance and Remote Learning

This course will be taught completely via on-line video lectures, web-based exams and quizzes, and electronically submitted assignments. Many of these provisions are new to many of us, so please bear with me as there will certainly be a few bumps in the road along the way. I appreciate your patience.

It will be important for all students to have access to a reliable high-speed internet connection and a device with a moderately-sized screen/keyboard interface, meaning a desktop or laptop computer or a tablet. Handheld mobile devices (like phones) will likely not be sufficient for students to fully participate in the course. If you are concerned about your ability to participate in remote classes or exams, please explore Pepperdine's student resources for online learning at <https://seaver.pepperdine.edu/academics/academic-support/student-success-center/>.

For this course, I will be presenting my lectures in real-time using the Zoom platform. Enrolled students may find links to enter the class meeting on the Courses page. Students are expected to attend the class in real time and participate in on-line/chat discussion during class. Attendance is not technically mandatory, but if you do not attend, you cannot earn participation credit. Per Seaver College guidelines, students who are attending from time zones greater than three hours different from Pacific Time or students for whom the class period falls between 11pm and 7am local time are entitled to time zone consideration. Please contact me ASAP if you meet these criteria. After a lecture is over, I will upload the video recording of the lecture to the course site for students to review at their convenience.

In-Class Participation

During each class period, there will be numerous opportunities to participate in the learning process through questions and discussion. I will award participation points to students who take advantage of these opportunities by asking relevant questions, responding to my prompts, or discussing course concepts in a meaningful manner. Participation may be in the form of spoken comments/questions after a student "raises their hand" to be recognized, or in the form of comments/questions in the Zoom "chat" window during class. Students who are unable to attend class synchronously (see **Attendance**, above), should make alternative arrangements to earn participation credit.

Course Requirements

Some material for exams may be discussed in lecture but not covered in the readings. You are responsible for all material in assigned textbook readings and discussed in lectures.

Current Events

Many of the elements of American political activity that we will discuss in this course will be playing out in real time during the term: You'll have an opportunity to see politics in action as we learn about it. Your familiarity with current events in American politics will greatly enhance your understanding of the course material, plus it will help you participate in class discussions. You should keep up with current events through various news sources.

The way news is consumed and produced is changing along with technologies that make data easier to collect, store, and analyze. Below are a few recommended resources to help you gather political news.

- Google News, Apple News, and other news aggregation sites – These sites compile news from a multitude of sources, and some even provides multiple sources for any given news story.
- Twitter – Many political reporters rely on Twitter to communicate with one another and with news consumers. I recommend opening a Twitter account and following a few political reporters and political scientists. Some suggestions:
 - Ezra Klein, David Leonhardt, Vox.com, The Upshot, John Dickerson, Chuck Todd, Lynn Vavreck, Michael Ross, Nate Cohn, John Sides, Maggie Haberman, Jake Tapper, Katy Tur, John Ray, Daniel Drezner. FiveThirtyEight
 - *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*

Remote Office Hours

My regularly scheduled office hours are Monday 11am-12pm, Tues 9am-10am, and Wed 11am-12pm. During these hours, I will be available for one-on-one Zoom meetings to answer questions, discuss course materials, or to address other student concerns. Links to access the Zoom meeting room for office hours will be located on the course site. Students who request a specific meeting time in advance will have priority during office hours. If you are unable to meet with me during scheduled office hours, please contact me via email to make alternate arrangements.

Discussion Forums and On-Line Participation

Beginning Week 2 of the term, all students will be expected to participate in a weekly online discussion forum. On the course website, there will be a forum for the week's topic in which you will be able to engage other students in a discussion of the week's reading materials.

Before midnight (PDT/PST) each Tuesday, students will write and post a response to any part of the current week's reading assignments or to a current news article that is applicable to the class. Posts should **not** be a restatement of what was in the reading, but rather a **response** to the reading. For example, students might engage the reading material in the form of a critique, an observation of its application to current events, or to discuss their understanding of the material as it applies to the course.

Before midnight each Thursday, students will post a response to another student's post in the forum, engaging in a conversation. You may respond to an original post or to another student's response. All students are reminded to engage one another using respectful language and a constructive tone.

All posts and responses should include proper spelling and grammar. Your original post should be approximately 150-200 words in length, and your responsive post should be at least 100 words. Participation in this discussion forum will be included in the course participation grade, with consideration given for the content of the post and writing mechanics.

Optional Quizzes

Approximately once each week (see schedule below) there will an on-line quiz over the assigned textbook reading. The quizzes are OPTIONAL. They will be open book, but they will also be time-limited to 60 minutes. The quiz will be available to take at your convenience for at least 48 hours, but you must complete quizzes **before** 8am (PDT/PST) on the assigned day. If you elect to take the quizzes (you have to take at least six of the nine to get credit), your highest six quiz grades will be incorporated into your overall course grade. You will not be penalized for not taking the quizzes. If your quiz score would lower your overall grade, I will not include it.

- **Bottom line, the quizzes can ONLY help you** to get a higher grade, to be prepared for class, and to be prepared for exams.

Academic Integrity

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. I encourage you to discuss matters relating to this course with other classmates, friends, family members, and students, but your coursework must be your own ideas and your own words. If you are having trouble completing an assignment, contact me for help before you resort to the use of someone else's words or ideas without proper attribution.

Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated. Violations include, but are not limited to: cheating on exams (e.g., using unauthorized materials or collaborating with other test takers visually or audibly), lying to me, or helping someone cheat or lie. For specific information on Pepperdine's academic integrity policies and procedures, Seaver College policies can be found at <https://seaver.pepperdine.edu/academics/academic-support/integrity/policies/code.htm>

All work submitted for the class must be done by the student whose name appears on the work.

Exams

Except for a documented emergency, you must take the exams when they are scheduled. There are simply too many students to reschedule exams. If you know that you will not be able to attend one of the exams due to an overriding scheduling conflict, you should contact me early in the semester. If you have an emergency on the day of the exam, you will need documentation to prove that your absence was due to an emergency. I will review your documentation with the help of the academic advising office.

Office of Student Accessibility

Any student with a documented disability (chronic medical, physical, learning, psychological, or temporary) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Office of Student Accessibility (Student Assistance Center, SAC - 105, Phone: 310.506.6500) as early in the semester as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. Please visit <https://www.pepperdine.edu/student-accessibility/> for additional information.

Online Course Evaluations

All students will have the opportunity to complete an on-line evaluation of this course beginning on Nov 10, 2020. All students are encouraged to complete these evaluations. Your feedback is extremely valuable to your instructor and Pepperdine.

Schedule of the Course
(Subject to Change)

Day	Topic	Reading
Aug 17	Introductions and Political Ideology	ISideWith Online Quiz The Logic of American Politics (TLAP) Ch. 1
Aug 19/20	Collective Action	Olson – <i>The Logic of Collective Action</i> Hardin – <i>The Tragedy of the Commons</i>
Aug 24	The Constitution	TLAP Ch. 2 Quiz 1 – By 8am 8/24
Aug 26/27	Federal Institutions	<i>The Federalist #10</i> <i>The Federalist #51</i>
Aug 31	Federalism	TLAP Ch. 3 Quiz 2 – By 8am 8/31
Sept 2/3	Civil Liberties	TLAP Ch. 5
Sept 7	Labor Day – No Meeting	
Sept 9/10	Civil Rights	TLAP Ch. 6 Quiz 3 – By 8am 9/10
Sept 14	Civil Rights	(Choose any two of these to read for class) King – <i>Letter from a Birmingham Jail</i> Luker – <i>Abortion and the Politics of Motherhood</i> Friedan – <i>The Feminine Mystique</i> Selected Articles on Stonewall (See course site)
Sept 16/17	Exam 1	

Sept 21	Public Opinion Polling	TLAP Ch. 10 Quiz 4 – By 8am 9/21
Sept 23/24	Informing the Public	Popkin – <i>The Reasoning Voter</i> , Ch 1 Guess et al – <i>Selective Exposure</i> Coppins – <i>How the Left Lost Its Mind</i>
Sept 28	Campaigns and Elections	TLAP Ch. 11 Quiz 5 – By 8am 9/28
Sept 30 / Oct 1	Campaigns and Elections	Sides and Vavreck – <i>The Gamble</i> , Ch 1,2 Sides et al – <i>Identity Crisis</i> , Ch 1,2
Oct 5	Political Parties	TLAP Ch. 12 Quiz 6 – By 8am 10/5
Oct 7/8	Polarization	Fiorina – <i>Culture War</i> Wilson – <i>How Divided?</i>
Oct 12	Interest Groups	TLAP Ch. 13 Quiz 7 – By 8am 10/12
Oct 14/15	The Media in Politics	TLAP Ch. 14
Oct 19	The Media in Politics	Sides et al – <i>Identity Crisis</i> , Ch 4
Oct 21/22	Exam 2	

Oct 26	Institutions – Congress	TLAP Ch. 6 Quiz 8 – By 8am 10/26
Oct 28/29	Institutions – The Presidency	TLAP Ch. 7
Nov 2	2020 Election Preview	
Nov 4/5	2020 Election in Review	
Nov 9	Institutions – Congress and the President	Smith et al – <i>The American Congress</i> , Ch 9
Nov 11/12	Institutions – The Executive Branch	TLAP Ch. 8 Quiz 9 – By 8am 11/12
Nov 16	Institutions – The Judiciary	TLAP Ch. 9
Nov 19	Course Review	
Nov 24	Final Exam Section 05: 7:30-10am Section 06: 10:30-1pm	

Legal Note

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