

PLSC 111 – Introduction to American Politics

Tuesday & Thursday, 8:30a-9:55a

CLASSROOM: LH 002

INSTRUCTOR: Gregory Robinson

OFFICE: LNG 88 (Library North Ground Floor)

OFFICE HOURS: Wednesday 10-Noon

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TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

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Office Hours: W 3:30-4:30, F 4-5

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Introductory survey of American politics and government, including a review of constitutional foundations, the organization and influence of elections and public opinion, and in-depth looks at the three branches of the national government. Evaluation is based on examinations, papers, and active participation in discussion sessions. THIS COURSE IS APPROPRIATE FOR FIRST YEAR STUDENTS.

COURSE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Please be aware that your Binghamton University email will be used for course announcements, including schedule changes, class cancellations, etc. You will be responsible for checking your email for any announcements regarding this course, so make sure you do so (even if you regularly use some other email service). MyCourses will be used extensively for posting information and is the portal you will use for uploading your writing assignments to TURNITIN.

REQUIRED TEXTS

Ken Kollman. *The American Political System*, Core Third Edition. New York: WW Norton. **(TAPS)**

Ken Kollman, ed. *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*, Fourth Edition. New York: WW Norton. **(RAPAP)**

GRADE DISPUTES

Grading in this course is done by the graduate assistants. The instructor will consider grade disputes. A student wishing to dispute a grade for an assignment or exam must do so by contacting the instructor in writing. When doing so students should provide a clear explanation as to why they feel a different grade is order. Simply “wanting” or “needing” a higher grade is insufficient reason. Students should also be aware that when work is reviewed for a grade dispute, the entire assignment/exam is reviewed, not simply the specific detail being disputed by the student. *This means that a grade*

dispute may result in a lower grade, the same grade or a higher grade. All grade disputes are due in writing within one (1) week after graded work is returned.

SPECIAL NEEDS

Students with special needs must contact me immediately. Every effort will be made to accommodate special needs. In addition, students with disabilities should feel free to avail themselves of the services provided by Services for Students with Disabilities, University Union 119, (607) 777-2686 (voice/TT).

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Absolutely no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Anyone found cheating or committing plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity will receive an automatic grade of 0.0 (F) for the course. Furthermore, all other available penalties within the University will be pursued to the fullest extent. Students should be careful about academic dishonesty since there are severe consequences, which may well extend beyond Binghamton University (it may complicate or prevent admission to law school or graduate school, adversely affect your chances of employment, etc.).

If you do not know what constitutes plagiarism it is your responsibility to find out. You should make use of campus resources like the Writing Center¹ if you have questions. We will use TURNITIN for all writing assignments not completed in class. Submitting your work to TURNITIN **on time** is a serious requirement. Instructions for submitting your work to the TURNITIN system will be provided in class and on MyCourses.

GRADING SCALE (100%)

<60: F, 60-69: D, 70-72: C-, 73-76: C, 77-79: C+, 80-82: B-, 83-86: B, 87-89: B+, 90-92: A-, 93-100: A

IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS (15%)

There will be a series of in-class assignments (sometimes they will be in lecture; more often they will be in your discussion section) over the course of the semester. Each assignment will have its own instructions, and may take place at any time during the class session. *No make-up assignments will be given.* Assignments missed due to excused absences, medical/family emergencies, or university-approved absences will be dropped from the calculation of this portion of your grade. In such a case **documentation must be provided.** All other missed assignments due to absence or tardiness will receive a grade of ZERO.

PARTICIPATION & ATTENDANCE (20%)

The success of a course like this relies on the participation of the students in discussion sections. As such, you will be graded on the quality (and to a lesser degree on the amount) of your participation. Obviously, attendance is a necessary condition for participation. There may be a sign-in sheet to help us assess participation. Make sure you sign it! But also remember that attendance is not a sufficient condition for participation. Just showing up while never talking will get you a C for discussion section **at most.** Our assessment will largely be subjective, so make it easy on us (and thereby on you): participate!

¹"The Writing Center provides free tutoring in college writing for all students. Our excellent tutors are available Monday-Friday to assist you with any assignment from any class—essays, arguments, research papers, reports, analyses, editorials, proposals, abstracts, and lab reports, with critical reading, developing presentations, and citing sources...Our friendly tutors are here to help every student from every college and school—native speakers and ESL, undergrads and grad students—to become a better writer. We guide and advise you as you work on your paper. There are two ways to use our tutoring services: 1. **Schedule your appointment online**, or 2. Drop in during Writing Center hours." <http://www2.binghamton.edu/writing/writing-center/>

Of course, the obvious reminder applies: Please be respectful of everyone, and of their right to voice their opinions.

Except in exceedingly exceptional circumstances (e.g., a student's citizenship ceremony), **a student may NOT attend another discussion section as a makeup**. In the aforementioned circumstances, express, prior permission from the instructor **and** the teaching assistant(s) is required.

PAPER ASSIGNMENT (20% + 5%)

A hard copy of the paper is due by the beginning of class on **Thursday, April 26**.

A one page proposal/prospectus/outline of your paper will be due **in your discussion section during Week 9 (see schedule below)**. The proposal is worth 5% of your total grade. You should consider including the sources you will use in the paper, though this is *not* a strict requirement for this assignment. This is a serious assignment that I hope forces you to start thinking about your paper earlier rather than later!

Each paper should be well-written, well-sourced, of standard formatting (double-spaced, one-inch margins, 12-point font, with page numbers and a separate title page). Papers may be no more than 5 pages in length. References must be cited according to the citation style guide for the class (found on MyCourses)

Papers will not be accepted via email under any circumstances. While TURNITIN will be used, uploading to TURNITIN alone is not sufficient. If we have not received a hard copy of your paper *and* a receipt of your TURNITIN upload by the assignment deadline **we will not grade your paper, and you will fail the assignment.**

Your paper should address the following prompt:

- Using the discussion in Chapter One of *The American Political System* and Chapter One of *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*, identify and discuss an event or series of events in American political history that serves as an example of a collective dilemma or a principal agent problem. Was the dilemma/problem solved? If so, how and why? If not, why not?

EXAMS (20% each)

There will be a midterm (**Thursday, March 8**) and final exam (**Friday, May 11, 12:50 PM in LH001**), each worth 20% of your grade. The exams will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The exact format will be announced in class. *Makeup exams will be offered only for University-approved absences. Documentation for such must be provided.* Makeup exams will not be the same format as the regularly scheduled exam, and will cover assigned material that may not have appeared on the regularly scheduled exam.

SCHEDULE

Reading assignments should be completed by the beginning of each week. In other words, if your discussion section falls on a Monday you should have completed the week's reading before section meets even though we have not covered that week's material in a lecture yet. The instructor reserves the right to change this schedule as needed and will post any such changes on MyCourses.

NOTE : Class will not meet on March 6 (Winter Break) or April 3 & April 5 (Spring Break)

UNIT I – Theoretical Foundations

Week 1 (Jan 16 & Jan 18) – Introduction

Readings: Syllabus, TAPS Ch. 1 & RAPAP Ch. 1

UNIT II – Our Constitutional System

Week 2 (Jan 23 & Jan 25) – The Constitution

Readings: TAPS Ch. 2 & RAPAP Ch. 2

Week 3 (Jan 30 & Feb 1) – Federalism

Readings: TAPS Ch. 3 & RAPAP Ch. 3

Week 4 (Feb 6 & Feb 8) – Civil Rights and Liberties

Readings: TAPS Ch. 4 & RAPAP Ch. 4

UNIT III – The Mass Public

Week 5 (Feb 13 & Feb 15) – Public Opinion

Readings: TAPS Ch. 9 & RAPAP Ch. 9

Week 6 (Feb 20 & Feb 22) – Political Participation

Readings: TAPS Ch. 10 and RAPAP Ch. 10

Week 7 (Feb 27 & Mar 1) – Voting Behavior, Campaigns, and Elections

Readings: TAPS Ch. 13 and RAPAP Ch. 13

NO CLASS – TUESDAY, March 6

MIDTERM EXAM – THURSDAY, March 8

UNIT IV – Linking the Masses and the Elites

Week 8 (Mar 13 & Mar 15) – Political Parties

Readings: TAPS Ch. 12 and RAPAP Ch. 12

Week 9 (Mar 20 & Mar 22) – Interest Groups

Readings: TAPS Ch. 11 and RAPAP Ch. 11

PAPER PROPOSAL DUE IN SECTION MEETING

Week 10 (Mar 27 & Mar 29) – Media

Readings: TAPS Ch. 14 and RAPAP Ch. 14

NO CLASS – TUESDAY, April 3 & THURSDAY, April 5 – SPRING BREAK

UNIT V – Political Institutions

Week 11 (Apr 10 & Apr 12) - Congress

Readings: TAPS Ch. 5 and RAPAP Ch. 5

Week 12 (Apr 17 & Apr 19) – Presidency

Readings: TAPS Ch. 6 and RAPAP Ch. 6

Week 13 (Apr 24 & Apr 26) – Bureaucracy

Readings: TAPS Ch. 7 and RAPAP Ch. 7

PAPER DUE IN LECTURE ON THURSDAY, APRIL 26

Week 14 (May 1 & May 3) – Judiciary

Readings: TAPS Ch. 8 and RAPAP Ch. 8

EVALUATIONS IN LECTURE AND SECTIONS

Final Exam: Friday, May 11, 12:50 PM in LH001