

POLI 320A – Introduction to Government and Politics in the United States of America

2019 Summer Term 1 (M-W 9-12pm)
Buchanan B313

Instructor: Dr. Eric Merkley

Email: eric.merkley@alumni.ubc.ca

Office: Buchanan C311

Office Hours: M-W (1-2pm)

1. Overview and Objectives

This course provides an introduction to the study of American Politics, its historical foundations, institutions, and political processes. We will cover a range of topics, such as the constitutional foundations of the republic, institutional structures (the presidency, Congress, the judiciary), political culture, and the behavior of elites and citizens. Over the course of the term students will engage with important debates in American politics such as partisan polarization, interest group domination, legislative gridlock, presidential power, and race relations.

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Describe the formal and informal features of U.S. politics, including the constitution, the three branches of government, elections and political parties, and American political culture.
- Understand core theoretical concepts of political science, including power, collective action-problems, media effects, group identity, and partisanship, and apply them to phenomena in American politics.
- Evaluate critical questions in American politics, and develop and communicate evidence-based arguments through written composition.

2. Course Format

Your attendance at lectures is mandatory. In lecture you will be regularly asked questions that require a response via TopHat. Your participation in these in-class question-and-answer sessions is the foundation of your class participation. Each lecture will also include group activities and discussion that reinforce the material covered. Participation in these activities will also be marked.

In this class I will use different online tools to:

- Provide content (readings, lectures, assignments) – Canvas
- Participate in class – TopHat
- Submit group work and quizzes – Qualtrics
- Submit homework and research design – Turnitin

3. Required Texts and Materials:

- Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright. 2019. *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, 8th Brief Edition (CQ Press) [Make sure to purchase “Brief” edition, as there are different editions. You can use the 7th or 6th Brief edition.]
- **Readings available electronically.** As listed below in the detailed syllabus, required readings for the course are electronically available on the course website (see section below on the Course Website). It is your responsibility to download all readings from the appropriate location.
- **Course webpage and emails.** There is a course webpage on UBC's Canvas System. You can log in with your CWL username and password. I will use this page to post important course documents (readings, syllabus, lecture slides, etc.) and send emails to you throughout the term. Lecture slides will be posted after each class.

4. Grading and Assessed Coursework

Assessed Course Components		
Assignment	Date/Due Date	Percentage of Overall Grade
Lecture Participation (TopHat/Activities)	All Lectures	10%
Pop Quizzes	Any Lecture	10%
Group Presentation	On assigned day	10%
Response Paper (X2)	Before class for assigned day	20% (10% each)
Research Outline	May 31st (11:59pm)	5%
Research Essay	June 19th (after class)	25%
Final Exam	Date/Time Set by Registrar	20%

4.1 Final Exam (20%)

There is only one (final) exam. This exam will test you on all the material covered in the lectures, activities, and readings. The date and time of the final exam are to be set by the Registrar.

4.2 Class Participation (10%)

Participation will be taken via TopHat. In most lectures, you will be asked to answer questions using TopHat. Part of your participation mark will depend on your engagement with these questions. Your mark does not depend on whether you get the answers right. The questions are exercises to provoke discussion and learning. However, to get credit for participation at a given lecture, you must be present at the lecture and input responses to all questions using your own device (phone, tablet, or computer). 5%

Sign up for TopHat at www.tophat.com, and enroll in your respective course.

Joincode: 564794; **Password:** uspoli19

To use Top Hat, you must bring your own laptop, tablet, or phone (easier with a smartphone, but even flip phone can be used) to each lecture. If this will be a problem, please contact me immediately.

Most class meetings dedicate some time to practical exercises, for which you will be working with your peers in small groups. You will be asked to discuss specific questions with your group, share your answers with the class, and submit your responses via Qualtrics. 5%

4.3 Pop Quizzes (10%)

Students will be asked to periodically complete very short, surprise quizzes throughout the course of the term covering material in the course. This quizzes will be submitted via Qualtrics. Students must attend lecture in order to complete them.

4.4 Group Presentation (10%)

At the start of the course students will sign up to give a group presentation on **one** week's assigned, *non-textbook* reading. This presentation should *briefly* summarize the thesis and main arguments of the reading. It should also evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of those arguments and draw out their implications for the theory and practice of American politics. These presentations can be anywhere between 5 and 8 minutes in length.

Three groups of students will instead present on the final day of class. Rather than summarize and analyze a reading, these groups will present a review of each section of the course. They will identify major themes and important concepts, and explain how each of the major topics in this course relate to one another. These review presentations should be made with an eye to helping their fellow students prepare for the final exam. These presentations can range from 7 to 10 minutes in length.

Students can use PowerPoint if they wish, but avoid putting too much text on the slides. Students will be graded on the quality of the analysis, and the clarity and professionalism of the presentation.

4.5 Response Paper (10% X 2)

Students will write **two** response papers in reaction to assigned, *non-textbook* readings that are **no longer than two pages and in a proper essay format**. You **cannot** write a response paper for the week you are doing a group presentation. One paper should be from the readings of section I and II of the course (i.e. Foundations and Institutions), while your second paper should be from section III (politics & society). These papers will *briefly* summarize the readings by identifying the thesis of each reading and their main arguments. They should evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the author's analysis and draw out its implications for the theory and practice of American politics. Students will be graded for the quality of the summary and analysis, along with the clarity and succinctness of the writing. Marks will be deducted if students exceed the page limit. They are due on Turnitin at the beginning of the class for a given week's reading. Late papers **will not** be accepted.

4.6 Research Outline (5%)

Students will choose a topic provided by the instructor on Canvas for their research paper. They will write an outline for this paper to assist them in developing an evidence-based argument on the topic they selected. This outline (between 600 and 900 words) should cover their thesis statement, major

arguments and topic sentences, and initial evidence in support for those arguments. The outline can consist of detailed bullet points, but evidence **must** be properly sourced.

The outline is due on Turnitin at 11:59PM on May 31st. It will be graded pass or fail. The main purpose of this task is to provide instructor feedback for the research essay. Late outlines will be accepted for the purpose of providing feedback, but they will be assigned a zero unless prior accommodation has been made.

4.7 Research Essay (25%)

Students will write an 1800-2400 word, properly sourced, research essay that further develops the argument from the research outline that takes into account instructor feedback. The essay is due on June 19th after the last class meeting.

Detailed instructions will be given and posted on Canvas. This assignment is worth 25% of your mark for the course. Extensions on deadlines will be given for documented emergencies only. Without documentation, late essays will be penalized 5 points out of 100 per day, including weekends. An example of the grading criteria can be found in the back of the syllabus.

5. Course Schedule and Readings

Section I. Foundations

Topic 1 (Mon May 6th) - Course Structure, Requirements, Objectives and Introduction

Readings:

- Course Syllabus

Topic 2 (Mon May 6th) – Foundations and the Constitution

Readings:

- The Constitution (KTR, A-10/16)
- KTR Ch. 2
- Madison: Federalist No. 10 & 51 (Canvas)

Topic 3 (Wed May 8th) - Federalism

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 3
- Shipan & Volden: “Policy Diffusion: Seven Lessons” (Canvas)

Section II. Institutions

Topic 4 (Mon May 13th) – The Judiciary & Civil Rights

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 9 & 5
- Maltzmann: “Advice and Consent” (Canvas)

Topic 5 (Wed May 15th) – Congress

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 6
- Binder: “Elections, Parties, and Governance” (Canvas)

Victoria Day May 20th (Stat Holiday, no class)

Topic 6 (Wed May 22nd) – The Presidency

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 7
- Kernell: “Going Public” (Canvas)

Topic 7 (Mon May 27th) – Bureaucracy

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 8
- Moe: “The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure” (Canvas)

Midterm Break, June 3-7 (NO CLASS)

Section III. Politics & Society

Topic 8 (Wed May 29th) – Public Opinion

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 10
- Kuklinski & Quirk: “Reconsidering the Rational Public” (Canvas)

Topic 9 (Mon Jun 10th) – Media

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 13
- Gilens: “Why Americans Hate Welfare” (Canvas)

Topic 10 (Wed Jun 12th) – Parties & Elections

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 11 (pp. 357-376) & KTR Ch. 12 (pp. 407-430)
- Vavreck: “The Message Matters” (Canvas)

Topic 11 (Mon Jun 17th) – Democratic Participation & Interest Groups

Readings:

- KTR Ch. 12 (pp. 398-407) & KTR Ch. 11 (pp. 376-391)
- Olson: “The Rise and Decline of Nations” (Canvas)

Topic 12 (Wed Jun 19th) – Free Form/Review

- No Readings

6. Course Policies

6.1 Contacting Course Instructor

I strongly recommend asking substantive questions about course content and requirements in person. Email should be reserved strictly for time sensitive questions or quick points of clarification. During the week I will try to respond within 24 hours, but emails received during the weekend will be answered on Monday. I will not respond to emails on the due date of an assignment.

6.2 Re-Grading

If you'd like anything re-graded, you must prepare a single-page memo outlining your case for re-grading. The memo needs to be serious and specific. I will then re-examine a particular item. Know, however, that a given grade can either increase or decrease.

6.3 Personal Electronics

Please put away your cellphones during class. You should also try to take notes by hand in this course. That way, you process the information, instead of just copying everything down verbatim. It will also make the studying environment more productive for yourself and your fellow students. Further, lecture slides will be made available on Canvas. There is little use in copying everything you see word-for-word.

6.4 Missing Class and Late Assignments

Attendance and participation is required at all class sessions due to the intensive nature of this course. Late short assignments **will not be accepted** except in the event of a documented serious illness or serious personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below). Late final papers will be penalized 5 points out of 100 per day, including weekends, except in the event of a documented serious illness or serious personal emergency (see section on Accommodation below). Missed examinations will result in a grade of zero except in the event of a documented illness or emergency.

6.5 Accommodation for Emergency Situations

Students who need additional time for an assignment or will miss a lecture, tutorial, or exam for a medical or serious personal reason must contact the course instructor **before** the due date or exam/lecture/tutorial date and as soon as the problem arises.

Requests for accommodation **made on or after an assignment's due date, or after the missed exam or lecture will not be considered**. Some documentation, such as a doctor's note, will usually be required to make accommodation. Please note that accommodations will not be made for foreseeable circumstances, such as having multiple papers due in the same week. Accommodations are reserved for unforeseeable events that are outside a student's control (e.g., illness, a death in the family). When there is a difficult situation that is foreseeable, it is your responsibility to organize your work for this course so that you can nonetheless turn in the assignment on time.

Due date extensions will usually not be granted for work lost due to computer crashes or the loss of a computer file. The reason for this is that there are simple and free ways of regularly and automatically backing up your work.

6.6 Other Accommodations

The University accommodates students with disabilities who have registered with the Disability Resource Centre. The University also accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let me know in advance, preferably in the first week of class, if you will require any accommodation on these grounds. Students who know in advance that they will have difficulty completing assignments because of varsity athletics, family obligations, or other similar commitments, cannot assume that they will be accommodated, and should discuss their commitments with me before the course drop date.

Read the [university calendar](#) so that you are aware of no-penalty drop dates, requirements for medical authorization (to defer an exam, for example) and other procedures that may affect you.

6.7 Other University Resources

University students often encounter setbacks from time to time that can impact academic performance. If you run into difficulties and need assistance, I encourage you to contact me by email or by dropping by my office. I will do my best to support your success during the term. This includes identifying concerns I may have about your academic progress or wellbeing through Early Alert. With Early Alert, faculty members can connect you with advisors who offer student's support and assistance getting back on track to success. Only specialized UBC advisors are able to access any concerns I may identify, and Early Alert does not affect your academic record.

For more information: <https://facultystaff.students.ubc.ca/systems-tools/early-alert>

If you find yourself struggling, the University of British Columbia offers a range of other supports – please reach out and take advantage of them.

- [Student resources](#)
- [Counseling Services](#)
- [Food Bank](#)

6.8 Respectful University Environment

UBC recognizes that “the best possible environment for working, learning and living is one in which respect, civility, diversity, opportunity and inclusion are valued.” The full UBC Statement on Respectful Environment for Students, Faculty and Staff can be found [here](#). Students should read this statement carefully and take note of both the protections and the responsibilities that it outlines for all members of the UBC community. Students should also review the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

This course values frank discussion, healthy debate, and the free and respectful exchange of ideas. Students are welcome to voice and defend their views, which may differ from those of other students or of the instructor. However, disrespectful behavior, including bullying and harassment, will not be tolerated. The instructor and teaching assistant will be professional and respectful in all their exchanges with students, and students will exercise similar professionalism and respect in their interactions with each other, with the teaching assistant, and with the instructor.

If you have any concerns about the class environment, please raise them with the instructor. You also have the options of contacting the Head of the Political Science Department, UBC's [Equity and Inclusion Office](#), or the UBC [Ombudsperson for Students](#).

6.9 Equity and Harassment

UBC is committed to equity (including but not limited to gender equity) and fostering a safe learning environment for everyone. All peoples should be able to study, work, and learn in a supportive environment that is free from sexual violence, harassment, and discrimination. UBC's Policy #3 on Discrimination and Harassment defines harassment as: "unwanted and unwelcome attention from a person who knows, or ought to know, that the behaviour is unwelcome. Harassment can range from written or spoken comments to unwanted jokes, gifts, and physical assault, and may be accompanied by threats or promises regarding work or study opportunities and conditions. Harassment can be either a single incident or a series of related incidents." Such behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated at UBC. If you or someone you know has encountered sexual violence or harassment, you can find confidential support and resources at the AMS Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC) and the Equity and Inclusion Office. The SASC is an all-genders service that serves the UBC-Vancouver campus community and is committed to creating a safer campus community, free from sexualized violence. Their work is informed by feminism, anti-oppression and recognition of intersectionality. The Equity and Inclusion Office is committed to fostering a community in which human rights are respected and equity and diversity are integral to university life.

Resources are available at:

Sexual Assault Support Centre (SASC)
249M, Student Union Building, UBC
604-827-5180
sasc@ams.ubc.ca
<http://amssasc.ca>

Equity and Inclusion Office
2306-1874 East Mall (Brock Hall)
604.822.6353
equity@equity.ubc.ca
<http://equity.ubc.ca>

6.10 Academic Integrity and Responsibility

Academic dishonesty in the form of cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. The University considers plagiarism to be the most serious academic occurrence that a student can commit. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to the presentation or submission of the work of another person, without citation or credits, as the student's own work. Whether intentional or accidental, instances of plagiarism will have serious academic consequences.

In my experience, many students who believe they know what plagiarism is do not actually have a clear understanding of where the line between proper and improper use of sources lies. I thus strongly encourage you to read the UBC library's excellent [online resources](#). If you have any doubts about how and when to properly acknowledge another person's work, please discuss these with the course instructor. Punishment for cheating or plagiarism will include a grade of zero and other disciplinary action. Please refer to the [University policies](#) on cheating and plagiarism for examples of what constitutes academic misconduct and the extent of disciplinary action that could be taken.

6.11 Acknowledgement

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

6.12 Turnitin

In accordance with departmental policy, in this course you will be required to submit your research paper in electronic form to a service called Turnitin. UBC subscribes to this service that checks written material for originality by searching for matching text. This service is in increasing use in universities as protection for students against the impact of academic fraud on scholarship competitions, graduate and law school admissions, and degree reputation. Students will submit their homework and research design to the Turnitin website, where software scans the paper against a database which includes public websites, paper writing services, essays submitted to Turnitin, and journal articles. The service then produces a report on the paper's originality. The instructor will review the reports, and where necessary, the papers themselves. Please note that Turnitin stores information on servers that reside in the United States. If you do not wish to use your name when creating your Turnitin account, please use the first 5 digits of your student number as an alias instead. For more information on Turnitin, reasons for its use, and general policies, see the UBC Vice President Academic and Provost web site, at <http://www.vpacademic.ubc.ca/integrity/Turnitin/index.htm>

This is a paperless course. Students are only required to submit their papers to Turnitin.

Still a little uncertain or paranoid about what constitutes plagiarism? For a quick refresher visit:

<http://www.indiana.edu/%7Ewts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml> and/or:
<http://sja.ucdavis.edu/files/plagiarism.pdf>

To submit your paper to Turnitin, log on to the Turnitin site, at:

www.turnitin.com

You will be asked to create a unique "user profile," consisting of an ID (e-mail address) and password (see upper right hand corner of the Turnitin homepage). Once this ID is created, you will be able to add courses to your profile. To add a course, you will need:

Enrollment Key: 20910883

Course Password: uspoli19

Once added to a course, you will be able to submit your homeworks to the service. You will be asked to provide your name and student number, as well as some details about your assignment. This information will be used only to identify your submission to your instructor. Please ensure that there is **NO IDENTIFYING INFORMATION** included in the text of your assignment, including headers. This is for your own privacy (if you do submit identifying information by mistake and you are not concerned, you can leave it as is). You will be asked to cut and paste (text only) the body of your assignment, and the bibliography into separate fields within the website. Simply confirm the submission, and Turnitin will issue a receipt (via e-mail). If you encounter difficulties submitting your bibliography, do not be concerned. The important element is the body (text) of the paper.

Please note that Turnitin stores information on servers that reside in the United States. If you do not wish to use your name when creating your Turnitin account, please use the first 5 digits of your student number as an alias instead. Assignments are not accessible to the public once submitted to Turnitin, and you, as the author, retain ownership of your original material. Your work will be added to Turnitin's archive for comparison against subsequently submitted material, thus ensuring that your work is not plagiarized.

Marking Descriptors

The following marking criteria for coursework, exams and dissertations, have been established as guides about what is normally expected of work receiving a particular grade.

A+

An answer that fulfills all of the criteria for 'A' (see below) and in addition shows an exceptional degree of insight and independent thought, together with flair in tackling issues, and is outstanding in terms of scholarship and originality.

A

An authoritative answer that provides a fully effective response to the question. It should show a command of the literature and an ability to integrate that literature and go beyond it. The analysis should achieve a high level of quality early on and sustain it through to the conclusion. Sources should be used accurately and concisely to inform the answer but not dominate it. There should be a sense of a critical and committed argument, mindful of other interpretations but not afraid to question them. Presentation and the use of English should be commensurate with the quality of the content.

A-

A sharply-focused answer of high intellectual quality, which adopts a comprehensive approach to the question and maintains a sophisticated level of analysis throughout. It should show a willingness to engage critically with the literature and move beyond it, using the sources creatively to arrive at its own independent conclusions.

B-, B, B+

A very good answer that shows qualities beyond the merely routine or acceptable. The question and the sources should be addressed directly and fully. The work of other authors should be presented critically. Effective use should be made of the whole range of the literature. There should be no significant errors of fact or interpretation.

The answer should proceed coherently to a convincing conclusion. The quality of the writing and presentation (especially referencing) should be without major blemish.

Within this range a particularly strong answer will be graded B+; a more limited answer will be graded B-.

C-, C, C+

A satisfactory answer with elements of the routine and predictable. It should be generally accurate and firmly based in the reading. It may draw upon a restricted range of sources but should not just re-state one particular source. Other authors should be presented accurately, if rather descriptively. The materials included should be relevant, and there should be evidence of basic understanding of the topic in question. Factual errors and misunderstandings of concepts and authors may occasionally be present but should not be a dominant impression. The quality of writing, referencing and presentation should be acceptable. Within this range a stronger answer will be graded C+; a weaker answer will be graded C-.

D

A passable answer which understands the question, displays some academic learning and refers to relevant literature. The answer should be intelligible and in general factually accurate, but may well have deficiencies such as restricted use of sources or academic argument, over-reliance on lecture notes, poor expression, and irrelevancies to the question asked. The general impression may be of a rather poor effort, with weaknesses in conception or execution. It might also be the right mark for a short answer that at least referred to the main points of the issue. Within this range a stronger answer will be graded D+; a bare pass will be graded D-.

F

An answer with evident weaknesses of understanding but conveying the sense that with a fuller argument or factual basis it might have achieved a pass. It might also be a short and fragmentary answer with merit in what is presented but containing serious gaps.

Serious Failures

30-40 An answer showing seriously inadequate knowledge of the subject, with little awareness of the relevant issues or literature, major omissions or inaccuracies, and pedestrian use of inadequate sources.

20-30 An answer that falls far short of a passable level by some combination of short length, irrelevance, lack of intelligibility, factual inaccuracy and lack of acquaintance with reading or academic concepts.

0-20 An answer without any academic merit which usually conveys little sense that the course has been followed or of the basic skills of essay-writing.

Final Essay Feedback Form

Student:	
Essay Question:	
Mark:	

Criteria	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Addresses question?					
Shows wide ranging basic knowledge and grasp of contents?					
Develops a logical and effective pattern of argument?					
Supports argument with evidence where relevant?					
Is well and correctly referenced?					
Is clear and well-written?					
Effectively addressed instructor feedback?					

Penalty for being late or over-long?