

POLS 021E
THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM
FALL SEMESTER 2017

Class Schedule:	1:15 – 2:30PM T, Th
Class Room:	L207 Lafayette
Instructor:	Professor Lisa M. Holmes
Office:	540 Old Mill
Office Hours:	2:45pm-4:15pm Tuesday, 11:00am-12:30pm Thursday, or by appointment
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INTRODUCTION

This course has two main objectives. The first is to familiarize you with the historical and theoretical foundations and institutions of American democracy, as well as the relevance of political behavior and public policy in the American political system. The second objective is to encourage students to analyze democracy as practiced in the United States in both class discussions and written assignments. The goal here is to strengthen your ability to critique (as in analyze, not merely criticize) the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system. Note that although we will use many current political issues as points of discussion, this is NOT a current events class.

Does this course description sound dull, dry, and boring? Probably so. However, lying beneath this colorless description hides many interesting and controversial issues in American politics - the kinds of issues that motivate people to become interested in politics. Should prayer be allowed in public school? Should a state be able to ban same sex marriage? Does it make any sense that marijuana use is legal in some states but not legal in the United States of America? Did President Obama use executive power in ways similar or different than his recent predecessors? Why is it that in some states, you have to be a registered member of a political party to vote in that party's primary? Why is it that some federal courts have recently struck down voter identification laws? Why do we have a system where the person who wins more votes sometimes does not become the president? We will discuss these and other issues throughout the semester. We will of course spend some time discussing the 2016 presidential election and the presidency of Donald Trump. However, remember that this is not a current events class, nor is it a class on the Trump administration. Most students come into this class having little or no interest in politics. Therefore, one goal of this course is to develop an appreciation for the importance of politics in your day-to-day life.

TEXTS

There is one assigned text for the course:

Lowi, Theodore J., Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. 2017. *American Government: Power and Purpose, Brief Fourteenth Edition*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. (ISBN: 978-0-393-28377-8) I have requested a copy of this book to be put on 2-hour reserve at the Bailey Howe Library.

BLACKBOARD

There are many other readings assigned for the class. These will all be made available on Blackboard. Any additional readings assigned throughout the semester will be posted on Blackboard or circulated in class.

Students will be able to access the syllabus at any time from Blackboard. Any important class announcements will be posted on Blackboard as well. As such, if you miss class you should go to Blackboard to determine what specific readings you will need to do for class, rather than email me for that information.

Very important announcements will be emailed to the full class, using your official UVM email address. Please check this email account with enough regularity that you avoid missing any important announcements.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Quizzes. Five short quizzes will be given throughout the course of the semester, on the dates listed on this syllabus. The quizzes will be administered at the end of the class session, and will typically consist of multiple choice questions.

Mid-semester and Final Exams. Two semester exams and a final exam will be given on the dates listed on this syllabus. These exams will integrate material from class lectures, class discussions, reading assignments, and any other class activities or assignments. These exams will include an essay component. The format will be discussed in class.

Quiz and Exam Makeup Policy: You are expected to take each quiz and exam during the class period on the days listed in the syllabus. Any and all makeup quizzes and exams will be administered during the final exam block, from 1:30pm-4:15pm on Tuesday, December 12th. (Yes, this means that you'll be taking any makeup quizzes or exams in addition to the final exam at that time.) The questions and format may differ from the regularly administered quizzes and exams, although the material covered on the makeups will be the same as those given during the semester.

Note that YOU are responsible for knowing which exams and/or quizzes you need to make up at the end of the semester. For example, if you show up to the final and tell me that you need to make up Quiz #3, when in actuality you needed to make up Quiz #2, your original grade on Quiz #3 will stand and you will earn a zero on Quiz #2. Also, keep in mind that I cannot reschedule anyone's final exam, unless for documented university-approved reasons. Those times are set by the university.

GRADING SCHEME

Final grades will be calculated as follows:

- Five Quizzes (at 5% each)	25%
- Two Semester Exams (at 25% each):	50%
- Final Exam:	25%
Total	= 100%

A Note on Grading:

There will be NO curve in the class. An "A" grade given on any assignment or as a final cumulative grade signifies "excellent" work (reserved for those students who have not only demonstrated an excellent understanding of the course material, but who have also shown an excellent ability to analyze the material); a "B" signifies "good" work (a "good" understanding of and ability to analyze the material); a "C" signifies "satisfactory" work (a "satisfactory" understanding of and ability to analyze the material); a "D" signifies "passing" work (a "passing" understanding of and ability to analyze the material); and an "F" signifies "failing" work (an inability to understand or analyze the material).

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students are, of course, expected to do their own work on all assignments in this class. University standards regarding academic honesty apply throughout the semester. Please see the official university policy at <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.html>

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

The Department of Political Science requires that this classroom protocol, defining minimum standards of conduct, be included in all syllabi of political science classes.

1. Students are expected to attend and be prepared for ALL regularly scheduled classes.
2. Students are expected to arrive on time and stay in class until the class period ends. If a student knows in advance that s/he will need to leave early, s/he should notify the instructor before the class period begins.
3. Students are expected to treat faculty and fellow students with respect. For example, students must not disrupt class by leaving and reentering during class, must not distract class by making noise, and must be attentive to comments being made by the instructors and by peers.

In addition to the above minimum standards, the following standards will apply throughout the semester:

1. All cell phones, iPads, laptops, and other electronic devices ***must be turned off and stowed away*** for the duration of ***each*** class session. Any use of these devices in class is distracting and will not be tolerated. ***Computers are not allowed for use in class***, unless you receive an individualized exception directly from me. Get used to taking notes the old fashioned way. Lots of research shows that old fashioned notetaking is better for learning and retention, anyway.
2. If you have a physical or learning disability, you **MUST** provide me with the relevant paperwork from the Student Accessibility Services office by the end of the second full week of classes. In addition, you **MUST** speak with me in person to discuss any relevant accommodations. Discussing these issues early in the semester is necessary to develop a plan that is workable for you and for me. Also, note that I may not be able to accommodate last-minute requests, nor will I accommodate any requests for students who haven't yet spoken with me in person. If your accommodation needs change during the semester, you must inform me of any such changes immediately. For students who take exams in the Exam Proctoring center, the student is responsible for scheduling an exam time with the SAS office and must ensure that I am informed at least two days before the exam of the need for me to send the Proctoring Center the exam.
3. If you are a member of a sports team or a UVM organization that requires travel out of town, you must provide me with your schedule as soon as it becomes available.
4. Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Students with religious observation needs must submit to me in writing their documented religious holiday schedule for the semester by the end of the second full week of classes.
5. As per University policy: "The uvm.edu e-mail address that has been issued to you is the official means by which the University will communicate with you (during academic session and break periods). You are responsible for checking e-mail (from the University) sent to your University e-mail address."
6. I reserve the right to reduce the final grade of any student who fails to adhere to these requirements. This is particularly the case for those who show up late, leave during class, or use any electronic devices in class without permission.

COURSE OUTLINE

Although our daily agenda may vary from this outline as necessary, quiz and exam dates will not change unless absolutely necessary. Any readings added to this list will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard. **All readings that are not provided in the Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere book are posted on Blackboard under the “Course Readings” link.**

PART I: THEORIES AND FOUNDATIONS

- Aug. 29 Introduction and Foundations, Day 1
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Chapter 1 (in full)
- Aug. 31 Foundations, Day 2
Foa and Mounk, “The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect,” *Journal of Democracy* (2016) 27:5-17.
Bright Line Watch Survey Report: Wave 2, <http://brightlinewatch.org/blw-expert-survey-wave-2/>, (May 23, 2017)
Taub, “How Stable Are Democracies? ‘Warning Signs Are Flashing Red,” *The New York Times*, Nov. 29, 2016
- Sept. 5 Declaration of Independence and the Articles of Confederation
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Begin Ch. 2 (to page 28)
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Declaration of Independence (p. A3 – A6)
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Articles of Confederation (p. A7 – A12)
- Sept. 7 The U.S. Constitution
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Finish Ch. 2
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Constitution incl. Amendments (p. A13 – A33)
- Sept. 12 Ratification, Day 1
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Federalist 10 (p. A34 – A39)
- Sept. 14 Ratification, Day 2 **(QUIZ #1)**
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Federalist 51 (p. A39 – A42)
Rauch, Jonathan, “How American Politics Went Insane.” *The Atlantic*, July/August 2016.
- Sept. 19 Federalism, Day 1
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Begin Ch. 3 (to page 77)
Graham, David, “Red State, Blue City.” *The Atlantic*, March 2017.
- Sept. 21 Federalism, Day 2
Chemerinsky, Erwin, Jolene Forman, Allen Hopper, and Sam Kamin. 2015.
“Cooperative Federalism and Marijuana Regulation.” *UCLA Law Review* 62:74-122

- Sept. 26 Separation of Powers
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Finish Ch. 3
 Appelbaum, Binhamin, and Michael D. Shear, “Once Skeptical of Executive Power, Obama Has Come to Embrace It,” *New York Times*, Aug. 13, 2016.
 Tanner, Michael, “A Rocky Road Ahead for Constitutional Governance,” *National Review*, July 27, 2016.
 Edelson, Chris, “Would a President Trump Recognize Limits on His Power?” *National Review*, May 6, 2016.

SEPT. 28 EXAM #1

PART II: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

- Oct. 3 Congress, Day 1
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Begin Ch. 5 (up to p. 142)
 Ungar, Rick, “Opinion: Why Congress Cannot Operate Without the Bribing Power of Earmarks,” *Forbes*, Dec. 29, 2012.
- Oct. 5 Congress, Day 2
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Finish Ch. 5
 Hulse, Carl, “Executive Branch Overreach? Lawmakers Blame Themselves,” *The New York Times*, Feb. 8, 2016.
- Oct. 10 The Presidency, Day 1
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Ch. 6 (in full)
- Oct. 12 The Presidency, Day 2 **(QUIZ #2)**
 Epps, Garrett, “Constitutional Myth #3: The ‘Unitary Executive’ is a Dictator in War and Peace.” *The Atlantic*, Jun. 9, 2011.
 O’Brien, David M. 2000. “Accountability and Immunities,” from *Supreme Court Watch 1999*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
 Bump, Philip, “No Matter How Bad It Gets for Him, Here’s Why Trump Isn’t Getting Impeached This Year,” *The Washington Post*, July 14, 2017.
- Oct. 17 The Executive Branch
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Ch. 7 (in full)
 Lewis, Michael, “Why the Scariest Nuclear Threat May Be Coming From Inside the White House,” *Vanity Fair*, July 26, 2017.
 Saenz, Arlette, “Rick Perry Lists 3 Departments He’d Cut, But Adds One, Misses Another,” *ABC News*, Jan 13, 2012.
 Sargent, “Greg, “Americans Hate Big Government, but They Like What it Does. That Includes Republicans,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 23, 2015.
 Porter, Tom, “Deep State: How a Conspiracy Theory Went from Political Fringe to Mainstream,” *Newsweek*, August 2, 2017.
- Oct. 19 The Federal Courts, Day 1
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Begin Ch. 8 (up to p. 259)
 “Is Judicial Review a Legitimate Power of the U.S. Courts?” including excerpts *Marbury v. Madison* and *Eakin v. Raub*, from *Taking Sides: Clashing Views in Constitutional Law*, 1st edition, 2011.

Oct. 24 The Federal Courts, Day 2
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Finish Ch. 8
 Ramsey, Michael D., “Why the Senate Doesn’t Have to Act on Merrick Garland’s
 Nomination,” *The Atlantic*, May 15, 2016.
 Obama, Barack, “Opinion: Merrick Garland Deserves a Vote – for Democracy’s Sake.”
 The Wall Street Journal, July 17, 2016.
 “Corporations and the Court,” *The Economist*, June 23, 2011.

OCT. 26 EXAM #2

PART III: DEMOCRATIC POLITICS

Oct. 31 Public Opinion
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Begin Ch. 9 (up to p. 295)
 Harrison, Margot, “UVM Prof Anthony Gierzynski Finds a ‘Harry Potter’ Factor in
 Politics.” *Seven Days*, Sept. 4, 2013.
 Robinson, Matthew, “Party On, Dudes!” *The American Spectator*, March/April 2002.
 Nyhan and Reifler, 2010. “When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political
 Misperceptions,” *Political Behavior* 32:303-330

Nov. 2 Media
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Finish Ch. 9
 Starr, Paul, “Governing in the Age of Fox News.” *The Atlantic*, Jan./Feb. 2010.
 Meyer, Robinson, “How the Average American Gets Their News.” *The Atlantic*, Jul. 7,
 2016

Nov. 7 Elections, Day 1 **(QUIZ #3)**
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Begin Ch. 10 (up to p. 335)
 Ahlquist, John S., Kenneth R. Mayer, and Simon Jackman. 2014. “Alien Abduction and
 Voter Impersonation in the 2012 U.S. General Election: Evidence from a Survey
 List Experiment.” *Election Law Journal* 13:460-475
 Domonoski, Camila, “As November Approaches, Courts Deal Series of Blows to Voter
 ID Laws,” *NPR*, Aug. 2, 2016.

Nov. 9 Elections, Day 2
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Finish Ch. 10
 Frankel, Matthew, “U.S. Congress: Gerrymandering is the Problem,” *Brookings Up
 Front*, June 15, 2010.
 Trende, Sean, “Gerrymandering Isn’t to Blame for D.C. Impasse,” *Real Clear Politics*,
 Oct. 11, 2013.

Nov. 14 Political Parties, Day 1
 Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Begin Ch. 11 (up to p. 369)
 Berman, Ari, “The Democratic Primary Wasn’t Rigged,” *The Nation*, June 16, 2016.
 Greenfield, Jeff, “Why We Need Those ‘Anti-Democratic’ Superdelegates,” *Politico*,
 May 28, 2016
 Greenhouse, Linda, “The Supreme Court: Freedom of Association; Court Strikes Down
 California Primary Placing All Parties on a Single Ballot,” *The New York Times*,
 June 27, 2000.

- Nov. 16 Political Parties, Day 2 **(QUIZ #4)**
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Finish Ch. 11
Graham, David A., “Really, Would You Let Your Daughter Marry a Democrat?” *The Atlantic*, Sept. 27, 2012.
Desilver, Drew, “The Polarized Congress of Today has its Roots in the 1970s,” *Pew Research Center*, June 12, 2014.

Nov. 21 and 23 Thanksgiving Break

- Nov. 28 Groups and Interests
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Ch. 12 (in full)
Drutman, Lee, “How Corporate Lobbyists Conquered American Democracy,” *The Atlantic*, Apr. 20, 2015.

PART IV: CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

- Nov. 30 Civil Liberties
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Begin Ch. 4 (up to p. 107)
Denniston, Lyle, “Court: A Constitutional Right to a Gun,” *SCOTUSBLOG*, June 26 2008.
Stevens, John Paul, “Opinion: The Five Extra Words that can Fix the Second Amendment,” *The Washington Post*, April 11, 2014.

- Dec. 5 Civil Liberties **(QUIZ #5)**
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Read pages 102-107 again.
Biskupic, Joan, “Court Allows Drug Tests; Ruling Permits Schools to Force Athletes to Comply,” *The New York Times*, June 27, 1995.
Liptak, Adam, “Supreme Court Says Child’s Rights Violated by Strip Search,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2009.
Greenhouse, Linda, “Vote Against Banner Shows Divide on Speech in Schools,” *The New York Times*, June 26, 2007.
Horwitz and Zaptosky, “Sessions Issues Sweeping New Criminal Charging Policy,” *The Washington Post*, May 12, 2017.

- Dec. 7 Civil Rights
Lowi, Ginsberg, Shepsle, and Ansolabehere – Finish Ch. 4
Howe, Amy, “We Gave You a Chance: Today’s *Shelby County* Decision in Plain English,” *SCOTUSBLOG*, June 25, 2013.
Katz, Ellen D., “How Big is *Shelby County*?” *SCOTUSBLOG*, June 25, 2013.
Howe, Amy, “Future of Voting Rights Up in the Air: In Plain English,” *SCOTUSBLOG*, June 7, 2013.
Newkirk, Vann, “Trump’s Voter-Fraud Commission Has Its First Meeting,” *The Atlantic*, July 19, 2017.

******* FINAL EXAM — TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12TH AT 1:30PM IN L207 LAFAYETTE *******
(This is also the time and location of any makeup exams or quizzes.)

This time is scheduled by the University. Final exams will NOT be given at any other time to accommodate any student’s personal schedule, so plan accordingly.