

Political Science 40: Introduction to American Politics UCLA
Prof. Chris Tausanovitch

Class Times: Tuesday and Thursday,
11-12:15 **Office Hours:** Thursday 2-4pm

Location: Broad 2160E
Office: Bunche 3383

Purpose of the Course

As the title suggests, this course is an introduction to politics in the United States of America. Politics is the process through which people engage in collective action. Understanding politics requires understanding why people engage in collective action to begin with, how they do so, and what the consequences are. In particular it will be important to understand how they create and sustain evolving institutions that organize this collective action, and how these institutions work. Although American politics may not always seem logical, the political system was created and persists to serve certain needs, and so it has a certain logic. The purpose of this course is to provide students with basic facts about American politics, some explanation of the logic of American politics and an introduction to how social scientists learn about the world. Along the way we will engage with numerous examples from political history and current American politics.

Learning Goals

1. Students will learn about the fundamental institutions and features of American politics, and will be able to situate this knowledge in American political history.
2. Students will learn how political scientists advance knowledge about politics, with a special emphasis on the methods and models used most prominently to study American politics. This includes basic data analysis and formal logic.
3. Students will learn to engage critically with claims that people make about politics. They will learn to be particularly suspicious of claims that are appealing for non-evidentiary reasons.
4. Students will learn the fundamentals of making and communicating clear arguments and evaluating arguments with evidence.

Required Textbook

Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. *The Logic of American Politics*, 11th edition. CQ Press.

This course is part of the UCLA Inclusive Access program. Your course materials are being automatically provided to you, digitally, through Bruin Learn by the first day of class or upon enrollment. The materials are being provided at a reduced and competitive price. You will receive e-mail from the UCLA Store (UCLA Store <no-reply>@verbasoftware.com) with program details and cost sent directly to your email

address on file with the Registrar. It is *your responsibility* to read all communication coming from the bookstore. Check your spam folder if not received.

Everyone enrolled in this course is automatically a participant to start and will have access to the materials through 2nd week of class. Those remaining in the program after 2nd week will be billed for the materials directly to their BruinBill account and will continue to have access to the course materials. *If you do not wish to participate in Inclusive Access, you must opt-out by the Friday of 2nd week deadline or you will be billed.* Those who opt-out will lose access to the digital materials and will be responsible for obtaining the materials on their own.

Do not pay for your materials through the publisher website unless you are opting out of Inclusive Access. All Inclusive Access course materials will be billed to your BruinBill account. Any questions regarding the Inclusive Access program can be directed to inclusiveaccess@asucla.ucla.edu.

Course Requirements

Participation – 10%

Midterm – 25%

Take-Home Essay – 20%

Final – 45%

Some of the material on the exams will be discussed in the class but not in the reading, and some of it will be discussed in the reading but not covered in depth in class. It is important that students do all of the reading and attend all of the lectures. Exams use multiple different question formats including multiple choice, short answer and short essay questions.

Three weeks into the class I will assign a five-page essay, due in the beginning of week 9. Part of your job during the intervening six weeks will be to think about what you are learning in the context of your essay assignment, and to incorporate what you have learned into your argument. The essay will ask you to pass judgement on some of the fundamental features of American politics and draw on your knowledge of both the Constitutional structure of these institutions and their modern functioning in order to make your argument. The most important aspect of this essay is that you (1) make an argument, (2) make empirical claims in support of that argument, (3) provide evidence for those claims, and (4) defend those empirical claims against possible critiques.

Section attendance is mandatory, and participation will be graded on the basis of active student participation in discussions. You may have one, and only one unexcused absence from section. Any other absences will be excused only if the student provides a doctor's note or a note from a UCLA administrator to their TA. For each additional section you miss, you will lose A HALF LETTER GRADE from your overall final grade.

It goes without saying that all of your graded work must be done by you without assistance from others. You are encouraged to discuss the class and materials with others, but your answers to exam questions must be yours and yours alone, with proper attribution for sources you wish to cite. If you are unfamiliar with the University's policy on academic dishonesty and associated penalties, see <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu>.

You can and possibly should use AI for generating ideas or as a starting place for answering questions. However all of your writing must be your own and not AI generated. Tests are closed book, closed notes, and AI assistance is obviously not allowed.

If You Don't Have Much Background in American Politics

This course attempts to cater to a broad variety of students, from those who have been obsessed with American politics from a very young age to those who are almost completely unfamiliar with how American government works. However, if you are in the latter camp you may occasionally find yourself at sea, simply because there is so much material to cover and I have to assume *some* prior knowledge to get through it. This may apply to international students in particular, but also students who simply have not taken any American government classes before. If you think that you may need more of the basics, I recommend picking up a copy of *What Your Professor Thinks You Already Know About US Politics*. This is a short book that is designed to help you catch up for exactly this set of students. As of this writing the Kindle edition is only \$8 on Amazon.

Outside of the Course

Students should keep up with current events so you can reinforce what you've learned and better understand what is happening in politics today. National newspapers are a good resource, particularly the New York Times, which has consolidated its central role in journalism of all kinds, and the Washington Post, with its focus on the nation's capital. Politico is probably the dominant player in politics-only news. Good Authority (goodauthority.org) is an accessible source for insights from political science about recent political developments.

Office Hours

I hold office hours every week, so please stop by! If my office hours do not work with your schedule, email me and we can set up another time to chat. That said, there are 300 of you, so I ask that when you come to office hours you know what you would like to discuss. I will keep meetings brief, especially if other students are waiting. Your TAs will hold office hours as well, so there are plenty of opportunities to get your questions answered.

A Note about Email

Over the course of the quarter I receive many emails from students, and I do my best to respond in a timely manner. However, emails from non-UCLA email addresses generally go straight to my spam filter,

and I do not have the time to go through all of my spam. Please email me from your UCLA email if you would like a response!

GE Credit Acknowledgment

Upon successful completion of this course, students will satisfy the General Education requirements in Social Analysis in the Society and Culture Foundation Area. Students will gain proficiency in Social Analysis through engagement with political science research, discussion of this material in sections, and through their own essays. For more information, please view your school or college's [GE requirements](#).

Students with Disabilities

Students with university documented disabilities that require accommodations on any of their class assignments should inform their teaching assistant of their needs within the first two weeks of the class. This is especially important if you require more time or separate rooms for exams. If you suspect you have a disability and have not been tested for one, contact the Center for Accessible Education:

Website: www.cae.ucla.edu

Phone Number: 310-825-1501

Campus Location: Murphy Hall A255

Schedule of the Course

Day	Date	Topic	Reading
Week 1			
Tuesday		American Politics: What's at Stake?	LAP Ch. 1 p. 12-25
Thursday		The Articles of Confederation to the Constitution	LAP Ch. 2. p. 35-52
		NO SECTION	
Week 2			
Tuesday		The Basic Constitutional Framework	The Articles of Confederation (in LAP) The US Constitution (in LAP) Bouie, Jamelle "Constitutional Change Will Be Here Sooner Than We Think"
Thursday		Federalism	LAP Ch. 3 p. 89-107 California State Budget – Summary Charts
Section		Federalist 51 and Policymaking, Malapportionment	Federalist 51(in LAP) Dahl, "How Democratic is the US Constitution?" Ch 3

Week 3			
Tuesday		Public Opinion	LAP Ch. 10, p.442-459
Thursday		Paper Assigned Voting and Elections	LAP Ch. 11, p. 479-492 Cuzan, "The Campbell Collection of Presidential Election Forecasts, 1984–2016: A Review"
Section		Is public opinion meaningful?	Zaller, "Coming to Grips with V. O. Key's Concept of Latent Opinion." p. 1-9
Week 4			
Tuesday		Congress 1: Representation	LAP Ch. 6, first half Mayhew p. 49-67
Thursday		Congress 2: lawmaking	LAP Ch. 6, second half
Section		Midterm Prep	
Week 5			
Tuesday		The Presidency	LAP Ch. 7
Thursday		Midterm	
Section		Why doesn't Congress do more stuff?	Binder, "Would a GOP Senate make a difference?" New York Times, "Why the Senate Couldn't Pass a Crime Bill."
Week 6			
Tuesday		<i>Presidential Elections</i>	<i>Silver, "What a Split in Consumer Confidence Means for Biden."</i>
Thursday		The Media	LAP Ch. 14
Section		Do we live in polarized media echo chambers?	Guess, "(Almost) Everything in Moderation: New Evidence on Americans' Online Media Diets."
Week 7			
Tuesday		The Courts	LAP Ch. 9
Thursday		The Bureaucracy and Interest Groups	LAP Ch. 8
Section		Do ideological judicial appointments affect judicial decisions?	Bonica and Sen, "The Politics of Selecting the Bench from the Bar: The Legal Profession and Partisan Incentives to Introduce Ideology into Judicial Selection"
Week 8			

Tuesday		Campaign Finance, Lobbying and Interest Groups	LAP Ch. 11, p. 496-504
Thursday		<i>Consuming Social Science Research</i>	TBD
Section		Is money in politics corrupting?	Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo and Snyder, "Why is There So Little Money in U.S. Politics?"
Week 9			
Tuesday		Paper Due Political Parties	LAP Ch. 12
Thursday		Polarization	McCarty, Nolan. "The Policy Consequences of Political Polarization."
Section		Is partisan animosity blind or substantive?	Orr and Huber, "The Policy Basis of Measured Partisan Animosity in the United States."
Week 10			
Tuesday		Civil Rights	LAP Chapter 4 Keele, Cubbison and White "Suppressing Black Votes"
Thursday		Inequality	Hacker and Pierson, "Abandoning the Middle: The Bush Tax Cuts and the Limits of Democratic Control"
Section		Final Exam Prep	
Final Exam		Final Exam	Location TBD

Other Resources

Academic Counseling

Academic Advisors aim to collaborate with you to support your academic, professional, and personal development. We encourage you to contact your academic advisor early and often to ensure your success during your first year.

Website: <https://www.registrar.ucla.edu/Academics/Academic-Counseling>

Title IX Office

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, 1st Floor Wooden Center West, CAREadvocate@careprogram.ucla.edu, 310.206.2465. In addition, Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) provides confidential counseling to all students and can be reached 24/7 at 310.825.0768. You can also report sexual violence or sexual harassment directly to the University's Title IX Coordinator, 2241 Murphy Hall, titleix@conet.ucla.edu, 310.206.3417. Reports to law enforcement can be made to UCPD at 310.825.1491.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS provides counseling services to students who are in need of support in any way 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Appointment can be made by contacting CAPS during their office hours Monday - Friday 9 am - 4 pm. Crisis support is available 24/7 by phone at 310-825-0768.

Website: www.counseling.ucla.edu

Phone Number: 310-825-0768

Campus Location: John Wooden Center, 221 Westwood Plaza

Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC)

The UWC is available by appointment through 25 minute to 50 minute appointments to support your academic writing needs. They may also have 30 minute same-day drop-in appointments available. Please check their website to view availability and make an appointment. The UWC is open Monday - Thursday 10 am - 6 pm and Friday 10 am - 3 pm, with evening hours Sunday - Thursday 6 pm - 9 pm.

Website: <https://uwc.ucla.edu/> Phone Number: 310-206-1320 Email: wcenter@g.ucla.edu Campus

Location: Kaplan Hall A61

UCLA Library

The UCLA library is a great resource to help you with any of your research needs, including finding relevant sources and evaluating their context. Please visit the library website for all your needs -

<https://www.library.ucla.edu/>

There are MANY other campus resources that are available to support you in all aspects of your life. I encourage you to check out these websites to see any programs or supports on campus that may help towards ensuring your overall success at UCLA.

Campus-Wide Student Services: <https://www.studentaffairs.ucla.edu/student-services>

Current Students Resources: <https://www.ucla.edu/students/current-students>

Consultation & Response Crisis Resources: <https://studentincrisis.ucla.edu/resources>

Student Affairs Guidebook: <https://www.studentaffairs.ucla.edu/guidebook>

Course Workload

Course Workload Estimator

Note: An enhanced version with new features has been released!
[Click here to switch to the Enhanced Course Workload Estimator](#)

READING	WRITING	EXAMS	COURSE INFO
<p>Pages Per Week: <input type="text" value="80"/></p> <p>Page Density: <input type="text" value="600 Words"/></p> <p>Difficulty: <input type="text" value="Many New Concepts"/></p> <p>Purpose: <input type="text" value="Understand"/></p> <p>Estimated Reading Rate: 13 pages per hour</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> manually adjust</p>	<p>Pages Per Semester: <input type="text" value="5"/></p> <p>Page Density: <input type="text" value="250 Words"/></p> <p>Genre: <input type="text" value="Argument"/></p> <p>Drafting: <input type="text" value="Extensive Drafting"/></p> <p>Estimated Writing Rate: 2.5 hours per page</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> manually adjust</p>	<p>Exams Per Semester: <input type="text" value="2"/></p> <p>Study Hours Per Exam: <input type="text" value="12"/></p> <p>OTHER ASSIGNMENTS</p> <p># Per Semester: <input type="text" value="0"/></p> <p>Hours Per Assignment: <input type="text" value="0"/></p>	<p>Class Weeks: <input type="text" value="10"/></p> <hr/> <p>ESTIMATED WORKLOAD</p> <p>9.8 out of class hrs/wk</p> <p>Estimation Details</p> <p>Research & Design Elizabeth Barre Justin Esarey</p>

These workload estimates are backed by research on how long these tasks actually take:
<http://cte.rice.edu/workload/>