

PSCI 110-001: American Government

Spring 2019
Drexel University
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Monday and Wednesday, 4:00-5:50 PM
Papadakis Integrated Sciences Building, Room 108

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Appointments: <https://jacksantucci.acuityscheduling.com>

1 Overview & goals

This course will teach you how to think scientifically about American politics. We are in a period of rapid and unsettling change. My goal for you is to learn to thrive in it. That means suspending value judgment, coming up with systematic explanations for why things work the way they do, and testing those explanations against historical facts.

I will make the case that American politics mostly involves conflict between two elite-led coalitions. It is up to you to decide if I am right, then what you want to do about it. This course covers the working of our national institutions, party organizations, public opinion, and mass media. Along the way, we apply those lessons to periods of change in modern U.S. history.

This course assumes basic, background knowledge of American politics (e.g., that Congress has two chambers, and a term in the House lasts two years). If you lack that knowledge, the textbook is your guide.

When this course is over, you will:

- Know how we got to the way things are today;
- Be able to analyze current events the way a political scientist might;
- And have gotten practice improving your writing.

2 Books you need to get

- Kollman, Ken. Any edition. *The American Political System*. New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company. (Copies sell online for as low as \$1.99 plus shipping.)
- Allen, Frederick Lewis. 1931. *Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920s*. New York: Harper & Brothers. (The entire text is online at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/ALLEN/cover.html>.)

3 Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following components.

1. Pop quizzes (10%) – These will be on the readings. I hate to do this to you, but experience suggests that many people do not read without this incentive.
2. Midterm exam (30%) – A combination of short-answer and essay-length prompts. This will be closed-book and written in class.
3. Two short papers (30% each) – In the first paper, you apply what we have learned about the political process and party system to a movie, *All the Way* (HBO 2016). In the second, you choose some theme from the course and apply it to *Only Yesterday*. I want to know about some development in the media and/or society that you think matters for politics, then how it was the same or different in the 1920s. For a grading rubric and advice, see “How to get an ‘A’” on this page: <https://bit.ly/2s7wTPS>. One will be due in the third week of May. The other will be due in finals week.

4 How to get what you want efficiently by sending me e-mail

1. Use a subject line that indicates your need. Please don't reply to a blanket email sent through Blackboard, nor to a thread about some other issue.
2. Include the full course number (i.e., PSCI-110-001).
3. Be as specific as possible, and use complete sentences.
4. Keep all correspondence with respect to the same issue in the same thread.
5. Use your Drexel email so that I can search my inbox for your username.

5 Other policies

You agree to:

1. Treat guest speakers and classmates with respect.
2. Check Drexel email daily through the date of the final exam.
3. Attend class and meet course deadlines. Out-of-class written work loses five points for each 24-hour period past the time and date it is due.
4. Use Internet search or a dictionary to look up words you do not know.
5. Abide by all other Drexel policies, found at the following websites. Note that I reserve the right to use plagiarism-detection software.
 - Academic integrity: http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp

- Disability accommodation: <http://drexel.edu/oed/disabilityResources/students/>
- Add/Drop: <http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-add-drop>
- Course withdrawal: <http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal>

I agree to:

1. Abide by any grading guidelines in this syllabus and related instructions for assignments. Grading is on the 0-100 scale: 97 and up (A+), 93-96 (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-87 (B), 80-82 (B-), and so on, down to 50 (F).
2. Answer student e-mail within 48 business hours. Business hours are 9 AM to 5:30 PM, Monday through Friday, non-holiday.
3. Except for the required books, post links to readings on Blackboard, if not the readings themselves.
4. Grade written work within 10 business days of submission.
5. Notify you of changes to this syllabus at least one week in advance of affected due dates.
6. Give office hours on a by-appointment basis. (See link above.) Students who are not in Philadelphia can book these times for phone conversations.

6 Schedule of work

6.1 Housekeeping

April 1 Three items:

- This syllabus,
- “How to get an ‘A’ on a paper” (link under “Requirements” above),
- and “How to write paragraphs in research texts” (link in “How to get an ‘A’” document).

6.2 The Constitution of 1787

April 3 Taylor, Steven L., Matthew S. Shugart, Arend Lijphart, and Bernard Grofman. 2014. “Political Engineering and the US Constitution.” In *A Different Democracy: American Government in a Thirty-One-Country Perspective*, 25-56. New Haven: Yale University Press.

April 8 “Federalism” in Kollman.

6.3 The emergence and logic of parties

April 10 Schwartz, Thomas. 1989. “Why Parties?” UCLA, Typescript. **Read pages 1-3, 12-17.**

April 15 “Political Parties” in Kollman.

6.4 The modern operation of our major institutions

April 17 Two items:

- “Congress” in Kollman.
- “Powell’s Amendments,” *Harvard Crimson*, May 20, 1964.
<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/1963/5/20/powells-amendments-prep-adam-clayton-powells/>

April 22 “The Presidency” in Kollman.

April 24 “The Judiciary” in Kollman.

6.5 Midterm exam

April 29 Midterm exam in class.

6.6 Historical application: Into the modern era

May 1 and May 6 *All the Way*. Film. United States: HBO, 2016. **Watch in class.**

6.7 Public opinion and the media

May 8 “Public Opinion” in Kollman.

May 13 Ladd, Jonathan M. 2011. “Why Is Everyone Mad at the Mainstream Media?” and “The Institutional News Media in an Era of Political Polarization and Media Fragmentation.” In *Why Americans Hate the Media and How It Matters*, 1-9, 66-101. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

May 15 Mason, Lilliana. 2013. “The Rise of Uncivil Agreement: Issue Versus Behavioral Polarization in the American Electorate.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 57 (1): 140-159.

May 20 Noel, Hans. 2014. “The Independent Development of Ideology.” In *Political Parties and Political Ideologies in America*, 67-92. New York: Cambridge University Press. **Skip pages 74-78.**

6.8 Non-elite participation

May 22 “Political Participation” and “Interest Groups and Social Movements” in Kollman.

May 29 Miller, Gary and Norman Schofield. 2008. “The Transformation of the Republican and Democratic Party Coalitions in the U.S.” *Perspectives on Politics* 6 (3): 433-450.

6.9 Historical application: Where might we be going?

June 3 First short paper due today. Lecture on the Progressive Era.

June 5 and June 10 *Only Yesterday*, selected chapters.

June 12 Spillover and concluding discussion.