

GOVT 020: US Political Systems

Georgetown University

Summer 2017

First session (section 10): MTWR in ICC 210A, 1-3 PM.

<https://blogs.commonsgorgetown.edu/govt-020-10-summer2016>

Instructor: Prof. Jack Santucci (jms346@georgetown.edu)

Office hours by appointment.

1 Goals

What is the American political system? What are its main parts? How is it different from other democratic systems? Are these differences good or bad? This introductory course in American politics will make us think about these questions. Readings, lectures, and discussion will help us answer each. A short essay will ask you to specialize. Overall, the course will prepare you for deeper study in political science.

2 Required items

Both are for sale at the campus bookstore. Used copies of **KK** should be for sale online.

- Taylor, Steven L., Matthew S. Shugart, Arend Lijphart, and Bernard Grofman. 2014. *A Different Democracy: American Government in a Thirty-One-Country Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (**TSLG**).
- Kollman, Ken. 2013. *The American Political System, 2nd Edition*. W. W. Norton & Company. (**KK**).
- The **REEF Polling** app for iOS or Android.¹ (This is a smartphone substitute for the i>clicker.)

3 Requirements

Your grade will be based on the following components:

- Participation and attendance (10%).
- Reading quizzes (10%).
- Short paper (40%). Due at 1 PM on the second-to-last day of class.
- Final exam (40%). Last day of class.

¹<https://www1.iclicker.com/products/reef-polling/>

The [Georgetown Honor System](#) has full effect.² Familiarize yourself with its clauses on plagiarism and cheating.

I relax deadlines and attendance rules only for documented medical emergencies and bereavement.

Audio and video recorders are prohibited. Laptops and tablets are allowed, but a preponderance of research-based evidence says they are distracting.

3.1 Participation

Attend class daily. Contribute to discussion when appropriate. Use your i>clicker. Please stay informed about major news events. These are interesting times in American politics, and the fit of political-science models is not to be taken for granted.

3.2 Reading quizzes

I will “pop” an occasional quiz. This is to encourage reading and continued thinking about the material. I will administer quizzes via i>clicker.

3.3 Short paper

I will distribute questions in the fourth week of class. Answer one of them. Please, don’t summarize our readings or lectures. Integrate and evaluate them. Make and defend a thesis statement. **A** is for **a**rgument.

Your paper should be 750-1,250 words in length (roughly 3-5 double-spaced pages). A title page is not necessary, but a title is. Your name, the date, and the course name must appear at the top of the page. Use the [Chicago author-date](#) citation style.³ All margins must be one inch, line spacing must be double, and the font must be 12-point. The paper is due in hard copy at the beginning of class on the day before the final exam.

Revise and proofread. Is your writing clear? If you are unsure, read this [short essay](#) on good writing.⁴

3.4 Final exam

This will consist of short- and long-answer questions. You will have choice. If you require special arrangements, please make these with me as soon as possible.

3.5 Instructional continuity

If we cannot meet in person, I will email the class discussion questions. Answer one of them in 200-300 words. Email the answer to me by 3 PM. Grades will factor into the quiz grade.

²<https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system>

³<https://www.library.georgetown.edu/tutorials/research-guides/turabian-paren-guide>

⁴<https://medium.com/advice-and-help-in-authoring-a-phd-or-non-fiction/how-to-write-paragraphs-80781e2f3054>

4 Schedule of readings

4.1 Two models of political behavior

Class 1 “Preface” and “Introduction” in TSLG.

Class 2 “Introduction” in KK.

4.2 Basic rules of the game

Class 3 “Political Engineering & the US Constitution” in TSLG. “The Constitution” in KK.

Class 4 “Constitutions” in TSLG.

Class 5 “Federalism” in KK. “Federalism & Division of Power” in TSLG.

4.3 Who plays the game?

Class 6 “Interest Groups & Social Movements” in KK.

Class 7 “Political Parties” in KK.

Class 8 “Elections & Electoral Systems” in TSLG.

4.4 How the players alter the game

Class 9 “Congress” in KK. “Legislative Power” in TSLG.

Class 10 “The Presidency” in KK. “Executive Power” in TSLG.

Class 11 “The Bureaucracy” in KK.

Class 12 “The Judiciary” in KK. “Judicial Power” in TSLG.

4.5 What about regular people?

Class 13 “Political Participation” in KK.

Class 14 “Public Opinion” in KK.

Class 15 “Mass Media and the Press” in KK.

Class 16 “Elections & Campaigns” in KK. “Political Parties, Election Campaigns, & Interest Groups” in TSLG.

4.6 Normative conclusions?

Class 17 APSA Committee on Parties. 1950. “Summary of Conclusions and Proposals.”⁵

⁵<https://www.jstor.org/stable/1950998>

Class 18 “Comparative Conclusions” in TSLG.

Class 19 Review session. *Paper due at start of class.*

Class 20 Final exam.