

## **GOVT 1200: U.S. Political System**

Georgetown University  
Department of Government

Summer 2025, June Term

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ICC 594

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Office Hours by Appointment

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the American political system. The first part of the course addresses the foundations of American politics, particularly the design of the US system of government. The second part focuses on the political engagement of citizens. The third phase considers parties, interest groups, and the mass media. The final section addresses the role of important institutions in American government including Congress, the Presidency, the courts.

### **Course Goals**

Students will develop an understanding of the basic structures of American government and the rationale behind the development of these structures. Students will learn to critically analyze arguments favoring and opposing reform of governmental institutions and electoral practices. Students will practice their writing skills via an analytical paper, and will engage actively with the material both inside and outside a classroom setting.

### **Required Readings**

Kernell, Samuel and Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2023. *The Logic of American Politics, 11<sup>th</sup> edition* Washington, D.C.: CQ Press. (Previous editions are acceptable though perhaps not ideal).

Additional readings will be posted on Canvas.

### **Assignments and Grading**

#### **Grading:**

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

Participation: 25%

## **Exams**

The midterm and final exams will be taken in class and will be handwritten. The focus will be on demonstrating what you have learned over the course of the class, compared to your knowledge at the beginning. I will elaborate on how this will work on our first day. The final exam is cumulative, meaning it will encompass the content for the entire class.

## **Participation**

Participation: You will certainly earn a higher participation grade if you attend class.

Engagement in thoughtful section discussion is expected and will enhance the learning experience for everyone. The participation component will be based on how well students prepare for and engage in recitation discussions. Good participation moves beyond discussion of current events to critical engagement of the readings and application of the theories to contemporary politics.

You do not need a note from a doctor if you cannot attend class due to illness or a professional conflict. I do advise that you contact your Dean if you have more than a minor disruption to your ability to keep up with your class responsibilities. Please do not come to class if you are sick. Prioritize your health.

If I am ill we may conduct class remotely or I may locate a substitute instructor. I will let you know.

**Assignment and Overall Grade Ranges:** The grade ranges are defined as follows:

A= unusual excellence (A- 90-93; A 94-100)

B= work distinctly above average (B- 80-83; B 84-86, B+ 87-89)

C= work of average quality (C- 70-73; C 74-76; C+ 77-79)

D= below average work, the lowest passing mark (D- 60-63; D 64-66; D+ 67-69)

F= Failure, No course Credit (59 and below)

## **Class Policies**

### **Observance of Religious Holy Days and Holidays**

From the Undergraduate Bulletin: "Georgetown University promotes respect for all religions. Any student who is unable to attend classes or to participate in any examination, presentation, or assignment on a given day because of the observance of a major religious holiday or related travel shall be excused and provided with the opportunity to make up, without unreasonable burden, any work that has been missed for this reason and shall not in any other way be penalized for the absence or rescheduled work. Students will remain responsible for all assigned work. Students should notify professors in writing at the beginning of the semester of religious observances that conflict with their classes. . . . The Provost and the Main Campus Executive Faculty encourage faculty to accommodate students whose bona fide religious observances in other ways impede normal participation in a course. Students who cannot be accommodated should discuss the matter with an advising dean."

## **Academic Integrity**

Georgetown has an Honor Code and an Honor Council. Any faculty member who suspects or *even wonders about* a possible violation of Academic Integrity **must** (no optional discretion) report this to the Honor Council. From [the Undergraduate Bulletin](#): "Any member of the University community with information concerning a possible act of academic dishonesty should report it to the Honor Council. Faculty members *are obligated to report apparent violations.*"

## **Laptops**

Laptops may be used in class to take notes or to look up related material. Laptop use that goes beyond this subject matter will result in the privilege being revoked.

## **Student Support**

### **Campus Resources**

#### **Academic Resource Center (ARC)**

The Academic Resource Center (ARC) provides students with academic strategies and individualized support needed for academic success and inclusion within the Georgetown community. Services offered through the ARC include disability support services (such as academic accommodations) and academic support (such as study tips, academic skills workshops, and tutoring).

#### **Counseling and Psychiatric Service (CAPS)**

Counseling and Psychiatric Service (CAPS) is a resource that serves the mental health care needs of students and the campus community. CAPS is open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm. To schedule an appointment with CAPS, contact the intake coordinator at (202) 687-6985.

### **Daily Sources of Political News**

Throughout the semester, you should follow political news through newspapers and websites such as the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Roll Call*, *The Hill*, *Vox*, and *Politico*. Watch C-SPAN to experience floor debates and committee hearings in the House and Senate as well as Presidential news conferences and events.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Week 1**

#### **Introduction**

#### **Why Government? and The Form Governments Take**

Kernell, et al., Chapter 1

History of Ideas Podcast – [Hobbes on The State](#) (listen (recommended) or read transcript)

## **Who are We? American Political Values**

History of Ideas Podcast - [Tocqueville on Democracy](#)

## **The Declaration of Independence and The US Constitution (Meet at The National Archives on 6/6 at 10:45)**

The Declaration of Independence, Kernell et al., Appendix

The Constitution of the United States, Articles I-VII, Kernell et al., Appendix

[Federalist 51](#)

## **Week 2**

### **Civil Liberties and Civil Rights**

Kernell et al., Chapter 5

### **Federalism**

Kernell, et al., Chapter 3

## **EXAM 1**

### **Public Opinion and Political Participation**

Kernell et al., Chapters 4, 10, and 11

### **Campaigns and Elections**

History of Ideas Podcast – [Schumpeter on Democracy](#)

## **Week 3**

### **Brookings event?**

### **Political Parties**

Kernell et al, Chapter 12

[David Karol on Nominations – Listen to The Weeds Podcast](#)

**Interest/Lobby Groups**

Kernell, et al., Chapter 13

**Media and Politics**

Kernell, et al., Chapter 14

**Week 4**

**EXAM 2**

**The U.S. Congress (Meet at the US Capitol)**

Kernell et al., Chapter 6

**The Presidency (Meet at Lincoln Memorial)**

Kernell et al., Chapter 7

Federalist 70 - <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/full-text>

**Week 5 (No class July 4 in observance of Independence Day)**

**The Bureaucracy**

Kernell, et al., Chapter 8

**The Judiciary (Meet at the US Supreme Court)**

Kernell, et al., Chapter 9

Federalist 78 - <https://guides.loc.gov/federalist-papers/full-text>

**Public Policy**

**FINAL EXAM**