Course Syllabus

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MIAMI UNIVERSITY

American Political System

Political Science 241C

304 Harrison Hall Tu Th 8:30–9:50

Instructor Information

Abigail A. Matthews, J.D., Ph.D.
Email: abigail-matthews@miamioh.edu (mailto:abigail-matthews@miamioh.edu)
Office: 214 Harrison Hall
Office Phone: (513) 529-9009
Office Hours: schedule an appointment with me at https://aamatthews.youcanbook.me/ (https://aamatthews.youcanbook.me/) (or Tuesday 10:00am to 12:00pm; Thursday, 12:00pm to 2:00pm)

Teaching Assistant: Ali Preissing, preissaj@miamioh.edu (mailto:preissaj@miamioh.edu) (mailto:preissaj@miamioh.edu)

Course Description

This is an introductory course in U.S. politics, which is designed to promote understanding and evaluation of politics: the application of theory to real-world examples. This class does not require prior knowledge or experience in political science, only an interest in understanding the world of government and politics and our role in it. This course is, for a large part, an active-learning experience. That is, you will be expected to come to class to work, learn, and actively engage in the material. You will be required to participate in groups and complete analytic activities. The course is designed around three main areas of American politics: governmental ideas and frameworks; political institutions; and the ways in which citizens are linked to the U.S. government. Throughout these sections of the course, you will participate in individual and group projects surrounding a specific public policy issue to apply themes and debates in political science to analyze how the concepts manifest themselves in current policy debates.

Course Objectives

- Through class discussion, short answer assignments, and activities, students will define and explain political science concepts, theories, and approaches.
- Through the Issue Portfolio assignment, students will demonstrate skill in evidence-based reasoning from identifying the appropriate data or evidence necessary to construct a convincing argument for constructing and communicating that argument.
- Given the individual and group Issue Portfolio assignments, students will apply political science knowledge to contemporary political issues and problems and be able to identify and evaluate alternative political-science based solutions.
- Given the final Issue Portfolio assignment and through presenting their group work, students will formulate, propose, and advocate possibilities for positive change in democratic society as engaged and informed citizens.

Course Materials

There is no required textbook for this course. The following are some Open Access Resources that can help you with questions about the basics of American politics. You may want to use these for the quizzes:

- Lenz and Holman Political Science textbook **(http://florida.theorangegrove.org/og/file/2e74506d-6095-0531-a2fb-b04504b885bd/1/9781616101633_LenzHolman.pdf)**
- Political Science Hub **(https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-politicalscience/)**
- Encyclopedia of Political Science **(http://holmes.lib.miamioh.edu/record=b4165793)**

Required Supplemental Readings:

There will be required supplemental readings on Canvas.

Requirements and Evaluation

Attendance Policy, Class Participation, and Civility

Class participation is an essential part of this class and your attendance is very important. I also understand that life happens, and as such, you may miss two class periods (for any reason such as boredom, hangovers, other obligations (interviews, extra-curricular activities, vacation, familial obligations, etc) without penalty. You do not need to notify me of the absence. If you have more than two absences, your class participation grade, which is worth 10% of your grade, will be lowered by 2% for each additional day. For example, if you have five total absences, your class participation grade will be no more than 4% (of the total 10%) and your overall grade in the class can be no more than 94%.

Attendance Points Calculated as Follows:

Number of days absent	% off grade	points off	total points
0-2	0	0	40
3	-2	-8	32
4	-4	-16	24
5	-6	-24	16
6	-8	-32	8
7 (or more)	-10	-40	0

Grades

Policies

Late assignments will not be accepted, even if the assignment is turned in one minute past the deadline.

Grading

In addition to the attendance and participation outlined above, we will be conducting an in-class, 7-day simulation. If you participate in all 7 days, you will receive 20 points (5% of your total grade). For each additional day, your grade will be lowered by 1% (of the total 5%). Participating in the simulation all 6 days = 16 points. For participating in the simulation 4-5 days = 12 points. For participating in the simulation 3 days = 8 points. For participating in the simulation 2 days = 4 points. For participating in the simulation 0-1 days = 0 points. Please note: these points are lost in addition to the general participation points. The other 20 points (5% of your total grade) will be an assignment asking you to reflect on your simulation experience.

All of the quizzes will be available on Canvas.

Your grade for this course will consist of the following components and relative weights:

Type	Item	Grade Value	Points Value
Verbal	Class Participation	10%	40
	Simulation	10%	40
Writing	Short-Answer Assignments	25%	100
	Issue Portfolio	25%	100
Examinations	Quizzes	15%	60
	Final Exam	15%	60

Grades will be assigned by the following scale:

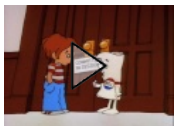
Grade	Percent of Points
A	90%-100%
B	80%-89%
C	70%-79%
D	60%-69%
F	0%-59%

Your final course grade will be based on the total points you receive from all assignments listed above. The plus and minus grade system will be used at my discretion for particularly outstanding or below average work within a particular grade range. If you are taking the course on a pass/fail basis, please see me to discuss the requirements for a passing grade. Students auditing the course are expected to attend class and participate in our discussions. I will only agree to requests for extensions after extensive consultation with a student and only in the most exceptional of circumstances.

Course Schedule

What follows is a tentative outline of the topics to covered and when we will cover them. I may modify this schedule as necessary based on the dynamics of this particular class. If the schedule is modified, I will provide you with appropriate notice.

Date	Topic	Readings Due	Assignment
Founding Principles			
1/30	Introductions	1. **U.S. Constitution (https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript)**	
2/1	No Class, Professor Matthews at conference		**SA 1**
2/6	Why Government?	1. **Olson – Logic of Collective Action**	**SA 2**
2/8	What are the	1. **DeTocqueville (http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/ch2_02.htm)**	**SA 3**

	values that unite Americans?	2. Declaration of Independence (https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript) 3. Elazar 4. Smith	
2/13	Why did America end up with this Constitution?	1. U.S Constitution (Arts. 1-3, 5, Bill of Rights) (https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript) 2. Federalist 10, 51 (https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers) 3. Antifederalist 1 (http://www.thisnation.com/library/antifederalist/index.html)	SA 4
2/15	How does federalism play out in current political issues?	1. Federalist 39 (https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/The+Federalist+Papers)	Quiz
2/20	Is American Politics Representative?	1. Bos, Nelson and van Doorn, p 1-5 2. Mansbridge – highlighted text 3. Sapiro, p 701-705	SA 5
The Role of the Public in American Politics			
2/22	How do we measure public opinion?	1. Lepore – New Yorker article on polling (https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/11/16/politics-and-the-new-machine) 2. How Questionnaires are put together 1. How Questionnaires are Put Together handout.doc	IP 1
2/27	Part #2	Asher – choose 1 section (Choosing Items to Analyze; Examining Trends with Polling Data; Examining Subsets of Respondents; Interpreting Poll Results; Weighting the Sample; When Polls Conflict: A Concluding Example)	SA-6 Public Opinion Polls
3/1	How does the media influence voters	Media Chapter – read sections 1-3, 7	SA-7 Media
3/6	Are Americans competent and sophisticated enough for democracy?	1. Delli Carpini & Keeter 2. No, we're not arguing from the same facts 3. Pew Report Ignorance article	
Institutions			
3/8	How does Congress operate to make laws?	1. Mayhew Farm Bill article 2. I'm just a bill/ how a bill becomes a law (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFroMQlKiag)  (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFroMQlKiag) 3. Beating the Odds (https://www.vox.com/2014/5/22/5723878/how-a-bill-becomes-a-law-in-2014) 4. Timeline of a Bill (https://web.archive.org/web/20140104102825/http://politics.nytimes.com/congress/bills/113/hr2642) 5. NYTimes article on Farm Bill	SA-8 Congress
3/13	Does the President have too much power?	1. Cameron – veto bargaining 2. Going Public 3. Choose 1: WaPo Vetoes, Public opinion, Executive orders, Signing statements (http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/cheney/themes/statements.html)	IP 2
3/15	How does a case get to the Supreme Court and how does it get decided?	1. Scalia and Breyer video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGKgJdW55nc)	SA 9- Supreme Court

	Does the Supreme Court have any power?	(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGKgJdW55nc) 2. Hall, Kermit L. and John J. Patrick. *The Pursuit of Justice* (http://www.annenbergclassroom.org/page/the-pursuit-of-justice). Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics. Read pp. 5-11 and pp. 12-21.	
	Spring Break 3/19-23		
Key Questions in American Politics			
3/27	(How) Does Race matter?	1. Sears et al pgs 1-15 2. Group 1: Housing activity 3. Group 2: Public opinion 4. Group 3: Voting Rights 5. Group 4: Education	SA (Fact Sheets)
3/29	What role does money play in US politics?	1. Big Sky, Big Money (https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/big-sky-big-money/)	
4/3	Are elites polarized?	1. Asymmetric Polarization 2. What we know and don't know about our polarized politics	
4/5	No Class, Prof Matthews at Conference		IP 3
4/10	Is the public polarized?	1. David Brooks – One Nation Slightly Divisible 2. Look how far we've come apart – NY Times	
4/12	Is inequality a problem?	1. Wealth and inequality in CQ Researcher 2. Inequality is not inevitable	
Game of Politics Simulation			
4/17	Game of Politics	Read and prepare for your role	
4/19	Game of Politics		
4/24	Game of Politics		
4/26	Game of Politics		
5/1	Game of Politics		
5/3	Game of Politics		
5/8	Game of Politics		
Wrap Up			
5/10	What changes should be made to the Constitution?	1. Toobin 2. Levinson 3. Time Article	IP 4
FINALS	tbd		

Important Matters

Email

Email is a quick and effective form of communication. I have several rules for our email correspondence to create reasonable expectations, maximum efficiency and positive interactions. I will do my best to write concise emails that are easy to read and to use as a reference. Please read my emails carefully as they will only contain information that is relevant, useful, and important.

For your part, you are welcome to email me, but email me wisely. Crafting professional emails can be difficult, these two articles nicely explain what I expect from you: **Re: Your Recent Email to Your Professor** (https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay?utm_content=buffer0f31d&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=IHEbuffer) and **How to Email Your Professor (without being annoying AF)** (https://medium.com/@lportwoodstacer/how-to-email-your-professor-without-being-annoying-af-cf64ae0e4087). If you don't want to read the articles, I encourage you to follow four guidelines. First, remember that I am your professor when you email me—address me by title and last name (Dr. Matthews or Professor Matthews; all emails sent to "Mrs. Matthews" will be forwarded to my mother), write in complete sentences, and keep your requests clear and concise. Second, make sure that your question cannot be answered by the syllabus, by asking a classmate, or by using the university's resources. For example, questions about why your computer cannot access Canvas might be better addressed by the resources on campus. A question about finding an article or book might be better addressed by a librarian. Third, consider whether your request is reasonable and appropriate. For example, asking me for a recommendation is reasonable and appropriate. Asking me to print your paper before class is not. Fourth, it has been my experience that students sometimes write an email with an expectation of an immediate response (i.e., an hour or two before an exam or a class when an assignment is due). While I will do my best to respond to such requests, particularly in the event of an emergency situation, please plan so as to allow at least two business days for an email response.

Grade Disputes

If you wish to dispute a grade, you may do so before the last day of this class by submitting a written statement (1-2 pages, hard copy) with the original paper to me explaining why the grade should be changed. You must refer to the course readings and assignment objectives when considering discussing why your grade should be changed. This written statement will be followed by a half hour personal meeting. I retain the right when re-grading an assignment to raise or lower your grade. After the last class period for this course, grade disputes will not be accepted. In addition, you should check your grades frequently on Canvas to make sure that they have been correctly recorded. While I do my best to ensure that no mistakes are made, there are occasionally times where I err in keying in a grade. Please let me know if this is the case as soon as possible and bring me the written assignment to demonstrate that the grade was incorrectly entered on Canvas. You must, however, do this one week after the grades have been posted.

One final note on grades: If you have a grade target (i.e., you need a B in order to stay in your sorority or sports team, etc), it would be best to come and discuss strategies for earning that grade early in the semester. Often, I find that students come to me at the end of the semester after grades are turned in and there is nothing I can or will do at that time to raise your grade.

Academic Integrity and Honesty

Academic integrity is honest, truthful, and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. Academic Dishonesty Cheating, plagiarism, and any form of academic dishonesty in any portion of the academic work for a course will not be tolerated and shall be grounds for awarding a grade of Withdrawal Academic Dishonesty (W(AD)) for the entire course. A W(AD) is calculated as an F in your grade point average. The University Policies can be found in the **Miami University Student Handbook Part I, Chapter 5** (http://blogs.miamioh.edu/miamipolicies/?page_id=2028). You might also look at **FAQs** (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1inl3BIeHvMYI-fQjDSy2duuYa1GnNjNEdkGlmc12Mrg/pub) about integrity.

Disability Services Academic Accommodations

I welcome requests and am willing to work with students who may need some academic accommodations due to a disability. If you are a student with a disability and feel that you may need a reasonable accommodation to fulfill the essential requirements of the course that are listed in this syllabus, you are strongly encouraged to contact Student Disability Services (SDS) at 513-529-1541 (V/TTY) to discuss accommodations and available support resources. Also, you may wish to refer to the University's **Office of Disability Resources** (http://miamioh.edu/student-life/sds/) or to the **Office of Equity & Equal Opportunity** (http://miamioh.edu/oeeo/).

Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can start with the University's **short guide** (http://miamioh.edu/campus-safety/sexual-assault/happens-to-you/index.html) on what to do if you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, the **Resource Guide** (http://miamioh.edu/campus-safety/sexual-assault/resource-guide/index.html) for sexual assault, and you can read about **how to report sexual assault** (http://miamioh.edu/campus-safety/sexual-assault/reporting/index.html). Miami's Deputy Title IX Coordinator for

Student Sexual Assault and Harassment is Ms. Rebecca Getson. You can contact the Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Student Sexual Assault by phone at 529-1870 or by email at **getsonra@miamioh.edu** (mailto:getsonra@miamioh.edu) . For a full description of support services, see **Title IX Protocol** (http://miamioh.edu/campus-safety/sexual-assault/protocol/index.html) and the **Office of Equity & Equal Opportunity** (http://miamioh.edu/oeeo/) .

Please note that as a faculty member, I am a mandated reporter, meaning that I am obligated to report any information I become aware of regarding alleged acts of sexual discrimination, including sexual violence and dating violence. For confidential support, you can contact Nora McVey by email at **nmcvey@womenhelpingwomen.org** (mailto:nmcvey@womenhelpingwomen.org) or call or text 513-431-1111 or contact Women Helping Women's 24-hour crisis hotline by phone at 513-381-5610.

Turn It In

You agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Terms and Conditions of Use posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Writing Center

The **Howe Writing Center (HWC)** (http://miamioh.edu/hcwe/hwc/index.html) recognizes that all writers have more to learn and supports Miami students and alumni in this process. Thus, I encourage you to schedule an appointment for academic, personal, and professional writing at any stage in your writing process—whether you are brainstorming ideas, revising first drafts, or polishing final drafts. The HWC offers appointments on the Oxford campus and online. For more information, please watch this short **Introduction to the HWC video** (http://miamioh.edu/hcwe/hwc/about/welcome-video/index.html) and visit the **HWC website** (http://miamioh.edu/hcwe/hwc/index.html) .

Course Summary:

Date	Details	
Thu Feb 1, 2018	SA 1-Constitution (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/633347)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Feb 6, 2018	SA 2-Issues (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/661682)	due by 8:30am
Thu Feb 8, 2018	SA 3-Political Culture (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/661684)	due by 8:30am
Tue Feb 13, 2018	SA 4-Practice Civics Test (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/661685)	due by 8:30am
Sun Feb 18, 2018	Quiz 1: Founding Principles (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/681885)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Feb 20, 2018	SA 5-Representation (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/661698)	due by 8:30am
Fri Feb 23, 2018	IP 1 Policies (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/661794)	due by 5pm
Sun Feb 25, 2018	IP 1 Policies (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/661794) (5 students)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Feb 27, 2018	SA 6-Public Opinion Polls (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/684820)	due by 11:59pm
Thu Mar 1, 2018	SA 7-Media (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/684821)	due by 8:30am
Thu Mar 8, 2018	SA 8-Congress (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/690922)	due by 8:30am
Sun Mar 11, 2018	Quiz 2: The Role of the Public in American Politics (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/691988)	due by 11:59pm
Tue Mar 13, 2018	IP 2 Public (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/684894)	due by 8:30am
	IP 2 Public (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/684894) (1 student)	due by 11:30am
	IP 2 Public (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/684894) (1 student)	due by 11:59pm

Date	Details	
Thu Mar 15, 2018	SA 9-Supreme Court (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/693861)	due by 8:30am
	SA 9-Supreme Court (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/693861) (1 student)	due by 10:30am
Thu Apr 5, 2018	IP 3 Institutions (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/684895)	due by 12pm
Thu May 10, 2018	IP 4 Participate (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/684899)	due by 8:30am
	Game of Politics Final Impression (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/634511)	due by 5pm
	Attendance (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/632076)	
	Final Exam (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/632077)	
	Game of Politics Attendance and Participation (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/634510)	
	Quiz 3: Institutions (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/696637)	
	Roll Call Attendance (https://miamioh.instructure.com/courses/64312/assignments/670654)	