

POSC 150-011: Introduction to American Politics

Monday/Wednesday/Friday 10.10–11.00
Kirkbride Hall 204

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Office hours:
Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 11.10–12.10

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Office hours:
Wednesday, 12.00-2.00

What will I get out of this course?

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of American politics. We will examine the constitutional framework of government, the preferences and behavior of citizens, the structure of political institutions, and the intermediary organizations that connect the public with its leaders. After successfully completing the course, you will have a basic understanding of American politics and the skills to think critically about why government produces the policy outcomes it does.

What do I need for this course?

- Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, 7th Brief Edition. [referred to as “KTR” from here on]
- Access to the course website on Canvas (<http://www.udel.edu/canvas/>), where all grades and course information are posted. We will use the Announcements tool to contact the entire class; you must make sure you are signed up for notifications by going to Account > Settings > Notifications > Course Activities and setting “Announcement” to “ASAP”.
- An i>clicker, which you must register on Canvas and bring to every class. It is your responsibility to bring your clicker to every class and to ensure that it is working correctly. If you are having difficulties with your clicker, see here: <http://sites.udel.edu/ats-student-response/faqs-for-students-iclicker/>

How can I succeed in this course?

There are three things you can do to make sure you get the most out of our class. First, you need to attend all of the lectures. Our discussions will go beyond the assigned readings and will help clarify particularly difficult concepts. Missing class will leave you underprepared for the exams and assignments. It will also, obviously, hurt your score on the in-class quizzes we do.

Second, you need to make sure you are well-prepared and ready to learn at each lecture. At a minimum, this means you need to do the assigned reading for each lecture before class starts. But you must also help create an environment conducive to learning for the entire class. You must be on time to class, turn off your cell phone, and refrain from talking during lecture.

Finally, if you are having difficulties with the course material, come [talk to us](#) in office hours or via email. We can work together to try and solve any problems. As general advice, you may want to read this useful article, "How to Email a Professor": <http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor>

How will my work be assessed?

Your overall grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

4 exams	18% each
4 short assignments	18% total
In-class quizzes	10% total

The due dates for the exams and short assignments are **highlighted** in the course schedule and you should make good note of them now.

We will use clickers for the in-class quizzes. Responses will not be graded since the aim is to practice for exams, assess how well the class is learning, and get a sense of your opinions. You will receive two points for each question answered (i.e., if there is a correct answer but you select an incorrect one, you still receive the points).

Occasionally, clickers unexpectedly malfunction. To ensure no one is unfairly penalized for these random errors, everyone's two lowest quiz scores will be dropped from their total score at the end of the class. It is still your responsibility to bring your clicker to every class and to ensure it is working correctly. This policy simply stops any last-minute emergencies from hurting your score.

Final letter grades will be assigned according to the following standard cutoff points:

A	93	B+	87	C+	77	D+	67
A-	90	B	83	C	73	D	63
		B-	80	C-	70	D-	60

What if I have to miss a class?

If you must miss a class, you need to:

- (1) Contact us before that class begins to let us know of your absence.
- (2) Contact the Dean's Office of your College (for Arts and Sciences, see here: <http://www.cas.udel.edu/uas/Pages/default.aspx>) to document the reason for your absence. They will then send a letter of verification to all your professors, saving you the need to discuss it with every instructor.

Any clicker quizzes you miss due to an excused absence will be dropped from your final score. Please note that deadline extensions and make-up exams are only given in extremely serious extenuating circumstances (and with an excused absence), and only if all arrangements are made before the due date.

Do not ask us for slides or notes. You should borrow the notes from a classmate, thoroughly do the reading for that class, and come see us in office hours to clarify anything that remains unclear.

Academic honesty

I have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty. You should familiarize yourself with UD's student Code of Conduct, available at: www.udel.edu/stuguide/16-17/code.html. Without exception, any academic dishonesty will automatically result in a failing grade for the entire course and an official referral to the Office of Student Conduct.

Students with disabilities

Students with disabilities are welcome in this class. If you think that you may need an accommodation, please contact the Disability Support Service (DSS) office as soon as possible and we will work with them to meet your needs. See: www.udel.edu/DSS

Course schedule

The schedule for this course is not set in stone. There may be some changes, but you can expect these will be announced in class and on the course website with adequate notice.

For topics which will have multiple lectures, the readings should be completed before the first lecture unless otherwise noted. For example, we will discuss political systems over two sessions – on Feb. 8th and 10th. You should read all of Chapter 1 of KTR before class on the 8th.

M Feb. 6 Introduction to the course

PART ONE: THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

W Feb. 8 Political Systems KTR, Ch 1
F Feb. 10

M Feb. 13 The Constitution KTR, Chs 2 & 3 [read Ch 2 for Feb. 13 and
W Feb. 15 Ch 3 for Feb. 17]
F Feb. 17

M Feb. 20 The Bill of Rights KTR, Chs 4 & 5 and Amendments I-X of the
W Feb. 22 Constitution, reprinted in KTR pA16–A17
F Feb. 24

Short assignment #1 due Wednesday, Feb. 24th

M Feb. 27 Exam #1

PART TWO: THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

W	Mar. 1	Public Opinion	KTR, Ch 10
F	Mar. 3		
M	Mar. 6		
W	Mar. 8	Political Participation	KTR, Ch 12, p379–391
F	Mar. 10		
M	Mar. 13	Voting and Elections	KTR, Ch 12, p392–417
W	Mar. 15		
F	Mar. 17		
Short assignment #2 due Friday, Mar. 17th			
M	Mar. 20	The Media	KTR, Ch 13
W	Mar. 22		
F	Mar. 24	Exam #2	

PART THREE: GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

M	Apr. 3	Congress	KTR, Ch 6 and Article I of the Constitution, reprinted in KTR pA10–A13
W	Apr. 5		
F	Apr. 7		
M	Apr. 10	The Presidency	KTR, Ch 7 and Article II of the Constitution, reprinted in KTR pA13–A14
W	Apr. 12		
F	Apr. 14	The Bureaucracy	KTR, Ch 8
Short assignment #3 due Monday, Apr. 17th			
M	Apr. 17	The Courts	KTR, Ch 9 and Article III of the Constitution, reprinted in KTR pA14-A15
W	Apr. 19		
F	Apr. 21		
M	Apr. 24	Exam #3	

PART FOUR: INTERMEDIARIES AND OUTCOMES

W	Apr. 26	Political Parties	KTR, Ch 11, p341-361
F	Apr. 28		
M	May 1		
W	May 3	Interest Groups	KTR, Ch 11, p361-378
F	May 5		
M	May 8	Political Outcomes	TBA
W	May 10		
F	May 12		
Short assignment #4 due Friday, May. 12th			
M	May 15	Exam #4	