

POSC 150-010: Introduction to American Politics

Spring 2021

Instructor

Professor Phil Jones
pejones@udel.edu
www.pejones.org

Teaching Assistants

Daniel Abankwa dabankwa@udel.edu	Discussion sections 021D (Fr 9.05-9.55am) and 024D (Fr 10.10-11.00am)
Chibuzo Achinivu chibz@udel.edu	Discussion sections 020D (Fr 9.05-9.55am) and 023D (Fr 10.10-11.00am)
Susan Weaver smweaver@udel.edu	Discussion sections 022D (Fr 9.05-9.55am) and 025D (Fr 10.10-11.00am)

What will I get out of this course?

This course introduces students to the fundamentals of how American politics works. We will focus on three main areas: (1) how the Constitution sets up the “rules of the game” that citizens and government officials have to follow; (2) what kinds of input the American public gives to our democratic system; and (3) how government institutions like Congress, the President, and the courts make policy in response. Throughout, we’ll be focusing on what democracy is and how it works in this country. After successfully completing the course, you will have a better understanding of politics, the skills to think critically about why government produces the policy outcomes it does, and — we hope! — a greater interest in learning more about American politics in the future.

How will the course be structured?

The material is split into three parts as described above, with a corresponding exam at the end of each part. Within each part, a new module will drop every week, which will include:

- Reading assignments
- Video mini-lectures for you to watch at your own pace
- A quiz based on the assigned reading and mini-lectures
- A short assignment, which you will complete and then discuss in
- Your weekly discussion section

I hope that this balances enough structure to keep everyone on track (including us!) with some flexibility within each week to give you control of your own schedule.

What do I need for this course?

- Christine Barbour and Gerald C. Wright, *Keeping the Republic: Power and Citizenship in American Politics*, 8th Brief Edition [referred to as “KTR” from here on]. There are lots of editions, make sure you get the right one (ISBN: 9781544316215). The eBook is accessible directly from within the Canvas site.

How will my work be assessed?

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

- Three exams (20% each), one for each part of the course. These will be open-book/open-note exams that test your understanding of the material for that part of the course. They will be in short-answer format. There will be a time limit, but you can take the exam at any point during the week it is available (see course schedule below).
- Canvas quizzes (15% total) that you will complete each week. Your lowest score will be automatically dropped at the end of the semester. These are due by Sunday at 11.59pm.
- Short assignments (15% total) that you will discuss in section each week. Your lowest score will be automatically dropped at the end of the semester. These are due by Thursday at 11.59pm.
- Section participation (10% total). Discussing the material each week with your TA and your classmates is the best way to be sure you have understood it fully. You will be graded on the quality (not just the quantity!) of your participation in section each week.

Final letter grades for the course 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

Late work policy: One of the challenges of online courses is keeping on track with the material. The assignments have due dates to help keep you accountable. We will still accept late assignments, but these are subject to a 10% deduction for each calendar day they are overdue (beginning on the day they are due).

Re-grading policy: We use rubrics and clearly defined assignments to make grading fair across the entire class. If, however, you think there has been an error in grading one of your assignments, you should do the following: (1) Wait 24 hours until after the grade was returned. (2) Submit an email to Prof. Jones and your TA explaining clearly what you see as the error. Prof. Jones will re-grade your assignment and let you know your new grade. Note well that your score could go down as well as up as a result of this re-grading.

Extra credit: You should not expect any opportunities for extra credit in the course. If anything changes on that front I will email the whole class with information.

Teaching and learning during a pandemic

Although it is tempting to pretend that this is a normal class in a normal semester, we all know that's not true. I am fully committed to making sure that you can get whatever you were hoping to get from this class. I think the most important thing we can do to facilitate that is to be open and honest with one another. If you are experiencing challenges of any kind preventing you from learning, reach out straight away. I *promise* I never think any less of students or penalize them for asking for help. I am good at finding solutions to problems, and am happy to help. But to do that I need to know that there is a problem, so make sure to keep lines of communication open.

On the flip side, I hope that you will also cut me and your classmates some slack too. We are all trying to do our best in a pretty unpredictable situation. I'll do the same thing I expect you to: if I have to make changes to the course, or can't meet some deadline I promised, I will let you know. Basically, let's be kind to one another and try to make our time together a pleasant one.

Course policies

- Absences. I am committed to being flexible and making sure that you can complete the course to the best of your ability. Some absences are going to be inevitable this semester. I ask that you be pro-active and contact me and your TA ASAP. You do not need to have an official excuse, nor do you need to go into detail about the reasons for your absence: just let us know so that we can help.
- Communication with instructors. The best way to contact me is via email, which I check during normal business hours (M-F, 9-5). You can usually expect a response within one business day. You may want to read [this general advice](#) about email; to be clear, I prefer to be addressed by undergraduates as either Prof. Jones or Dr. Jones.
- Student hours. These are times in my schedule that I have set aside to help you with the course material. You should make use of them! [Please schedule a meeting here](#). We can talk either via Zoom or via phone; you will be given details when you confirm the meeting.
- Academic honesty. Although this is an online course, the University's policies on academic integrity still apply. To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, to re-submit the same assignment for different classes, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance.
- Intellectual property and course materials. All of the materials posted to the Canvas page for this course are for personal use only. Personal use is defined as use by an individual student for the purpose of studying or completing course assignments. Sharing and distribution of the course materials is in violation of the copyright.

Course schedule

The schedule for this course is not set in stone, but here's the plan. You can expect that any changes will be announced via Canvas with adequate notice.

PART ONE: THE POLITICAL FRAMEWORK

Date	Module	Reading assignment
Week 1 (Feb. 15–21)	Political Systems	KTR Ch 1
Week 2 (Feb. 22–28)	The Constitution	KTR Ch 2 and the Declaration of Independence
Week 3 (Mar. 1–7)	The Bill of Rights: Civil Liberties	KTR Ch 4 and the Bill of Rights
Week 4 (Mar. 8–14)	The Bill of Rights: Civil Rights	KTR Ch 5
Week 5 (Mar. 15–22)	Exam #1 to be completed by Sunday at 11.59pm	

PART TWO: THE AMERICAN PUBLIC

Date	Module	Reading assignment
Week 6 (Mar. 22–28)	Public Opinion	KTR Ch 10
Week 7 (Mar. 29–Apr. 4)	Voting and Elections	KTR Ch 12
Week 8 (Apr. 5–11)	The Media	KTR Ch 13
Week 9 (Apr. 12–18)	Exam #2 to be completed by Sunday at 11.59pm	

PART THREE: INSTITUTIONS AND INTERMEDIARIES

Date	Module	Reading assignment
Week 10 (Apr. 19–25)	Congress	KTR Ch 6 and Article I of the Constitution

Week 11 (Apr. 26–May 2)	The Presidency	KTR Ch 7 and Article II of the Constitution
Week 12 (May 3–9)	The Courts	KTR Ch 9 and Article III of the Constitution
Week 13 (May 10–16)	Parties and Interest Groups	KTR Ch 11
Week 14 (May 17–23)	Exam #3 to be completed by Sunday at 11.59pm	

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

ACADEMIC HONESTY

I have zero tolerance for academic dishonesty of any kind. Please familiarize yourself with [UD's policies in this regard](#). To falsify the results of one's research, to steal the words or ideas of another, to cheat on an assignment, to re-submit the same assignment for different classes, or to allow or assist another to commit these acts corrupts the educational process. Students are expected to do their own work and neither give nor receive unauthorized assistance.

DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

If, at any time during this course, I happen to be made aware that a student may have been the victim of sexual misconduct (including sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic/dating violence, or stalking), I am obligated to inform the university's Title IX Coordinator. The university needs to know information about such incidents in order to offer resources to victims and to ensure a safe campus environment for everyone. The Title IX Coordinator will decide if the incident should be examined further. If such a situation is disclosed to me in class, in a paper assignment, or in office hours, I promise to protect your privacy — I will not disclose the incident to anyone but the Title IX Coordinator. More information on sexual misconduct policies, where to get help, and how to report information, is [available online](#). UD provides 24-hour crisis assistance and victim advocacy and counseling. Contact 302-831-1001, UD Helpline 24/7/365, to get in touch with a sexual offense support advocate.

HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION

The University of Delaware works to promote an academic and work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including harassment. As a member of the community, your rights, resources and responsibilities are reflected in the [non-discrimination and sexual misconduct policies](#).

The University of Delaware does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, genetic information, marital status, disability, religion, age, veteran status or any other characteristic protected by applicable law in its employment, educational programs and activities, admissions policies, and scholarship and loan programs as required by Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable statutes and University policies. The University of Delaware also prohibits unlawful harassment including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

You can report any concerns to the University's Office of Equity & Inclusion, at 305 Hulihan Hall, (302) 831-8063 or you can report anonymously through UD Police (302) 831-2222 or the EthicsPoint Compliance Hotline at www1.udel.edu/compliance. You can also report any violation of UD policy on harassment, discrimination, or abuse of any person [online here](#).

INCLUSION OF DIVERSE LEARNING NEEDS

Any student who thinks they may need an accommodation based on a disability should contact the [Office of Disability Support Services](#) (DSS) office as soon as possible. The DSS office is located at 240 Academy Street, Alison Hall Suite 130, Phone: 302-831-4643. We will work together to find accommodations for you that ensure you can get the most out of the class as possible.