Current Issues in American Government  
Political Science 2000; Spring 2017  
Monday/Wednesday/Friday 1:10 – 2:00 PM  
EN 2102

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Office Hours: MWF 12-1

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Course Overview

Current [kur-uh nt] adjective
1. passing in time; belonging to the time actually passing: the current month.  
2. prevalent; customary: the current practice.  
3. popular; in vogue: current fashions.  
4. new; present; most recent: the current issue of a publication.  
5. publicly reported or known: a rumor that is current.  
6. passing from one to another; circulating, as a coin.

Event [ih-vent] noun
1. something that happens or is regarded as happening; an occurrence, especially one of some importance.  
2. the outcome, issue, or result of anything: The venture had no successful event.  
3. something that occurs in a certain place during a particular interval of time.

This class is about current events in American politics – what’s happening in our nation’s political landscape in our day and age. While some events are truly new developments, others are contemporary additions to long-running political disputes. This course will both empower students to connect the past to our shared present and encourage students to perceive those dynamics that are truly new as such.

Texts

The following are required texts for this course:


Additionally, supplemental readings will be announced from time to time. For your convenience, these readings will be available in electronic format, through WyoCourses.

Students are expected to purchase the textbook and to remain current with all assigned readings listed in the Course Schedule (below). Current events are the focus of this class. Thus students
should keep abreast of what is happening in American politics through reading a daily newspaper, watching television news, etc. Class discussion is required (see below). Please feel free to raise questions concerning the readings or current events. However, the instructor reserves the right to restrict in-class discussions if necessary to meet course objectives.

**Grading**

Grades for this course will be based on three criteria:

1. **Presentations**
   a. Each student will participate in four (4) group presentations over the course of the semester.
   b. Each presentation will be worth 75 points toward the overall course grade.
      i. A presentation rubric will be posted online and discussed in class prior to the commencement of presentations
   c. Groups
      i. Groups will consist of 2 - 4 students.
      ii. Groups will be formed by online student sign-up through WyoCourses.
   d. Presentation topics will be relevant to the course topic of the week.
      i. See tentative course schedule, below
   e. Content
      i. Presentations will relate course concepts of the week to material the student group has found outside the assigned readings.
      ii. Presentations will include visual aids. (e.g. slides, video, etc.)
      iii. Presentations will include an audience participation component.
   f. Deadlines
      i. Each student *must* participate in *one* presentation during *each* of the four presentation periods
      ii. Presentation periods and their associated weeks
         1. Presentation 1 – Weeks 3, 4, and 5
         2. Presentation 2 – Weeks 6, 7, and 9
         3. Presentation 3 – Weeks 10, 11, and 12
         4. Presentation 4 – Weeks 13, 14, and 15
      iii. Failure to participate in a presentation during any of the four presentation periods will result in a grade of zero (0) for the associated assignment

2. **Final Examination:**
   a. A comprehensive final examinations, is worth 50 points.
b. The final exam will be offered on Wednesday, May 10

c. Examination procedures

i. Requests for make-up exams must be made in writing (via email) within seven calendar days of the scheduled examination date. The written request must include the reason for missing the examination and your student identification number.

ii. Requests for make-up exams will be denied unless a valid reason is presented. Examples of valid excuses for taking an exam at an alternative time include illness, death in the family, and participation in a university-sponsored activity. Other excuses will be considered as well. Documentation for the excuse may be required. Other excuses will be considered as well but will be approved at the instructor’s discretion. Documentation for the excuse may be required.

iii. University regulations concerning academic dishonesty will be strictly enforced.

3. Attendance:

Attendance will be taken each class period. Attendance is worth 50 points.

Grading at a Glance

Final grades for the course will be based on the total number of points earned on the four presentations (4 x 75 points), a final exam (50 points), and attendance (50 points):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Sub-total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Course Point Total 400 pts.

Course grades are calculated relative to the following scale:

360 to 400 points = A
320 to 359 points = B
280 to 319 points = C
240 to 279 points = D
0 to 239 points = F

Academic Dishonesty

1. University regulations concerning academic dishonesty (UW Regulation 6-802) will be strictly enforced. (http://www.uwyo.edu/generalcounsel/_files/docs/uw-reg-6-802.pdf)
2. Any and all suspicions of academic dishonesty shall be investigated in accordance with UW Regulation 6-802.
3. Evidence of academic dishonesty will result in the recommended sanction of a failing grade for the course, in accordance with UW Regulation 6-802 6.A.vi

Reasonable Accommodation

It is University of Wyoming policy to accommodate students, faculty, staff, and visitors with disabilities. If you have a physical, learning, sensory, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please let me know as soon as possible. You will need to register with University Disability Support Services (UDSS) in the Student Educational Opportunity offices, Room 330 Knight Hall, and provide UDSS with documentation of your disability.”

Words of Advice

If you find yourself having difficulty identifying the important points from the readings or following lectures, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class. Do not wait until the day of an examination or the end of the semester to tell me that you are having trouble. By then it is too late. The time to adjust your study habits is in mid-semester, not the last week of classes.

There is a strong correlation between attending class regularly and receiving a high grade in the course. Students are therefore urged to attend lecture on a regular basis. Exams are designed to draw from the readings and lectures, and students are expected to be familiar with all class material. If you miss a class, I suggest that you obtain notes from a classmate and/or discuss the lecture with me. I will be happy to discuss missed lectures but I do not permit students to copy my notes.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1 (1/23 - 27) Fundamentals

- Monday - Introductions
- Wednesday
- 1.1 John Locke, from The Second Treatise of Government
- 1.2 Mancur Olson, Jr., from The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups

- Friday
- 1.3 Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons”
- 1.4 D. Roderick Kiewiet and Mathew McCubbins, from The Logic of Delegation

**Week 2 (1/30 – 2/3) The Constitution and the Founding**

- Monday
  - 2.1 James Madison, The Federalist, No. 10
  - 2.2 James Madison, The Federalist, No. 51

- Wednesday
  - 2.3 Brutus, The Antifederalist, No. 1
  - 2.4 Robert A. Dahl, from How Democratic Is the American Constitution?

- Friday – Demo presentations

**Week 3 (2/6-10) Federalism**

- Monday
  - 3.1 James Madison, The Federalist, No. 39
  - 3.2 William H. Riker, from Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance

- Wednesday
  - 3.3 ARIZONA VS. UNITED STATES (2012)

- Friday - Presentations

**Week 4 (2/13-17) Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

- Monday
  - 4.1 MICHAEL DAWSON, FROM NOT IN OUR LIFETIMES: THE FUTURE OF BLACK POLITICS
  - 4.2 Brown v. Board of Education (1954)

- Wednesday
  - 4.4 ANDREW KOPPELMAN, FROM SAME SEX, DIFFERENT STATES: WHEN SAME SEX MARRIAGES CROSS STATE LINES
  - 4.5 UNITED STATES VS. WINDSOR (2013) AND SCALIA’S DISSERT

- Friday - Presentations

**Week 5 (2/20-24) Congress**

- Monday
  - 5.1 David Mayhew, from Congress: The Electoral Connection
Week 6 (2/27-3/3) The Presidency

- Monday
  - 6.1 Richard E. Neustadt, from Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan
  - 6.2 Charles M. Cameron, “Bargaining and Presidential Power”
  - 6.3 Brandice Canes-Wrone, from Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public
- Wednesday
  - 6.4 William G. Howell, from Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action
  - 6.5 Samuel Kernell, from Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership
- Friday – Presentations

Week 7 (3/6-10) The Bureaucracy

- Monday
  - 7.1 James Q. Wilson, from Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It
  - 7.2 Mathew D. Mccubbins and Thomas Schwartz, “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms”
- Wednesday
  - 7.3 Daniel Carpenter, from The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy
  - 7.4 SEAN GAILMARD AND JOHN PATTY, FROM LEARNING WHILE GOVERNING: EXPERTISE AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH
- Friday - Presentations

Week 8 (3/13-17) Spring Break

Week 9 (3/20-24) The Judiciary

- Monday
8.1 Gerald N. Rosenberg, from The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring about Social Change?
8.2 Marbury v. Madison (1801)
8.3 Lawrence v. Texas (2003)
* Wednesday
  8.4 NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESS V. SEBELIUS (2012)
  8.5 GREG STOHR, “GRUTTER V. BOLLINGER: AN ARGUMENT FOR THE AGES”
* Friday - Presentations

**Week 10 (3/27-31) Public Opinion**

* Monday
  9.1 Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. Mccubbins, from The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?
  9.2 John R. Zaller, from The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion
* Wednesday
  9.3 DONALD KINDER AND CINDY KAM, FROM US AGAINST THEM: ETHNOCENTRIC FOUNDATIONS OF AMERICAN OPINION
* Friday - Presentations

**Week 11 (4/3-7) Participation**

* Monday
  10.1 Steven Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, from Mobilization, Participation, and American Democracy
  10.2 JANELLE WONG, S. KARTHICK RAMAKRISHNAN, TAEKU LEE, AND JANE JUNN, FROM ASIAN AMERICAN POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: EMERGING CONSTITUENTS AND THEIR POLITICAL IDENTITIES
* Wednesday
  10.3 Robert D. Putnam, from Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community
  Selection from The Social Fabric (a follow-up to Bowling Alone)
* Friday - Presentations

**Week 12 (4/10-14) Interest Groups**

* Monday
• 11.1 MARTIN GILENS, FROM AFFLUENCE AND INFLUENCE: ECONOMIC INEQUALITY AND POLITICAL POWER IN AMERICA
  • Wednesday
    ○ 11.2 Ken Kollman, from Outside Lobbying: Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies
  • Friday - Presentations

Week 13 (4/17-21) Political Parties

• Monday
  ○ 12.1 JOHN ALDRICH, FROM WHY PARTIES? A SECOND LOOK
  ○ 12.2 Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, from The American Voter
• Wednesday
  ○ 12.3 MARTY COHEN, DAVID KAROL, HANS NOEL, AND JOHN ZALLER, FROM THE PARTY DECIDES: PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATIONS BEFORE AND AFTER REFORM
  • Friday - Presentations

Week 14 (4/24-28) Elections

• Monday
  ○ 13.1 JOHN KOZA, BARRY FADEM, MARK GRUESKIN, MICHAEL S. MANDELL, ROBERT RICHIE, AND JOSEPH S. ZIMMERMAN, FROM EVERY VOTE EQUAL: A STATE-BASED PLAN FOR ELECTING THE PRESIDENT BY POPULAR VOTE
• Wednesday
  ○ 13.3 Nolan Mccarthy, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, from Polarized America
  ○ 13.4 SHELBY COUNTY, ALABAMA VS. HOLDER (2013)
  • Friday - Presentations

Week 15 (5/1-5) The Media

• Monday
  ○ 14.1 Matthew A. Baum, from Soft News Goes to War: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy in the New Media Age
• Wednesday
  ○ 14.2 MARISA ABRAJANO, FROM CAMPAIGNING TO THE NEW AMERICAN ELECTORATE: ADVERTISING TO LATINO VOTERS
• Friday
- Presentations