

POL SCI 104-401
Introduction to American Government and Politics

Spring 2022

Mon & Wed 9:30AM – 10:30AM
Architecture & Urban Planning Bldg. #170

Professor Hong Min Park

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00PM – 2:30PM

Course Description

This course is an introduction to American Politics. However, it will go beyond a simple survey of the civics, law, and history of the American political system. First, our focus will be on the *scientific* understanding of politics. We will examine how various agents and institutions inside and outside governments interact with each other. More specifically, we will emphasize goal-directed behavior on the part of political agents, who operate within an institutional setting and an historical context. Second, our ultimate goal is to have *liberal education*. By engaging live discussions and debates with each other, students can develop strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. The topics that we will intensively discuss include: (1) Constitution; (2) federalism; (3) individual rights and liberties; (4) Congress; (5) the presidency; (6) bureaucracy; (7) courts; (8) public opinion; (9) voting behavior; and (10) interest groups.

Prerequisites

No specific pre-requisite course except for high-school civic education.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. understand how the “collective-action” frameworks explain American Politics; for instance,
 - a. Why was the Constitution constructed as it was?
 - b. How do the President, Congress, bureaucratic agencies, and Supreme Court interact among one another?
2. analyze historical transformation of our democracy; for instance,
 - a. How have state, local, and federal governing authorities interacted and coexisted?
 - b. How have individual rights and liberties been protected and guaranteed?
 - c. How do our federal governments, including Congress, the presidency, and the Supreme Court, evolve over time?
3. describe how our “representative” democracy works; for instance,
 - a. How does each branch of our representative government work?
 - b. Does the public provide clear signals to elected politicians?
 - c. How do citizens arrive at their vote choices?
 - d. How representative our federal governments are in reality?
4. lastly but most importantly, express their opinion on various reform issues by participating in the class debates.

This course fulfills the Social Science General Education Requirement (GER) through its focus on:

- the study of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and/or socio-cultural factors associated with individual behavior, collective action, or societal development; and

- the study of human collectivities, organizations, institutions, and cultures, their infrastructures, and interrelationships.

This 3-credit course meets for 2 hours of lecture and 1 hour of discussion section per week during the semester. Students are expected to set aside a minimum of 6 hours each week studying the material and working on assignments to achieve the learning goals of the course.

Required Texts and Materials

A required textbook is available at the UWM bookstore:

- Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson. 2021. ***Debating Reform: Conflicting Perspectives on How to Fix the American Political System***. 4th edition. CQ Press.

And, strongly recommended textbook is also available via E-book:

- Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle and Stephen Ansolabehere. 2020. ***American Government: Power and Purpose***. 16th edition. W.W. Norton (earlier editions are also okay). <https://wwnorton.com/books/9780393538946>

This course will have a site on the **Canvas** system (<https://uwm.edu/canvas/>). The site will be used to share course materials including, but not limited to, lecture notes (with blanks)—***make sure that you print them in advance and bring them to the class***. While no special computer skills are required, students can get technical help via UWM Help Desk (414-229-4040, help@uwm.edu).

In addition, it is strongly recommended that students regularly read national as well as local newspapers. *New York Times* and *Washington Post* are two excellent sources of news on politics and government.

Course Requirements and Grading

The final course grade will be based upon five parts:

- 1) **Online Quiz** (20%): There are 12 regular quizzes that aim to help understanding of the course materials. Students can choose to discard 2 worst-performed quizzes. As such, each quiz is worth 2% of the final course grade.
- 2) **Midterm Exam** (25%): The exam will be taken in class on March 16th, Wednesday, at 9:30AM. It will consist of multiple-choice, T/F, “definition,” and some short-answer questions.
- 3) **Final Exam** (25%): The exam will be taken in class during the university-wide final exam period (May 16th, Monday, at 10:00AM). It will be cumulative, and consist of multiple-choice, T/F, “definition,” and some short-answer questions.
- 4) **Public Debates** (30%): Graduate Teaching Assistant will run **Discussion Sections** (DIS 601-605). Students will debate with each other on a given topic from the required textbook. This portion of grade is determined primarily by GTA, with advice of Professor Park.
- 5) **Class Attendance**: In normal times, class attendance would be critically important for an introductory class. However, due to Covid-19, I will be flexible on this. As such, class attendance will be considered to be bonus up to 5%.

Students who take this course under the Pass/Fail option must receive a grade of C or better in order to obtain a Pass on their final grade. A final grade of “incomplete” will only be given under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of Professor Park.

As a general rule, make-ups for exams will not be given. Students who miss exams because of scheduled activities of an official University student organization, a religious holiday, or a verifiable illness should contact Professor Park *in advance* of missing an exam so that alternative arrangements can be made.

If there is a dispute regarding a grade, re-grading is possible under two conditions:

- We will have a “cooling” period of at least TWO business days. Any complaints or disputes will NOT be considered in this period.
- Then, all complaints must be *typed* and must clearly express specific concerns. These written statements must be accompanied by citations of support from course materials, i.e. readings, textbooks, and/or lecture notes, in order to ensure accuracy.

Classroom Policies

All students are expected to behave professionally in this class. Professor Park is intolerant of disruptive behavior in the classroom, including talking during lectures, reading newspapers, and especially the ringing of cell phones or pagers. Laptops may be used to take notes in class, but not for playing games, checking emails, or surfing the internet. Students engaging in disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom in order to preserve the learning environment for other students. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of others’ opinions. Please do not intimidate, patronize, or ridicule anyone else during the course of classroom activities.

No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. UWM has detailed its policies on academic integrity (<https://uwm.edu/deanofstudents/conduct/academic-misconduct/>). You should acquaint yourself with policies concerning cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and academic interference. Any submission of work in this course constitutes a certificate that the work complies with university policies on academic integrity.

Any student with disabilities of any kind (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact Professor Park and the Accessibility Resource Center (<https://uwm.edu/arc/>, Mitchell 112, archelp@uwm.edu, 414-229-6287) at the beginning of the course.

In addition, students can refer to <https://uwm.edu/secu/syllabus-links/> for more detailed information on university-wide policies.

Instructor Availability

If students would like to meet with Professor Park, feel free to utilize the office hours (Bolton 666, Wednesdays 1:00pm-2:30pm). If you are unable to attend office hours, contact me via email to arrange an appointment. In addition, due to Covid-19, virtual meeting is also available via Teams or Zoom.

Email is a convenient way to continue contact between professor and students outside of class. Students should take advantage of this opportunity but should also do so in a professional manner. Please refer to the document, *Email Etiquette* (uploaded to Canvas and distributed manually on the first meeting), to understand how to write a professional email.

Covid-19 Statement

Professor Park understands that Covid-19 can affect people in various ways. We can protect ourselves only when we follow appropriate procedures recommended by specialists—let’s make sure that we are all familiar with essential information on Covid-19 (for example, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>). In addition, UWM closely monitors Covid-19 situations around the campus, so students should also regularly check <https://uwm.edu/coronavirus/students/>.

Whenever students are negatively affected by Covid-19 or related issues, please contact Professor Park immediately so that alternative arrangements can be made in a timely manner. Professor Park will work hard on this but cannot always guarantee that all the requests be accommodated, in order to be fair to all the students in class.

Tentative Schedule

Below is a tentative schedule, and Professor Park reserves the rights to alter the reading assignments and test dates in a timely fashion according to the progress of the class. **Power** indicates Lowi et. al. (2020) textbook. And, **Debating** indicates Ellies and Nelson (2021) textbook.

1. Schedule for Lectures

- Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30AM – 10:30AM

Topic	Scheduled Date	Readings
Introduction	1/24	
Principles in American politics	1/26	Power 1
Constitution	1/31, 2/2	Power 2
Federalism	2/7, 9	Power 3
Civil rights and liberties	2/14, 16, 21	Power 4
Congress	2/23, 28	Power 5
Presidency	3/2, 7	Power 6
Review for Midterm	3/9	
Midterm Exam	3/16 Wednesday	
Bureaucracy	3/28, 30	Power 7
Judiciary	4/4, 6	Power 8
Public opinion	4/11, 13	Power 9
Elections	4/18, 20, 25, 27	Power 10
Political parties	5/2, 4	Power 11
Interest groups & News media	5/9	Power 12
Review for Final	5/11	
Final Exam	5/16 Monday at 10:00AM	

2. Schedule for Debates

- Meeting time varies depending on your enrolled section (DIS 601-605).
- Schedule is subject to change by your own GTA.

Topic	Scheduled Date	Readings
Introduction	Week starting 1/24	
Debate 1 – Constitution	Week starting 1/31	Debating 1
Debate 2 – Federalism	Week starting 2/7	Debating 3
Debate 3 – Civil rights and liberties	Week starting 2/14	Debating 4
Debate 4 – Congress I	Week starting 2/21	Debating 11
Debate 5 – Congress II	Week starting 2/28	Debating 14
Debate 6 – Redistricting	Week starting 3/7	Debating 12
No Debate (due to exam)	Week starting 3/14	
Debate 7 – Presidency	Week starting 3/28	Debating 15
Debate 8 – Judiciary	Week starting 4/4	Debating 18
Debate 9 – Elections I	Week starting 4/11	Debating 7
Debate 10 – Elections II	Week starting 4/18	Debating 8
Debate 11 – Political parties	Week starting 4/25	Debating 9
Debate 12 – Interest groups	Week starting 5/2	Debating 10
Wrap-up	Week starting 5/9	