

## **PSCI 1101-100: Introduction to American Politics & Government**

Instructor: Dr. Janet Donovan

Tuesday & Thursday 9:30-10:20, MUEN E050

Office hours Monday 1-2 & Tuesday 11-12, Ketchum 219

janet.donavan@colorado.edu

**This syllabus may be amended- students will be notified if amendments are made.**

**Course Description:** This course provides an introduction to the U.S. system of government and politics, and to political science research on American politics. We will emphasize interrelations among levels and branches of government, formal and informal institutions, processes, and political behavior. This semester, we will also focus on how each individual can affect the political process, and the importance of information and media literacy in a representative democracy. Each student will choose a political issue to follow throughout the semester for a semester project, learning how the U.S. political system addresses the issue in government, elections, extra-governmental institutions and media. This course meets MAPS requirement for social science: general or U.S. history and is approved for the old arts and sciences core curriculum: contemporary societies or United States context. Please see your advisor for additional information on how this course meets graduation requirements.

The class is designed so that by completing the readings and preparing for class, attending lecture regularly, attending and participating in weekly recitations, and completing the course assignments and exams, students are able to achieve the course objectives. It is therefore important that students are engaged in all of these aspects of the course in order to be successful.

### **Course Objectives:**

1. Foster an understanding of the U.S. political system enabling students to operate as fully-participating citizens and providing foundation for additional political science coursework.
2. Learn about the changes in the U.S. political system over time.
3. Evaluate the current status of the U.S. political system and identify areas for improvement.
4. Examine the importance of information and information literacy in the functioning of a representative democracy
5. Provide an opportunity for students to gain an in-depth understanding of an issue of individual importance through the semester project.
6. Improve writing, researching and critical thinking skills through the semester project.

### **Required Texts:**

Bianco, William T and David T Canon. 2018. *American Politics Today*, full 6th edition. Norton. ISBN 9780393679878.

Canon, David T, et al. 2013. *The Enduring Debate*, 8th edition. Norton. ISBN 9780393283655.

*Follow U.S. political news daily. Additional readings as assigned, to be made available through Canvas.*

**Grade Basis:**

## Exams:

Midterm 1	20 points
Midterm 2	20 points
Final	20 points

## Semester Project:

Project Assignments	12 points
Paper	15 points

Recitation Attend & Participate	13 points
---------------------------------	-----------

---

Total:	100 points
--------	------------

**Grading Scale:**

98-100	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
73-77	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
< 59	F

**What to Expect:** The good news and the bad news is that this is a rigorous course. As a 3 credit hour course, students should expect to spend 6-9 hours per week reading the course text, taking notes, completing assignments and studying, in addition to lecture meetings and recitations, for a total of 9-12 hours per week commitment to the course. The class follows a set schedule, which is outlined in the course schedule. All graded work must be completed on schedule. Please note the three exams and the semester paper are all required to receive a passing grade in the course.

**Requirements:**

**Exams:** There are 3 exams in this class, 2 midterms and a final. The dates for these exams can be found in the course schedule. Each exam will consist of 30 multiple choice questions and 5 term identifications. The midterms will be conducted in class, and the final exam will be in the regular class room during the assigned final exam slot. Make-up exams are permitted only in cases of documented medical or family emergency, or participation in a university sanctioned activity. Prof. Donovan must be informed in advance, if physically possible of such an emergency. All make-ups are at Prof. Donovan's discretion and will be in a different format than the original exam. Each exam is valued at 20 points each. Students must take all 3 exams to receive a passing grade in the course. Students must be on time for exams- no student will be permitted to begin an exam once any student has turned in a completed exam. Students are not permitted to leave during exams unless the exam is completed and submitted. More information will be provided near exam time.

**Project Assignments:** Each student will choose a political issue of interest to follow throughout the semester. Students will complete 3 project assignments. The purpose of the assignments is to assist students in learning about their chosen issue. Project assignments must be turned in by the designated dates. Late assignments will receive a substantial grade reduction, and assignments more than 1 week late will not be accepted. The assignments are designed to prepare students for the project paper. If completed properly, students should not need to do any additional research beyond the project assignments to gather information for the project paper. Each assignment is worth 4 points, for a total of 12 points of the final grade. More information on choosing a topic will be provided with the first project assignment in recitation.

**Project Paper:** Each student will choose a political issue of to follow throughout the semester, turning in 3 project assignments, and use the research from the project assignments to complete the paper. The project paper is due on the designated date and must be submitted on Canvas. Papers should be 5-6 pages typed, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, in a 10-12 point standard font. Paper length does not include titles or title pages, bibliography, graphs, pictures, or other non-text materials. Deviations from this length will receive a deduction. The paper is worth 15 points of the final grade and is required to receive a passing grade in the course. Extensions are given only in cases of documented medical or family emergency and are at the instructor's discretion. Late papers will receive a 1 point deduction per day. More information on the project paper will be provided later in the semester in recitation.

**Recitation Attendance and Participation:** Attendance and participation in recitation are valued at 13 points, or 13% of the final grade. This is approximately 1 point per week. Students may miss 2 recitation periods without excuse or penalty, after that, 1 point will be deducted per day missed. We will not ask for or accept documentation of illness or absence directly from students. Please save the allowed absences in case of illness or other needs. For students with medical or personal issues that require additional absences, please see the disability and accommodation policy below for additional information, and please acquire documentation from the appropriate university office. For absence due to university sanctioned activities or military service, please provide the documentation as soon as possible to the recitation teaching assistant. For absences due to religious observances, please see the religious observances policy below and speak directly to the course instructor; we are happy to make accommodation for religious observances. Absences from recitation documented by the university through appropriate procedures will be excused. In these cases, the value of participation will be deducted from the denominator of the student's grade. For example, if a student has university-provided documentation to miss two weeks of recitation, the final recitation attendance and participation grade will be calculated out of a total of 11 instead of 13, and the student's final grade in the course will be calculated out of a total of 98 points instead of 100. For more information, please ask your TA or the instructor. In general, it is important to be in recitation. Original material is covered in recitation, and this is the opportunity to engage in discussion and ask questions in a smaller classroom setting.

Students are expected to participate. Participation is credited at the recitation teaching assistant's discretion, but in general, students should participate meaningfully at least once per week for full credit for participation over the semester, and participate fully in any group activities that occur in recitation. A student who has perfect attendance, but does not participate fully in the recitation, can expect a B grade for attendance and participation.

Please be sure to attend the recitation that you are registered to attend. Most of the recitation sections are full. If you need to change recitations within the first two weeks of class, please see the instructor (Dr. Donavan) directly.

### **Course Policies:**

**Course communications:** Email is the official mode of communication for the University of Colorado at Boulder. Students are required to regularly check their @colorado.edu email (at least every 48 hours) for updates regarding the course. Students are responsible for receiving any messages sent by the instructor to the class email list, or individually to the student. In addition, students are responsible for checking the Canvas site for the course regularly.

**Contacting the TA or Instructor:** Please feel free to contact us with questions about the course. Please contact your TA first for most concerns. If you feel that your questions are not addressed by the TA, or that it is more appropriate to come to the instructor first, please feel free to do so. The best ways to reach me are to come by office hours, or to email. I always answer email within 48 hours, so if you do not receive a reply, that means I did not get your email and you should try to contact me again. For any complicated questions, please ask in person. When addressing me, please address me in person or in email as Dr. Donovan or Professor Donovan.

**Course Etiquette:** Students are expected to come to class on time and stay the entire time. If it is necessary to come late or leave early, please let us know in advance. If your schedule does not permit you to be on time and in class on a regular basis, please take another course. Students are expected to be respectful of each other and of the instructor and teaching assistants; lively debate is encouraged, but personal attacks are prohibited. These guidelines should be obvious, and they will help to make the course a more enjoyable experience for all. For more information on University requirements regarding classroom behavior please see <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code).

**Electronic Devices:** Electronic devices, including computers, mobile phones and tablets can be a serious distraction in class. Students are asked to put away phones and switch them to airplane mode or turn them off during class, unless there is an urgent reason to leave the device on silent mode (such as a family member in surgery). Students are asked to turn off notifications and refrain from using the internet during class on computers and tablets. It is tempting to do internet searches to look things up during class, as well as to answer messages that come in. However, we only meet for 50 minutes at a time, and what we do in class and recitation cannot be done outside of that time- the internet will still be there. Please engage in the class without distraction for yourself or others. Students are asked to consider taking notes by hand, which research indicates is a more effective means of learning than typing. Recording of video or audio in class is strictly prohibited absent an accommodation requirement to do so. Students are asked to self-regulate, but if we do have a problem in lecture or recitation, the instructor and TAs reserve the option to prohibit electronic devices if they become too much of a distraction.

University Policies:

#### ACCOMMODATION FOR DISABILITIES

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu) for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

#### CLASSROOM BEHAVIOR

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

#### HONOR CODE

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code ([honor@colorado.edu](mailto:honor@colorado.edu)); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

#### SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND/OR RELATED RETALIATION

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or [cureport@colorado.edu](mailto:cureport@colorado.edu). Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

#### RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, students should contact the instructor directly at least two weeks in advance of the necessary accommodation.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

**Reading Schedule:**

Note: Readings are to be completed BEFORE the lecture or recitation for which they are assigned

Section 1: Foundations of the American Political System

**Week 1 (1/14 & 1/16): Introduction: Introduction to American Politics and Government**

Tuesday: Introduction to the class, syllabus

Thursday: Read chapter 1 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Introduction to recitation

**Week 2 (1/21 & 1/23): The Constitution, Political Culture and the Founding**

Tuesday: Continue chapter 1 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Read chapter 2 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapter 1 in *The Enduring Debate*

**Week 3 (1/28 & 1/30): Federalism & Civil Liberties**

Tuesday: Read *Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, The Constitution and Amendments, and The Federalist Papers* in the Appendix of *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Read chapter 3 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapter 2 in *The Enduring Debate*

**Week 4 (2/4 & 2/6): Federalism & Civil Liberties**

Tuesday: Read chapter 4 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Continue chapter 4 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapter 3 in *The Enduring Debate*

*Project Assignment 1 due Friday at 8pm on Canvas*

**Week 5 (2/11 & 2/13): Civil Liberties & Civil Rights**

Tuesday: Read chapter 5 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Continue chapter 5 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapter 4 in *The Enduring Debate*

**Week 6 (2/18 & 2/20): Drawing Conclusions & Midterm One**

Tuesday: Drawing conclusions about the foundations of the American political system

Thursday: Midterm one in class

Recitation: Preparation and review for midterm one

Section 2: American Politics and Extra-Governmental Institutions

**Week 7 (2/25 & 2/27): Public Opinion & Media**

Tuesday: Read chapter 6 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Read chapter 7 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapter 9 in *The Enduring Debate*

**Week 8 (3/3 & 3/5): Media & Political Parties**

Tuesday: Continue chapter 7 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Read chapter 8 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapter 11 in *The Enduring Debate*

*Project Assignment 2 due Friday at 8pm on Canvas*

**Week 9 (3/10 & 3/12): Elections & Interest Groups**

Tuesday: Read chapter 9 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Read chapter 10 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapters 10 in *The Enduring Debate*

**Week 10 (3/17 & 3/19): Drawing Conclusions & Midterm Two**

Tuesday: Drawing conclusions about American politics and extra-governmental institutions

Thursday: Midterm two in class

Recitation: Read chapter 12 in *The Enduring Debate*, preparation for midterm two

**Spring Break March 23-27, no class meetings or responsibilities this week**

Section 3: American Political Institutions

**Week 11 (3/31 & 4/2): The Legislative Branch**

Tuesday: Read chapter 11 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Continue chapter 11 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapter 5 in *The Enduring Debate*

*Project Assignment 3 due Friday at 8pm on Canvas*

**Week 12 (4/7 & 4/9): The Executive Branch**

Tuesday: Read chapter 12 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Read chapter 13 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapter 6 in *The Enduring Debate*

**Week 13 (4/14 & 4/16): The Judicial Branch**

Tuesday: Read chapter 14 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: **No class meeting**, independent work finishing up project papers

Recitation: Read chapter 8 in *The Enduring Debate*

*Project Papers due Friday at 8pm on Canvas*

Section 4: Public Policy

**Week 14 (4/21 & 4/23): Economic & Social Policy**

Tuesday: Read chapter 15 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday: Read Chapter 16 in *American Politics Today*

Recitation: Read chapters 13 & 14 in *The Enduring Debate*

**Week 15 (4/28 & 4/30): Foreign Policy and The Future of the American Political System**

Tuesday 5/2: Read Chapter 17 in *American Politics Today*

Thursday 5/4: What is the Future of the American Political System?

Recitation: Read chapter 15 in *The Enduring Debate*, preparation for final

**Final Exam Tuesday, May 5, 4:30-5:30**

**(Please note we will not use the whole final exam slot. The final exam is in the same format as the midterms and is designed to be completed in 50 minutes)**