

# PS 40: Introduction to American Politics

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**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesdays 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. Bunche 4258

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The purpose of this course is to designed to introduce students to American institutions, the structure and organization of American government in the United States, and political behavior in the United States. Students are expected to think critically about the structure of US institutions, and how the political system shapes the world in which we live. By the end of this course I hope that you will continue to read and evaluate political events and understand the implications for our institutions and members of U.S. society. We will start class every day by discussing political headlines in the news and together we will place these articles into a broader picture of American politics. It is with this in mind that I **highly** recommend that you read the news every morning be it via Twitter, Facebook, or newspaper subscriptions. An important component to understanding American politics and political behavior in particular, will require having mastered a basic understanding of how to read figures and statistics, which will be emphasized in this course.

## GRADING

Quizzes.....	20%
Midterm.....	25%
Assignment Packet.....	20%
Final Exam.....	30%
Participation.....	5%

## TEXTBOOK

We The People (Eleventh Essentials Edition) by Benjamin Ginsberg, Theodore Lowi, Caroline Tolbert & Margaret Weir. This textbook is available for purchase at the UCLA bookstore or can be bought/rented on Amazon. This textbook is also available in Ebook format for \$35 on Amazon. [https://www.amazon.com/People-Eleventh-Essentials-Benjamin-Ginsberg/dp/039328364X/ref=sr\\_1\\_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1531953066&sr=1-2&keywords=we+the+people+the+essentials+11th+edition](https://www.amazon.com/People-Eleventh-Essentials-Benjamin-Ginsberg/dp/039328364X/ref=sr_1_2?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1531953066&sr=1-2&keywords=we+the+people+the+essentials+11th+edition)

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1 Political Foundation**

- 8/6 Chapter 1 (optional) Chapter 2 (required) Introduction to American Politics, Political Foundation & Constitution
- 8/8 Chapter 3 Federalism

### **Week 2 Congress & Parties**

- 8/13 Chapter 7 Political Parties, Participation, and Elections
- 8/15 Chapter 9 Congress Chapter 8 Interest Groups

### **Week 3 The Presidency & The Courts**

- 8/20 **Midterm**
- 8/23 Chapter 10 The Presidency Chapter 11 The Bureaucracy

### **Week 4 The Federal Courts, Civil Liberties & Civil Rights**

- 8/27 Chapter 4 Civil Rights and Civil Liberties
- 8/29 Chapter 12 The Federal Courts

### **Week 5 Foreign and Domestic Policy**

- 9/3 Labor Day **no class**
- 9/5 Chapter 13 Domestic Policy & Chapter 14 Foreign Policy

## Week 6 Public Opinion

- 9/10 Chapter 5 Public Opinion & Chapter 6 Media
- 9/11 **Final**

## QUIZZES

There will be several unannounced closed book reading quizzes covering the assigned readings for that day. No additional preparation aside from staying on track with the assigned reading, is necessary. Most if not all quizzes will be conducted via <https://create.kahoot.it/1/#>. You do not need to purchase anything to access the clicker program. Please look at the website to understand how Kahoot works and be sure to bring your computer/ ipad/ phone with you to class so that you can participate. We will be testing out Kahoot on the first day of class.

## MIDTERM & FINAL

The midterm and final exams account for 25% and 30% of your grade respectively. These will both be closed note exams. The midterm will be held on Monday August 20th, and the final will be held Wednesday September 11th. Please bring a scantron (882E) and a blue book to both exams.

## ASSIGNMENT PACKET

In lieu of submitting a course paper, students are expected to turn in an assignment packet. Students will be given a number of short assignments to be turned in the last day of class. These assignments will build on the material over the 6 week course. This packet will be handed out at the end of week 3.

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance will be taken every day. While attendance does not count towards your grade, any student missing 4 or more classes will be docked 5% for every class missed, and should

not expect to receive a grade higher than 80%. In addition to being present, it is also important that you are **on time**.

## RULES AND GUIDELINES

- **Late policy.** If you fail to turn an assignment in on time you are welcome to submit it after the deadline. The assignment in question will be marked down 5% for each day it is late.
- **Office Hours.** Office hours will be held in Bunche Room 4258.
- **Emails.** When emailing me, please include your last name and section number (or time) in the subject line of your email. Emails should start with a greeting and my name, have at least one body paragraph, a closing, and your signature. Below is an example of proper email format.

**subject line: “Garcetti Ps 40 set up an appointment”**

Hi Angie,

I was wondering if it would be possible to set up an appointment to discuss the course material. Are you available anytime Monday morning between 8:00 am and 10:30am?

Thanks,

Eric Garcetti

I will do my best to respond within 24 hours to your emails, however on the weekend it may take up to 48 hours. Please note that emails should not ask for a summary of concepts covered in class, or if I could read your paper before you turn it in. I would be happy to discuss material and ideas with you during office hours.

- **Electronics.** You are welcome to use your laptops in class so long as they do not serve as a distraction. This means **no Facebook, iChat, Gchat, Twitter, ESPN, etc.** Allowing the use of computers is meant for note taking and to reference previous notes. If it becomes a problem I will ask you to put your computers away. I also ask

that you place your phones away and on silent during class time in order to minimize disruptions.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

Your work should consist of your own ideas and your own words. Quotations and ideas used from other authors must be properly cited. If you are unfamiliar with the University's policy on academic dishonesty and associated penalties, see <http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu>. Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean.

## FINAL REMARKS

I cannot stress enough the importance of communicating with me should problems arise during the quarter. It is better to be proactive about situations than wait until it is too late to come up with a solution.