

# Poli 10: Introduction to American Politics

Summer Session II 2017

**Instructor:** Brandon Merrell, [bmerrell@ucsd.edu](mailto:bmerrell@ucsd.edu)  
**Lectures:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:00pm–7:50pm in CSB 004  
**Office Hours:** Mondays 3:30–4:45pm (and by appointment) in SSB 341  
**Online Content:** <http://TritonEd.ucsd.edu>  
**TA:** Skyler Roth, [seroth@ucsd.edu](mailto:seroth@ucsd.edu) (TA office hours by appointment only)

**Description:** This course provides an overview of the political system in the United States, an introduction to the institutions and behaviors studied by political scientists, and examples of modern social science approaches to inquiry. Your objective is to acquire the knowledge and skills that are necessary to understand and analyze political interactions. By the end of the term, you will be expected to:

- understand the origins and functions of American political institutions;
- make sense of the behaviors of voters, interest groups, and elected officials; and
- interpret and assess many of the theories and empirical contributions of political science.

**Prerequisites:** This is an introductory undergraduate course. No previous work in the subject is necessary. However, students should prepare for the class by developing a working knowledge of current political events and by reading major news stories on a daily basis. I also expect students to participate in discussions as we move between analytic stylization and accounts of contemporary and historic political events. Be prepared to ask and answer questions!

**Textbook:** The following textbook is available through the campus bookstore, is accessible for either purchase or rental online, and is also on reserve at the library. The sixth and seventh editions are acceptable, but take note that specific details and pagination will differ.

- *The Logic of American Politics* (LAP). Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck [8th Edition].

**Rules and Requirements:** The course requirements consist of participation (10%), quizzes (20%), a midterm exam (35%, August 21<sup>st</sup>), and a final exam (35%, September 8<sup>th</sup>). Tests may include identification, short-answer, and essay questions. You must earn a passing grade on both exams to pass the overall course. I use the following grading scale: “A-” = [90-93.3̄), “A” = [93.3̄-96.6̄), “A+” = [96.6̄-100], with other letter grades following similar intervals.

**Quizzes:** At the beginning of each class, students will answer a series of short questions on material from the assigned readings and/or the previous lecture. I will drop your lowest quiz score when calculating your overall grade.

**Academic Dishonesty:** All work must be completed by the individual to whom it is assigned. Students are not permitted to use unauthorized assistance of any kind. Any student who is caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office for administrative sanction.

**Late Assignments and Missed Exams:** Make-up assignments are only offered under valid and documented circumstances. If you know you will miss an exam for a legitimate reason, notify me at least a week in advance. Email is perfectly acceptable. If you cannot contact me in advance, you must do so as soon as possible. I will work with you to resolve reasonable problems, but it is your responsibility to arrange with me to take a makeup exam. All make-up work must be submitted at least 48 hours prior to the grade submission deadline.

**Attendance:** Class attendance is not mandatory but will probably improve your performance on assignments. Information we cover in class either may not be in the readings or may not be in interpretable form. Some material is also easier to learn when you hear someone explain it and/or when you have an opportunity to discuss it with others.

**Grades and Appeals:** You will be graded solely on your academic performance. This includes clarity of thought, knowledge of the material, composition, spelling, and grammar. Students can appeal grades that they believe are incorrect. Grade appeals will consist of a single typed page that identifies the problem and presents a reasoned argument that the grade fits the appeal criteria.

**Disability:** Students who will request accommodations should register with the Office for Students with Disabilities (University Center 202; 858.534.4382) and provide me with documentation outlining appropriate accommodations. I am happy to meet with you during my office hours to discuss your needs.

## **Readings and Course Schedule:**

### ***Part I: Theories of Political Interaction and Political Behavior***

#### **Meeting #1: Introduction and Overview (Monday, August 7<sup>th</sup>)**

- LAP Chapter 1: "The Logic of American Politics"

#### **Meeting #2: Strategic Behavior and Institutional Design (Wednesday, August 9<sup>th</sup>)**

- LAP Chapter 2: "The Constitution"
- LAP Chapter 3: "Federalism"
- Federalist 51 & Federalist 10

#### **Meeting #3: Public Opinion (Monday, August 14<sup>th</sup>)**

- LAP Chapter 10: "Public Opinion"
- LAP Chapter 11: "Voting, Campaigns, and Elections"

#### **Meeting #4: Organized Interests (Wednesday, August 16<sup>th</sup>)**

- LAP Chapter 12: "Political Parties"
- LAP Chapter 13: "Interest Groups"

#### **Meeting #5: Midterm Exam (Monday, August 21<sup>st</sup>)**

***Part II: American Institutions***

**Meeting #6: The Judiciary, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties (Wednesday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>)**

- LAP Chapter 4: "Civil Rights"
- LAP Chapter 5: "Civil Liberties"
- LAP Chapter 9: "The Federal Judiciary"

**Meeting #7: Congress (Monday, August 28<sup>th</sup>)**

- LAP Chapter 6: "Congress"

**Meeting #8: The Executive and the Bureaucracy (Wednesday, August 30<sup>th</sup>)**

- **Guest Lecturer: Skyler Roth**
- LAP Chapter 7: "The Presidency"
- LAP Chapter 8: "The Bureaucracy"

**No Class (Monday, September 4<sup>th</sup>)**

**Meeting #9: The News Media (Wednesday, September 6<sup>th</sup>)**

- LAP Chapter 14: "The News Media"

**Meeting #10: Final Exam (Friday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 7:00-10:00pm)**