

Professor Sarah Cate  
Saint Louis University  
Department of Political Science

POLS 1150  
American Political Systems

Fall 2019

Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 12:00pm – 12:50pm  
Morrissey Hall 400

This class is an introductory survey course of the American Politics subfield in political science. By the end of this course, students should have a familiarity with some of the fundamental debates and works within American political science research. The course is organized around three areas of focus: political institutions, political behavior, and public policy. Throughout all these sections of the course, students will examine major themes such as federalism, democracy, representation and political power by exploring political science literature and using relevant policy issues to highlight the tensions that arise in American politics and governance. We will also critically evaluate how research on American politics is conducted and explore ideas for how it could be improved. The course will develop analytical skills necessary to address important questions about equality and democracy in the U.S. context.

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Office: 124 McGannon Hall

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1:00pm – 4:00pm, or available by appointment.

Learning Objectives

1. To understand the theoretical underpinnings of research focusing on institutions, political behavior and public policy in the United States.
2. Students will acquire conceptual tools and methodologies to analyze and understand their social world. With these tools, they will be able to act in their world more effectively and become forces for positive change. They will become aware of the various methodological approaches used by social scientists.

## Course Requirements:

Readings and Lectures: Students are expected to read the assigned readings for the week prior to class on Monday. Lecture attendance is mandatory—and necessary—for success in the course. Information about tests, changes in reading assignments, etc. may be made during class periods. You are responsible for knowing this information, whether you have attended class or not. A sign-in sheet will be circulated in lecture (or in-class activities and quizzes will be used for attendance).

Current Events: Students are expected to be familiar with current events by reading *The New York Times* or other major outlets like *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, or *BBC News* each day.

Participation: Active participation is a key part of the course, as is weekly attendance. Students are expected to complete the assigned readings before class, bring hard copies of readings to class, and come prepared to discuss the main themes of the readings. Be sure that you can summarize each assigned reading, describe the central questions and provide some critical assessment of the work.

Quizzes/In-class writing: There will be short quizzes or short writing assignments in class once a week. This is a way to help you process the material and be better prepared for the major exams. The quizzes and writing topics will cover material from the readings and/or previous lectures.

Papers: There will be two papers in this course. In the first paper, you will review and critique a debate in American political science research. For the second paper, you will revise the first paper and apply your analysis to a current event.

Midterm exam: The midterm exam will be on Friday October 18<sup>th</sup>, 12:00pm – 12:50pm. It will consist of a combination of multiple-choice questions and short essay questions. More details about the format and content of the exam will be given out as the test date approaches.

Final exam: The final exam will be on Wednesday, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 12:00pm – 1:50pm. The exam will be comprehensive, covering all material presented throughout the semester. It will consist of a combination of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. More details about the format of the exam will be given out as the test date approaches.

### **\*You must complete ALL assignments to pass the course\***

Your grade in the course is broken down as follows:

Participation and attendance: 15%

Quizzes: 15%

Papers: 20%

Midterm exam: 20%

Final exam: 30%

*Grading Scale:*

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	60-70
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	F	below 60
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72		

Classroom requirements: Any use of cell phones is strictly prohibited while class is in session. Turn your cell phone off while in class. Videotaping or tape-recording lectures is not allowed without first getting permission from the professor.

**Use of laptops is not permitted because they are distracting to your classmates and the professor.**

E-mail: If you have a pressing administrative question about the course, contact the professor via e-mail (sarah.cate@usm.edu). If you have substantive questions or comments about the content of the course or American politics more generally, come see the professor during office hours.

Course Materials:

The following book is required reading and is available for purchase at the SLU Bookstore.

Kollman, Ken. 2017. *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*. New York, NY. W.W. Norton Company. ISBN: 978-0393283686

Additional readings available on Blackboard.

*Before outlining the schedule of reading and assignments, the following sections detail important policies and resources provided by the University. Please take the time to carefully read through these paragraphs so you are aware of your rights and resources and so you can notify me of any questions or concerns you might have.*

**Title IX**

Saint Louis University and its faculty are committed to supporting our students and seeking an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have encountered any form of sexual misconduct (e.g. sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, domestic or dating violence), we encourage you to report this to the University. If you speak with a faculty member about an incident of misconduct, that faculty member must notify SLU's Title IX coordinator, Anna R. Kratky (DuBourg Hall, room 36; akratky@slu.edu; 314-977-3886) and share the basic facts of your experience with her. The Title IX coordinator will then be available to assist you in understanding all of your options and in connecting you with all possible resources on and off campus.

If you wish to speak with a confidential source, you may contact the counselors at the University Counseling Center at 314-977-TALK. To view SLU's sexual misconduct policy and for

resources, please visit the following web addresses: [www.slu.edu/here4you](http://www.slu.edu/here4you) and <https://www.slu.edu/general-counsel>.

## **Disability Services**

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations must contact Disability Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Once successfully registered, the student also must notify the course instructor that they wish to access accommodations in the course.

Please contact Disability Services, located within the Student Success Center, at [Disability\\_services@slu.edu](mailto:Disability_services@slu.edu) or 314.977.3484 to schedule an appointment. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about the student's eligibility for academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors via email from Disability Services and viewed within Banner via the instructor's course roster.

Note: Students who do not have a documented disability but who think they may have one are encouraged to contact Disability Services.

## **Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is honest, truthful and responsible conduct in all academic endeavors. The mission of Saint Louis University is "the pursuit of truth for the greater glory of God and for the service of humanity." Accordingly, all acts of falsehood demean and compromise the corporate endeavors of teaching, research, health care, and community service via which SLU embodies its mission. The University strives to prepare students for lives of personal and professional integrity, and therefore regards all breaches of academic integrity as matters of serious concern.

The governing University-level Academic Integrity Policy was adopted in Spring 2015, and can be accessed on the Provost's Office website at: [https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy\\_academic-integrity\\_6-26-2015.pdf](https://www.slu.edu/provost/policies/academic-and-course/policy_academic-integrity_6-26-2015.pdf).

Additionally, each SLU College, School, and Center has adopted its own academic integrity policies, available on their respective websites. All SLU students are expected to know and abide by these policies, which detail definitions of violations, processes for reporting violations, sanctions, and appeals. Please direct questions about any facet of academic integrity to your faculty, the chair of the department of your academic program, or the Dean/Director of the College, School or Center in which your program is housed.

## **Student Success Center**

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. The Student Success Center assists students with academic-related services and is located in the Busch Student Center (Suite, 331). Students can visit

<https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/> to learn more about tutoring services, university writing services, disability services, and academic coaching.

### **University Writing Services**

Students are encouraged to take advantage of University Writing Services in the Student Success Center; getting feedback benefits writers at all skill levels. Trained writing consultants can help with writing projects, multimedia projects, and oral presentations. University Writing Services offers one-on-one consultations that address everything from brainstorming and developing ideas to crafting strong sentences and documenting sources. For more information, visit <https://www.slu.edu/life-at-slu/student-success-center/> or call the Student Success Center at 314-977-3484.

### **Library Resources**

The Librarian for Political Science is Rebecca Hyde. Her office is room 202H of Pius Library. Rebecca provides research assistance with library and other information resources, developing search strategies, finding the right sources for your research project and more. Her can contact her via email ([rebecca.hyde@slu.edu](mailto:rebecca.hyde@slu.edu)) and/or set up an appointment online.

### **Basic Needs Security**

Students in personal or academic distress and/or who may be specifically experiencing challenges such as securing food or difficulty navigating campus resources, and who believe this may affect their performance in the course, are encouraged to contact the Dean of Students Office ([deanofstudents@slu.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@slu.edu) or 314-977-9378) for support. Furthermore, please notify the instructor if you are comfortable in doing so, as this will enable them to assist you with finding the resources you may need.

### **Week 1 (Aug. 26, 28, and 30): *Introduction and the Constitution***

#### Reading:

Robertson, David Brian. *The Original Compromise*. (Blackboard).

### **Week 2 (Sept. 4 and 6): *The Constitution and Federalism***

#### Reading:

Kollman 2.3: Dahl, Robert. "How Democratic is the American Constitution?" (pp. 70-74)

Peterson, Doug (2016, Feb. 23). "Colorado's Marijuana Regime Is an Affront to Federalism and the Rule of Law." *National Review*. (Bb).

Gurman, Sadie and Natalie Andrews. (2018, June 10). "Jeff Sessions Struggles to Get Planned

Marijuana Crackdown Going.” *The Wall Street Journal*. (Bb).

**Week 3 (Sept. 9, 11, and 13): Congress**

Kollman 5.1: Mayhew, David. “The Electoral Connection” (pp. 157-169)

Kollman 12.1: Aldrich, John. “Why Parties? A Second Look” (pp. 525-540)

**Sept. 13 – Handout Paper Assignment**

**Week 4 (Sept. 16, 18, and 20): The Presidency**

Kollman 6.1: Neustadt, Richard. “Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan.” (pp. 215-223)

Skowronek, Stephen. “Presidential Leadership in Political Time.” (Bb).

**Week 5 (Sept. 23, 25, and 27): The Courts**

Kollman 8.1: Rosenberg, Gerald. “The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change.” (pp. 349-355)

Keith Whittington, Benjamin Ginsberg, and Martin Shefter, “Resolved, the Presidential Impeachment Process is Basically Sound,” in Richard J. Ellis and Michael Nelson, eds., *Debating the Presidency: Conflicting Perspectives on the American Executive* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2006), pp. 45-59. (Bb).

**Week 6 (Sept. 30, Oct. 2 and 4): Partisanship and Polarization**

Hetherington, Mark. “Partisanship and Polarization” in Berinsky (Chapter 5). (Bb).

Kollman 12.2: Campbell, Angus et. al. “The American Voter: An Abridgment” (pp. 541-547)

Fiorina, Morris “Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America.” (Bb).

**Oct. 4 – Paper due by 12:00pm**

**Week 7 (Oct. 7, 9, and 11): Public Opinion**

Key, V.O. “The Voice of the People: An Echo” from *The Responsible Electorate*. (Bb).

Kollman 9.2: Zaller, John. “The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion.” (pp. 430-434)

Lippmann, Walter. 1925. “The Phantom Public” Excerpt. (Bb).

**Week 8 (Oct. 14, 16, and 18): Elections**

Kollman, 13.1, Koza, John, et. al. "Every Vote Equal: A State-Based Plan for Electing the President by National Popular Vote." (pp. 561-566)

Kollman 12.4: Kollman, Ken. "Who Drives the Party Bus?" (pp. 558-560)

**Oct. 16 – Review**

**Oct. 18 – Midterm**

**NO CLASS Oct. 21 – Fall Break**

**Week 9 (Oct. 23 and 25): *Interest Groups and Campaign Finance***

Bartels, Larry. "Economic Inequality and Political Representation." Chapter 9 in *Unequal Democracy* 2016. (Bb).

Lafer, Gordon. *The One Percent Solution*. Chapter 1, pp. 1-43. (Bb).

**Week 10 (Oct. 28, 30 and Nov. 1): *The Media***

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. "News that Matters." Chapters 2 – 3. 1987. (Bb).

Prior, Markus. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." (Bb).

Kollman 14.1: Baum, Matthew. "Soft News Goes to War: Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy in the New Media Age." (pp. 613-616).

**Week 11 (Nov. 4, 6, and 8): *American Foreign Policy***

Pious, R.M. (2011). "Prerogative Power in the Obama Administration: Continuity and Change in the War on Terrorism," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 41.2 (June): 263-290. (Bb).

"What Constitutes a 'Just War'?" – NPR Interview of Barack Obama (Bb).

Lee, Barbara. "Why I Opposed the Resolution to Authorize Force," Editorial, *San Francisco Chronicle*. (Bb).

**Nov. 8 – Paper 2 Due by 12:00pm.**

**Week 12 (Nov. 11, 13, and 15): *Political Economy & Social Policy***

Kollman 15.1: Scheve, Kenneth and David Stasavage. "Taxing the Rich: A History of Fiscal Fairness in the United States and Europe." (pp. 629-644)

Kollman 15.2: Mettler, Suzanne. "The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy." (pp. 645-658).

**Week 13 (Nov. 18, 20, and 22): *Social Policy I: Education***

Lafer, Gordon. *The One Percent Solution*. Chapter 4, pp. 127-155. (Bb).

Bill Moyers interview with Diane Ravitch. "Public Schools for Sale?" (Available on Bb, either read transcript or watch the interview).

**Week 14 (Nov. 25): *Social Policy II: Health Care***

Gottschalk, M. "'It's the Health-Care Costs, Stupid!': Ideas, Institutions, and the Politics of Organized Labor and Health Policy in the United States." *Studies in American Political Development*. (Bb).

**NO CLASS Nov. 27-29 – Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 15 (Dec. 2, 4, and 6): *Social Policy III: Mass Incarceration & Recap***

Alexander, M. (2010). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Introduction (pp. 1-19). (Bb).

Gottschalk, M. (2015). "It's Not Just the Drug War." *Jacobin Magazine*. (Bb).

**Week 16 (Dec. 9): *Review***

**Final Exam: Wednesday, Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 12:00pm – 1:50pm.**