This course will begin by analyzing the possible roles government can play in society. We will then examine how voters, elected officials, un-elected officials, and other political actors behave in the political arena. The goal of the course is to help students learn the basic structure of American politics, to understand why political actors behave as they do, and to be able to evaluate the implications of alternative political institutions.

While we will be following the syllabus, the order and timing of readings and exams, IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE! The numbering in the syllabus does not refer to specific days or weeks. Also note that additional readings may be assigned, when they are they will generally be made available electronically.

For many class sessions you will be required to have a web-capable device with you (a laptop or tablet) so that you can participate in class activities.

Your grade will be based on the following:

- First Midterm: 20%
- Second Midterm: 20%
- Three to Five short Papers or Exercises: 20%
- Final Exam: 30%
- Section and Class Participation: 10%

Attendance in class and section is required. We will do exercises in some class sessions. If you miss those, that counts negatively towards your participation grade. The short papers will be exercises or written analyses based on topics we cover in class, and will include applications of theories you have read to current U.S. political events.
**Required Text:**


There are many versions of this book, and two different editions that are both the ‘13th edition’! The version types are: ‘full’, ‘brief’, and ‘core’. Do not get the ‘brief’ version, it omits too much useful information and pagination will vary too much. The ‘full’ edition is preferred. The ‘core’ edition omits just two chapters that we will cover - but you can probably deal with that via reading them at the library, or select pieces online. There is a ‘13th edition, 2014 election update’. That is the most current version of the book. It offers minimal changes over the regular 13th edition, but page numbers and content remain the same. So: if you prefer to buy used books, and find the ‘13th edition, 2014 election update’, you will be totally fine with it and miss nothing And, finally, there is both a hardcover and paperback version of the full edition. [**Hint:** you will probably be able to find the 13th edition that is NOT the ‘2014 election update’ edition readily available on the used market, and you may also find the ‘2014 election update’ used.] And the new editions are available as e-books.

The key thing to note: be sure your edition includes ‘13th’ (NOT 12th or earlier), and that it is ‘full’ or ‘core’ (NOT ‘brief’). So, acceptable books are (with ISBN numbers where I have them):


**Optional Text:**


We will only read chapters 1 thru 3 of this book. And it is available electronically via Bobst.

**Readings Provided Online:**

Readings preceeded by RAP and PPAP will be provided online at the CLASSES course website.

Readings listed in the syllabus not from LGSA or Who Votes Now will be provided online at the CLASSES course website.
Note that the dates below may be updated! Pay attention to announcements in lecture and made via CLASSES. However, in the absence of announced changes - you should follow the reading schedule below.

[9/5 - 9/10] Why We Have Government: We will look at the role of government. And we will look at classical views of government from as far back as Locke and Hobbes, and briefly look at the Marxist critique. You should learn about government’s role in dealing with market failure, in addressing problems of collective action, and in providing public goods, as well as understanding classical arguments justifying the existence and scope of government.

- Reading: LGSA, Chapter 1 “Five Principles of Politics.”
- Reading: “Introduction to Game Theory,” Osborne.
- Reading: RAP, Chapter 1.3. “Tragedy of the Commons,” Hardin.

[9/12 - 9/17] The Making of the Constitution: The institutions of government describe who is authorized to do what government does, and it provides the mechanisms for choosing who wields power. You should learn about factions, as well as the separation of powers.

- Reading: LGSA, Appendix - “Federalist Papers 10 and 51.”
- Reading: LGSA, Chapter 2 - “Constructing a Government: The Founding and the Constitution”
- Reading: United States Constitution (entire document!).

[9/19 - 9/23 - Part 1 of 2] Federalism We consider – briefly – the multiple levels of United States government: there is a national government, and 50 state governments. You should learn what the role of each level of government is, and how they often clash.

- Reading: LGSA, Chapter 3 - “Federalism and the Separation of Powers”
- Reading: PPAP, Chapter 3-3. “Clean-Air Battlefield” [Not in volume 3 of PPAP.]
[9/19 - 9/23 - Part 2 of 2] Civil Liberties and Civil Rights: The US allows citizens many liberties: things the government can not stop them from doing. And it provides citizens with many rights: where the government intervenes in society to protect citizens from discrimination for a host of reasons.

- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 4 - “Civil Liberties”

[9/26 - 9/30 - Part 1 of 2] Civil Liberties and Civil Rights: The US allows citizens many liberties: things the government can not stop them from doing. And it provides citizens with many rights: where the government intervenes in society to protect citizens from discrimination for a host of reasons.

- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 5 - “Civil Rights”

[9/26 - 9/30 - Part 2 of 2] Voter Behavior and Elections: We will cover basic aspects of voter behavior in elections. You should learn about *the median voter theorem*, *the spatial model*, the role of *partisan identification*, and about the impact of the *state of the economy* on elections. We will also discuss why we have elections.

  - **Reading:** Spatial Models of Majority Rule, *Analyzing Politics*, Shepsle, Chapter 5.
  - **Reading:** *Change and Continuity 2012*, Abramson, et-al., chapter 6, “Candidates, Issues, and the Vote”.

[10/4 - Tuesday] More Voter Behavior and Elections

- **Reading:** Spatial Models of Majority Rule, *Analyzing Politics*, Shepsle, Chapter 5.

10/6 - Thursday - MIDTERM 1 - in class

[10/10 - 10/21] United States Elections: We will cover the rules governing presidential elections in the US, and the nature of the campaigns. You should learn about the *two-stage* aspect of the election (primary then general), the *effects of campaigns* on elections, and the *role of money* in presidential elections. You will also learn about the role of money, candidates, and district composition in congressional elections. [That last clause means: you will learn how uncompetitive most House elections are.]

  - **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 11 - “Elections”
  - **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 12 - “Political Parties”

[10/24 - 11/4] Public Opinion: Here we examine what people want from government, what they know, and what and how they think about politics and policies. In isolation, public opinion may not be interesting. But we can not understand how democratic governments function without understanding public opinion. You should learn what people know about politics, and how opinion *varies systematically across people in different age, ethnic, and economic groups.*

  - **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 10 - “Public Opinion”
  - **Reading:** *TBA*, Interpreting Polls and Sampling
[11/7 - 11/11] Congress: We consider the rules of how congress works internally. We also consider how the electoral incentives individual members have affect their behavior and the outputs of the institution, and how Congress interacts with the President to pass laws. You should learn: how a bill becomes a law (it is not easy); and how the preferences of the president and members of congress come together in predictable ways to generate outcomes.

- **Reading:** LGAS, Chapter 6 - “Congress: The First Branch”
- **CASE STUDY:** The Affordable Care Act
- **COMPARISON:** Legislative record of Nixon vs Obama

11/16 - Thursday - MIDTERM - in class

[11/21 - 11/25] Interest Groups and Lobbying We will cover the nature of interest groups in America, how they form, and what they do.

- **Reading:** LGSA, Chapter 13 - “Groups and Interests”

[11/28 - 12/2] The President: We consider what powers the president actually has, and what the president can do to influence policy.

- **Reading:** LGSA, Chapter 7 - “The Presidency as an Institution”

[12/5 - 12/9] The Bureacracy (Executive Branch): Here we study the part of the federal government that does things. This includes all the federal agencies. You should learn what incentives bureaucrats have, and what the legislature can do to ensure that the bureaucracies behave as the legislature intended. You should also understand the ‘standard operating procedure’ of bureaucracies.

- **Reading:** LGSA, Chapter 8 - “The Executive Branch: Bureaucracy in a Democracy”
- **Reading:** RAP, 2nd edition, Chapter 7-2 - “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs Fire Alarms”, McCubbins and Schwartz.
Public Policy: The Outputs of All of This: Politics comes together to produce government outputs. Here we look at domestic social policy and economic policy. You should learn how policy is made in the United States, and learn about the scope of the federal government, and get a sense for where most money is spent in the budget.

- **Reading:** LGSA, Chapter 16 - “Social Policy”
- **Reading:** LGSA, Chapter 15 - “Economic Policy”

FINAL EXAM, Tuesday 12/20 Location TBD