Power and Politics in America
POL-UA 300
Spring 2020
Professor Christopher Dawes

Course Description
This course is an introduction to American political institutions and behavior. The course is made up of four primary components. First, we will discuss the American Constitution, political culture, civil liberties, and civil rights. Second, we will focus on parties, interest groups, campaigns and elections at the national level. In this section we will devote attention to which citizens participate in politics and how they make political choices. Third, we will cover the institutions of American national governance including the Congress, Presidency, judiciary, and bureaucracy. Finally, we will wrap up the course with discussions of reform of the political system. A theme we will continue to come back to throughout all of these components is the existence and importance of political inequality in American politics.

As part of the course, students will be exposed to analytical and empirical tools that political scientists utilize in the study of politics. In addition, we will compare the United States to other countries around the world to highlight how American politics is similar and different.

Course Logistics
Lecture
Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30-1:45pm
Global Center for Academic and Spiritual Life (238 Thompson Street)
Room C95

Contact Information
Phone: 212.998.8533
Email: cdawes@nyu.edu

Office Hours
19 West 4th Street, Room 325
Monday, 2:30-4:30pm
Teaching Assistants
Tine Paulsen (tine.paulsen@nyu.edu)
Michael Becker (mb4959@nyu.edu)
Taylor Mattia (trm354@nyu.edu)

Required Readings
There is one required text book for the course (available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore):
*The Logic of America Politics* (Ninth Edition) by Samuel Kernell, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck [Logic]

I encourage all students to use the website set up for Logic (https://edge.sagepub.com/kernell9e). This site is a particularly good resource for review of course materials.

Additional assigned readings will be made available on NYU Classes [Classes].

Course Grading

*Midterm Exams* (20% each): There will be two in-class written midterm exams comprised of short answer and essay questions. The first exam will be Monday, February 24 (covering the first third of the class) and the second will be held Monday, April 6 (covering the second third of the class).

*Research Assignment* (15%): A short research exercise is due in lecture on Monday, April 27. The topic will distributed in class.

*Final Exam* (30%): The in-class final exam will cover the entire semester with an emphasis on material presented after the second midterm. The date of the exam has not been announced yet.

*Recitation Participation* (10%): The goal of recitation is to help you better understand the topics presented in lecture. Attendance is required and the schedule of required readings for recitation is included at the end of the syllabus.

*Pop Quizzes* (5%): Throughout the semester you will be given a brief quiz to answer at the beginning of class. These quizzes will be based on the reading. You must be present to take and receive credit for the quiz and there are no makeups.

Missing Exams

Students missing either of the two midterm exams or the final exam will be assigned a zero unless a justified excuse is provided (illness or family/personal emergency). Travel plans are not an acceptable excuse. If you know that you must miss an exam (and have a justified excuse), please contact your teaching assistant ahead of time in order to schedule a make-up.
Late Assignments

The research assignment is due at the beginning of lecture on Monday, April 27. A penalty of 1/3 a grade (e.g. B+ to B) will be imposed for each day it is late.

Academic Integrity

All of the work you do in this course must be your own and the penalties for academic dishonesty are severe. I will follow university academic policy for any incident of cheating or plagiarism. For details, see https://cas.nyu.edu/content/nyu-as/cas/academic-integrity.html

Lecture Schedule and Assigned Readings

The best way to prepare for lecture and recitation is to have the readings completed before each lecture.

Introduction and Tools

Course Introduction (Monday 1/27)
Analytical Tools (Wednesday 1/29)
Logic, Chapter 1

The Nationalization of Politics

The Constitution (Monday 2/3)
Logic, Chapter 2
The Articles of Confederation (Logic, Appendix 1)
The Constitution of the United States (Logic, Appendix 3)
Federalist #10 and 51 [Classes]

Federalism (Wednesday 2/5)
Logic, Chapter 3
The Price of Federalism excerpts [Classes]
Devolution Revolution [Classes]

American Political Culture (Monday 2/10)
Logic, Chapter 10 Section “The Content of Public Opinion”
The American Anomaly excerpts [Classes]
Views of a Changing World pages 103 - 117 [Classes]
Trends in American Values: 1987-2012 “Overview” and “Section 1” [Classes]
Civil Liberties & Civil Rights (Wednesday 2/12)
Logic, Chapter 4
Logic, Chapter 5

**President’s Day – No Class (Monday 2/17)**

The Public’s Influence on National Policy
Public Opinion (Wednesday 2/19)
Logic, Chapter 10
*The Democratic Dilemma* excerpts [Classes]

**First Midterm (Monday 2/24)**

Who Votes? (Wednesday 2/26)
Logic, Chapter 11 Section “Who Uses the Right to Vote?”
*Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* excerpts [Classes]
*Who Votes Now?* excerpts [Classes]

Spatial Model of Voting / Economic Voting (Monday 3/2)
*The Gamble* excerpts [Classes]
*Identity Crisis* excerpts [Classes]

Campaigns (Wednesday 3/4)
Logic, Chapter 11 Section “Election Campaigns”
*The Gamble* excerpts [Classes]
*Identity Crisis* excerpts [Classes]
*The Message Matters* excerpts [Classes]

Party Identification (Monday 3/9)
*The American Voter* excerpts [Classes]
*Partisan Hearts and Partisan Minds* excerpts [Classes]
*Political Partisanship as a Social Identity* [Classes]

Polarization (Wednesday 3/11)
*The Polarized Electorate* [Classes]
*Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* excerpts [Classes]
*The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States* [Classes]

**Spring Break (Monday 3/16 and Wednesday 3/18)**

Political Parties as Institutions (Monday 3/23)
Logic, Chapter 12
*Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* excerpts [Classes]
Interest Groups and Lobbying (Wednesday 3/25)
Logic, Chapter 13
*The Logic of Collective Action* excerpts [Classes]

The Role of the Media (Monday 3/30)
Logic, Chapter 14
*Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election* excerpts [Classes]

**Formal Institutions of National Government**

Institutional Design of Congress (Wednesday 4/1)
Logic, Chapter 6
*Congress: The Electoral Connection* excerpts [Classes]
*Electoral Incentives and Partisan Conflict in Congress* excerpts [Classes]

**Second Midterm (Monday 4/6)**

Representation / Legislative Strategy (Wednesday 4/8)
*Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress* excerpts [Classes]
*Setting the Agenda* excerpts [Classes]

The Presidency (Monday 4/13)
Logic, Chapter 7
*The Politics Presidents Make* excerpts [Classes]

The President and Congress (Wednesday 4/15)
*Going Public* excerpts [Classes]
*Pivotal Politics* excerpts [Classes]

The Bureaucracy (Monday 4/20)
Logic, Chapter 8
*The Politics of Presidential Appointments* excerpts [Classes]

The Judiciary (Wednesday 4/22)
Logic, Chapter 9
*The Real World of Constitutional Rights* [Classes]
*Gay Rights* [Classes]
*Impose Your Friendly Hand* [Classes]
Political Inequality, Reform, and Wrap Up

Political Inequality (Monday 4/27)

Unequal Democracy excerpts [Classes]
Affluence & Influence excerpts [Classes]
Winner-Take-All Politics excerpts [Classes]

Prospects for Reform (Wednesday 4/29)

Logic, Chapter 15
The Politics of Reforming Social Security [Classes]
Doom-Loop Partisanship excerpts [Classes]

Biology and Politics? (Monday 5/4)

Predisposed excerpts [Classes]

TBA (Wednesday 5/6)

Wrap Up and Review for Final Exam (Monday 5/11)

**Final Exam (TBA)**
Recitation Schedule and Assigned Readings

(**PRELIMINARY**)  

No Recitation (Week of 1/27)

Models of Cooperation and Defection (Week of 2/3)  
Martin Osbourne, *An Introduction to Game Theory* [Classes]

Federalism and Separation of Powers in a Comparative Context (Week of 2/10)  
*The American Anomaly* excerpts [Classes]

Analyzing Survey Data (Week of 2/17)  
*Analyzing and Interpreting Polls* excerpts [Classes]  
PollingReport.com (http://www.pollingreport.com/index.html) reports

Review For First Midterm (Week of 2/24)

Spatial Model of Voting / Economic Voting (Week of 3/2)  
Handout and Exercise [Classes]  
Extensions to the Economic Voting Model [Classes]

The Power of Partisanship (Week of 3/9)  
*Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines* [Classes]  
*The Politics of Beauty* [Classes]

Spring Break (Week of 3/16)

Polarization in Congress (Week of 3/23)  
*Monkey Cage Series on Polarization* selections [Classes]  
Additional readings TBA
Review For Second Midterm (Week of 3/30)

Help with Research Assignment (Week of 4/6)

Pivotal Politics & Who Controls the Bureaucracy? (Week of 4/13)

*Pivotal Politics* excerpts [Classes]
Additional readings TBA

Prospects for Reform: The Next Four Years (Week of 4/20)

TBA

Political Inequality in a Comparative Context (Week of 4/27)

TBA

Review for Final Exam (Week of 5/4)