



COURSE REQUIREMENTS
P. 2



COURSE SCHEDULE
P.3-4



COURSE POLICIES
P. 5



BU POLICIES AND RESOURCES
P.6



BU HUB LEARNING OUTCOMES
P. 7

PO 111

Intro to American Politics

Professor's Contact Information

Lauren Mattioli*
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Zoom Office Hours: Mondays,
1pm-2pm
Meeting Room [Link](#)
Or by Appointment

Course Meetings

Class will meet from 9am to 12:30 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays via Zoom.

Course Site

All course materials (other than the textbook), grades, and assignment submissions will be made available on the course Blackboard site. Exams will be given using Qualtrics.

*Pronounce the T's like D's. It rhymes with ravioli

In this course we will examine American government and politics. We begin with a study of the Constitution, separation of powers and federalism. The institutions of federal government constitute the second unit of the course: the U.S. Congress, the executive branch, and the courts. We then turn to elections, interests and groups, the media, and political behavior.

Throughout, we will consider how interactions between individuals and institutions shape policy and governance, and how American government has evolved over time. While the course serves as an introduction to American government, it also introduces students to key ideas and theories in political science.

This is a foundational course in political science. It provides an introduction to key concepts in American politics specifically, and to institutions, political behavior, and the policy process more broadly. Completing this course will prepare students for more advanced courses within the department and major.

Course Requirements

Required Materials

There is one required textbook for this course. It is referred to as LGSA in the schedule. All other course readings will be made available on the course blackboard site.

The required textbook is: Lowi, Theodore J., Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. 2018. American Government: Power and Purpose. 15th ed. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company.

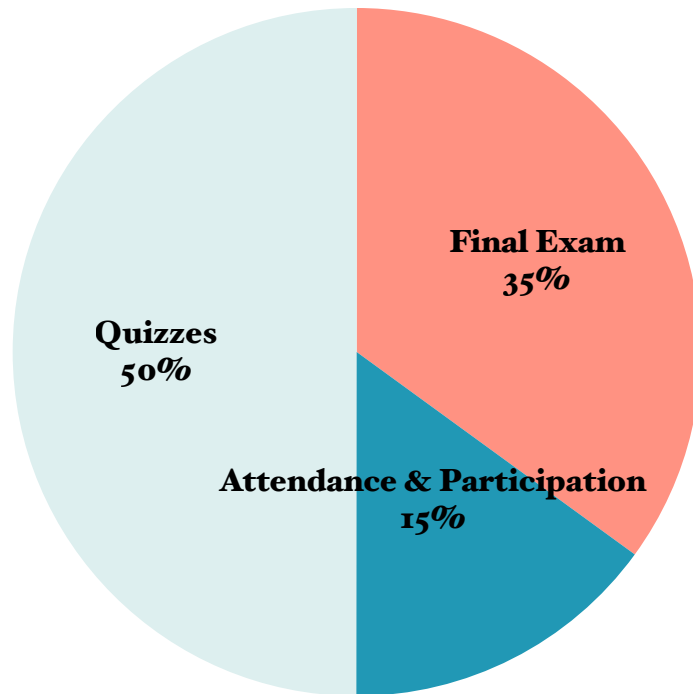
We are using the standard 15th edition. Do not purchase the “core” or “brief” editions.

Students are also required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with a microphone and either a built-in webcam or separate webcam in order to participate in class.

Classes are held remotely, so a reliable internet connection is also essential to participate in the course.

Grading Scale

A 93-100	C 73-76
A- 90-92	C- 70-72
B+ 87-89	D 60-69
B 83-86	F 0-59
B- 80-82	
C+ 77-79	



Attendance and Participation

Attending class and actively participating in class discussion is necessary to succeed in this course. To participate effectively, you will need to complete the course readings ahead of class time. Students get ONE “free” absence that will not impact their grade. There is no need to tell Prof. Mattioli if or when you will be using that absence. If you miss more than one class your attendance grade will suffer.

Quizzes

Five quizzes will assess student comprehension of course materials and the week’s readings. You will have 15 minutes to complete the online, closed note quiz. Quizzes are weighted equally.

Final Exam

The final exam will take place during the final class meeting. It will be open-note and essay based.

Date	Topic	Readings
5/20	Introduction Five Principals of Politics	1. LGSA, Chapter 1 2. Nyhan, Brendan. 2017. "Norms Matter." Politico Magazine. 3. Azari, Julia. 2018. "Forget Norms. Our Democracy Depends On Values." FiveThirtyEight.
5/27	The Founding The Constitution	1. LGSA, Chapter 2 2. LGSA A24-33 3. The Federalist No. 10 4. Centinel I 5. Dahl, How Democratic is the American Constitution? Chapters 1 & 3
5/29 11:59 PM	Deadline	Quiz 1
6/1	Federalism Separation of Powers State Politics	1. LGSA, Chapter 3 2. CCM, Chapter 3 3. McCulloch v. Maryland (1819) Case Summary and Opinion 4. United States v. Lopez (1994) Opinion 5. The Federalist No. 51 6. Miller, Lisa, "The Invisible Black Victim: How American Federalism Perpetuates Racial Inequality in Criminal Justice." 7. 1 U.S. state constitution of your choice
6/3	Congress	1. LGSA, Chapter 6 2. Edmund Burke, Speech to the Electors of Bristol 3. Mayhew, David. Congress: The Electoral Connection 4. Fenno, Richard F., Home Style: House Members in their Districts 5. Klein, Ezra. "The political scientist Donald Trump should read" Vox, January 24 2019.
6/5 11:59 PM	Deadline	Quiz 2
6/8	The Presidency	1. LGSA Chapter 7 2. Cameron, Charles. Veto Bargaining 3. New York Times, Trump's First Year 4. Neustadt, Richard. Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents 5. Howell, William. Power without Persuasion 6. Canes-Wrone, Brandice. Who Leads Whom?
6/10	Foreign Policy Bureaucracy	1. LGSA Chapter 17 & 8 2. Wildavsky "The Two Presidencies" 3. The Atlantic "The Obama Doctrine" 4. Wilson, James Q. Bureaucracy 5. McCubbins and Schwartz "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols and Fire Alarms"
6/12 11:59 PM	Deadline	Quiz 3

Date	Topic	Readings
6/15	Federal Courts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LGSA Chapter 9 2. Marbury v. Madison (1801) 3. Antonin Scalia, "Constitutional Interpretation, the Old-Fashioned way" 4. Stephen Breyer "Our Democratic Constitution" 5. NFIB v. Sebelius (2012) 6. Rosenberg. The Hollow Hope.
6/17	Civil Rights Civil Liberties	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LGSA Chapter 4 & 5 2. The Marshall Project "The Rosa Parks of the Fourth Amendment" 3. Make No Law Podcast: "Fire in a Crowded Theatre" 4. Planned Parenthood v. Casey (1992) 5. District of Columbia v. Heller (2008)
6/19 11:59 PM	Deadline	Quiz 4
6/22	Elections Political Parties	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LGSA Chapter 11 & 12 2. Shelby County, Alabama v Holder (2013) 3. Aldrich, Why Parties? 4. Vox, "Everything Mattered: Lessons from 2016's bizarre presidential election"
6/24	Public opinion Political Behavior	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LGSA Chapter 10 2. Bartels, "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind." 3. Pew Research Center. The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Wider. 4. Campbell et.al The American Voter
6/26 11:59 PM	Deadline	Quiz 5
6/29	Groups and Interests The Media Exam Review	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LGSA Chapter 13 & 14 2. Olson, Mancur. The Logic of Collective Action 3. New York Times. How Fake News Turned a Small Town Upside Down
7/1	Final Exam	

Course Policies

Academic Integrity: I take the Honor Code very seriously. All course materials must comply with the BU Academic Code of Conduct. Suspected violators of the Code will be referred to the Dean's office.

Changes in the Course: Changes may become necessary to accommodate extraordinary circumstances. Students will have at least three days notice for any changes to the reading schedule.

Communication: Course communication will happen in class and by email. Students are expected to check their email every day. Not reading a course email is not a valid excuse for almost anything.

Conduct: Be respectful. Come to class on time. Be awake and pay attention in class. Be courteous to your professor and fellow students. Phone use (texting or talking) during class is not acceptable. You will get one warning. Repeated poor conduct will result in a penalty to your attendance and participation grade.

Extra credit: Extra credit will not be offered under any circumstances.

Grade Disputes: Grade disputes should be timely (within 1 week of the grade being received), lodged via email, and accompanied by a written explanation.

Lecture Content: Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures, are the property of the instructor. Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited. Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person. Electronic devices other than laptops (e.g., cell phones, PDAs, calculators, recording devices) are not to be used during lectures or exams without prior permission of the instructor. Copyright 2020 (Lauren Mattioli, Ph.D.) applies to this syllabus and all lectures. Students shall not sell notes (or receive remuneration for taking notes) during this course to or by any person or commercial entity without the express written permission of the professor teaching this course. My lectures are protected by state common law and federal copyright law. They are my own original expression and I record them at the same time that I deliver them in order to secure protection. Whereas you are authorized to take notes in class thereby creating a derivative work from my lecture, the authorization extends only to making one set of notes for your own personal use and no other use.

Late Work: Late submission of quizzes and the final exam will not be accepted.

Office Hours: Office hours are held remotely (details on page 1) and are a good way to ask questions and communicate difficulties. You do not need an appointment to come to office hours. If none of the scheduled office hours times work for you, send an email to schedule an appointment.

Technology problems: Our class depends on students having regular access to a reliable internet connection, capable of connecting to online lectures/class for three hours, twice a week. This is a requirement of the course. Technological issues will not be accepted as an excuse for failing to meet any course requirement.

BU POLICIES



Disability Services: Students with documented disabilities, including learning disabilities, may be entitled to accommodations intended to ensure that they have integrated and equal access to the academic, social, cultural, and recreational programs the university offers. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to, additional time on tests, staggered homework assignments, note-taking assistance. If you believe you should receive accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services to discuss your situation. This office can give you a letter that you can share with instructors of your classes outlining the accommodations you should receive. The letter will not contain any information about the reason for the accommodations.

Bereavement: In the event of the death of an immediate family member, you should notify your advisor, who will help you coordinate your leave. You will be automatically granted five weekdays of leave, and if necessary, your advisor will help you to petition the Dean for additional leave time. You may also request a leave of absence due to bereavement. Please contact your advisor, who will help you with the process.

Incomplete Grades: An incomplete grade (I) is used only when the student has conferred with the instructor prior to the submission of grades and offered acceptable reasons for the incomplete work. If you wish to take an incomplete in this class, please contact the instructor as soon as possible but certainly before the submission of final grades. To receive an incomplete, you and your instructor must both sign an “Incomplete Grade Report” specifying the terms under which you will complete the class.

<https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/incomplete-coursework/>

Academic Conduct: All Boston University students are expected to maintain high standards of academic honesty and integrity. It is your responsibility to be familiar with the Academic Conduct Code, which describes the ethical standards to which BU students are expected to adhere and students’ rights and responsibilities as members of BU’s learning community. All instances of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct will be addressed in accordance with this policy. Penalties for academic misconduct can range from failing an assignment or course to suspension or expulsion from the university.

<https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/>

BU RESOURCES



Boston University

- Summer programs resources: <https://www.bu.edu/summer/summer-sessions/life-at-bu/campus-resources/>
- BU Behavioral Medicine: <https://www.bu.edu/shs/behavioral-medicine/>
- CAS Advising: <http://www.bu.edu/cas/current-students/undergraduate/casadvising/>
- Dean of Students Resources: <http://www.bu.edu/dos/resources/>
- BU Writing Center: <https://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/the-writing-center/>
- BU ERC: <https://www.bu.edu/erc/>

BU Hub Learning Outcomes

Social inquiry proceeds both theoretically, with the development of concepts and models, and empirically, with the accumulation of evidence. This course introduces students to both approaches. PO III carries social science divisional credit in CAS, and Social Inquiry I credit in the BU Hub.



This course is organized around a set of social scientific principles that we will use to understand political activity. Throughout the course, we use these principles and a set of social science models (the median voter theorem, collective action, and principal agency, among others) to analyze the political behavior of individuals, including citizens, voters, members of Congress, presidents, and judges. We analyze institutions as the intersection of collections of individuals and sets of rules and norms. The principles and models used in this class help us understand the role of the individual, whether a voter

or a senator, within the American political system, and how these roles have evolved over time.

Wherever possible, we use empirical evidence to assess theoretical claims, illuminate differences between competing theories, and understand historical changes over time. Students will learn about how data are collected and analyzed, including public opinion data, election results, and measures of ideology. We will also learn about the limitations of data for answering social science questions, including observability, sample and selection bias, and the challenges of measuring public opinion.