

Government 3: The American Political System

Instructor: David Glick (David.M.Glick@Dartmouth.edu)

Meetings: Tuesday, Thursday 2:00-3:50

Office Hours: Thursdays 10-12, Silsby 121B

Course Description: The course will serve as an introduction to the American political system. We will investigate how the system's different pieces operate to ultimate aggregate preferences and produce public policies. These pieces include public opinion, the media, Congress, the Executive Branch, the Courts, and elections. We will do more than just learn the basics about these elements. We will study how they shape and are shaped by individuals' behavior. The class, like much of the academic study of American Politics, revolves around two key dilemmas and questions. The first is -- are the citizens are informed and active enough to serve as the foundation for effective democratic governance? The second is whether political institutions effectively make public policy given an often disengaged and uninformed public? Related to this second question are issues of how political institutions channel and shape human behavior, goals, and preferences. Finally, this course will not only serve as an introduction to American Politics, but for many of you, an introduction to political and/or social science. You will come across tools and ways of thinking – e.g. collective action, rational choice theory, thinking about causal inference, and measuring complex social phenomena which will help you in future classes in the Government, Economics, Sociology, and other departments.

Readings: Each day on the syllabus includes many shortish readings. Many are very short (one or two page news paper articles for example). Additionally, most of the readings in the class reader (marked **R**) and on Blackboard (**BB**) are only a few pages each. The readings will all be related to the day's topic, but will cover different aspects of it. Part of the challenge for students will be making connections and identifying similarities amongst a large number of readings from different sources and perspectives.

The syllabus comprises three types of readings. The first are chapters from the textbook which provide the basics and which cover a wide range of factual material concisely. The second are political science analyses, usually in condensed form, from books and journal articles. These readings explore particular topics in more detail as the authors make arguments and evaluate hypotheses about different parts of the political system. While these should be pretty approachable, some students may need to practice making sense of some of these readings. The third type of reading is newspaper and magazine articles. Some of these are very similar to

political science analyses aimed at wider audiences while others will provide examples and applications of ideas we encounter in the other readings.

In addition, we will read Michael Lewis' *the Big Short* which tells the story of the recent financial crisis. While it is a non-fiction book, it is also a story and reads like a novel. I will give you the weekend after the midterm with this as the only reading, but many of you may want to start it before then and basically read it as a fun book in your free time.

Readings will either be in the Lowi textbook, in the Kollman reader (**R** on the syllabus) or posted on blackboard (**BB** on the syllabus)

The required books for the class are:

Lowi et. al. *American Government, Power and Purpose, Brief Eleventh Edition, WW Norton* (**The Brief edition is a very different book (shorter and less expensive) than the full version**)

Ken Kollman, *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives, WW Norton 2010*

Michael Lewis, *The Big Short, WW Norton 2010*

All three books are published by W.W. Norton and will be sold at a substantial discount as a package at the bookstore.

Lectures and Questions Distributed Before Class: Lectures will **not** simply mirror the textbook chapters and walk through all of the basics. In fact, a large part of the reason we will use the textbook is so that we don't have to cover all of the basics in class. You are nevertheless accountable for this material even when the textbook is the only place you come across it. There will of course be some overlap between the text and the lectures, but we will also cover some of the more detailed analyses, arguments, and applications. Some of this material we cover in lecture will go beyond the readings but you are nevertheless accountable for these materials as well.

We will spend some time understanding where some of the conclusions and claims about the system come from and how confident we should be in them. To this end, and to avoid me talking and listening for four hours a week, I will expect you to work through some of these problems in class with me. The class will be small enough that it can be interactive. While not a discussion class, I do expect you to come to class prepared to answer questions, evince understanding, and speak intelligently about the day's materials. Rather than use short reading quizzes, I will freely call on people and expect you to have something to contribute. **To help, I will send out a few questions the night before class to guide your thinking. At a minimum, I will expect you to be able to offer answers to these questions if called upon.** While participation is not part of the grade formula, I will use it to make decisions (up or down) when I need to make close calls at the end of the quarter.

Assignments: There are three types of written assignments. The first are standard exams – a **midterm and a final**. The final will focus on material covered after the midterm. These exams will combine factual material and short essays and analysis. Rather than standard in class “blue book” tests, they will be closed book, take home exams in which you are on your honor to keep time and of course keep your books closed.

The second assignment will be a group paper – or rather, a pair of papers. The paper will address the question(s) “Is the American Political System capable of meaningful financial reform?” and b) when we look back on financial reform in a year, what will the policy response teach us about the political system generally?” You will write this paper from the perspective of the spring of 2010 (e.g. before legislation) using Michael Lewis’ *The Big Short* – which you will read during the quarter, as a baseline of information about the crisis and some of the problems that legislation might want to address. You can supplement this with minimal amounts of research while constrained to use information known before congress passed legislation. As a group you will submit a four to five page paper which represents your true views (or the views of a majority of the group) as well as a three to four page paper which essentially argues against your own arguments.

The third assignment will be two write one “Op-Ed” paper which you will write on your own at anytime during the quarter. Professor Carey deserves the credit for this idea and I will provide more information about it separately. In brief, the Op-Ed will be 750 words (no more, this is a strict limit just like it is for a real Op-Ed) which apply course materials to a contemporary issue or question. This issue or question can concern national, local, or even campus politics and policy. You will want to be precise and concise and tell the reader why the issue is important and briefly advance a clear thesis about based in course materials which would also be interesting to the newspaper reading public. You will find examples on the editorial pages of the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post among others and should pay particular attention to writers such as Paul Krugman and David Brooks who often ground their Op-Eds in social scientific thinking, findings, and methods.

The congressional simulation will also factor into the final grade (details to follow). Finally, participation in class, particularly in response to the questions I will send around (see above) will not factor into the weighted average, but can lead to a bump up or down if you are on the margin.

- Midterm Exam 25%
- Final Exam 30%
- Group Paper 25%
- OP Ed 15%
- Congressional Simulation 5%
- Class Participation – Bump up or down if it’s close.

Grades for Written Work and Exams: For written work, the A range will comprise only work which features strikingly original thinking and/or argumentation, expressed in clear, cogent, error-free writing. Only students that go well beyond class materials and discussions (in thought, not extra research) will be considered for an A grade. Papers and examinations in the B range exhibit mastery of the course materials and discussions, expressed in clear, cogent, error-free writing. Papers and examinations in the C range exhibit inadequate understanding of the course materials and discussions and/or deficient, error-plagued writing. Papers and examinations in the D range exhibit wholly inadequate understanding of the course materials combined with deficient, error-plagued writing. Hopefully the D range and worse will not be an issue. Pluses, minuses, or flat grades within any of these ranges reflect the instructor's judgment of the merits of the paper or examination relative to other papers in the same range. All late assignments will be reduced 1/3 of a grade for every day they are late. Students may appeal grades they feel they received in error but I reserve the right to increase or decrease their grade upon reconsideration.

Other Practical Matters:

Email: The most efficient way to reach me is via email which I check frequently throughout the day. No promises, but I'm usually pretty quick. If you write and don't hear back in 24 hours, please write again.

Office Hours: My official office hours are Thursday mornings from 10-12, but I aim to be around and as accessible as possible. Just let me know some times that work for you.

Meetings and Help: I am around a lot and look forward to meeting and getting to know all of you. Do not hesitate to come ask for help with a concept or reading. More importantly, please come by and talk about your major, future plans, sports, activities, campus politics.....

Technology: I'm quite skeptical of laptops in class – and don't allow them in seminars, but I understand that there are benefits to taking notes on them. I will not deprive you. I know I am not disciplined enough to avoid Facebook, G-Chat and fantasy baseball when I have a computer in front of me and I think this is pretty typical. Please resist the temptation. It's also hard to both think and type at the same time. I will use the threat of cold calling (since I will have sent you questions to think about with that expectation) to hopefully focus your computer use and thinking.

X-Hours: At my discretion I may use some of the X-Hours so that we can split the class in half and have better discussions. In this case, we would basically have half the group meet in X-Hour, and have the other half use the second half of class time on a Tuesday or Thursday. We would thus spend an hour less together in lecture on these weeks.

Readings and Schedule

- **June 24 – Introduction**
 - Textbook Chapter 1
 - Greg Marx, “Embrace the Wonk,” *The Columbia Journalism Review*, May/June 2010, http://www.cjr.org/feature/embrace_the_wonk_1.php?page=1 **BB**
 - Christopher Beam, “The Only Politics Article You’ll Ever Have to Read,” *Slate Magazine*, June 4 2010, <http://www.slate.com/id/2256068/> **BB**
- **June 29 – Collective Action and the Founding**
 - Textbook Chapter 2
 - Mancur Olson – *from The Logic of Collective Action*: **R**
 - Garret Hardin – *The Tragedy of the Commons*: **R**
 - The Federalist No. 10 **R**
 - The Federalist No. 15 **R**
 - The Federalist No. 51 **R**
 - Letters from the Federal Farmer No. 2 **R**
 - The U.S. Constitution **Textbook (appendix)**
- **July 1 – Federalism, Separated Powers, and Individual Rights**
 - Textbook Chapter 3 and 4 (skim chapter 4, we’ll revisit it when we discuss the Courts)
 - The Federalist 39 **R**
 - The Federalist 46 **BB**
 - William Riker, *from Federalism, Origin, Operation, Significance* **R**
 - Paul Peterson, “Who Should do What? Divided Responsibility in the Federal System,” *The Brookings Review*, 13(2) 1-6, **BB**
 - *McCullough v. Maryland*, **BB**
 - George Annas, “Jumping Frogs, Endangered Toads, and California’s Medical Marijuana Law,” **BB**
- **July 6th - Political Participation and Opinions**
 - Textbook Chapter 9
 - Robert Putnam, “Tuning In, Tuning Out...”, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1995, **BB**
 - Cliff Zukin, “Sources of Variation in Published Election Polling: A Primer,” 2004, **BB**
 - Steven Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen, *from Mobilization, Participation and American Democracy*, **R**
 - Martin Wattenberg, “Should Election Day be a Holliday,” *Atlantic Monthly*, 10/1/1998 **BB**
- **July 8th Political Behavior, Fundamentals – What do the voters know and who participates?**

- Michael X. Delli Carpini, "In Search of the Informed Citizen: What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters," *Pew Charitable Trusts conference paper*, 1999 **BB**
- Larry Bartels, Homer Gets a Tax Cut, *Perspectives on Politics*, 3 (1): 15–32, 2005, **BB**
- Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. McCubbins, from *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What they Need to Know?* **R**
- **July 13 – Political Parties and Polarization**
 - Textbook Chapter 11
 - Larry Bartels, *Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996*, **BB**
 - John Aldrich, from *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Party Politics in America*, **R**
 - Rick Valelly, *Who Needs Political Parties?* **BB**
 - Morris Fiorina, from Culture War, the Myth of a Polarized America, **BB**
 - David Brooks, "One Nation, Slightly Divisible" *The Atlantic* **BB**
 - Sasha Issenberg, "Boo-boos in Paradise," *Philadelphia Enquirer Magazine* **BB**
- **July 15 – The Media**
 - Dietram Scheufele and David Tewksbury, "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models," **BB**
 - Timothy Groseclose and Jeffrey Milyo, *A Measure of Media Bias*, **R**
 - Shanto Iyengar and Jennifer McGrady, from *Media Politics: A Citizens Guide* **R**
 - Marcus Prior, "News vs. Entertainment, How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout," *The American Journal of Political Science*, Vol 4, No. 3, 2005 **BB**
 - Richard Posner, "Bad News", *The New York Times*, July 31, 2005 **BB**
 - William Powers, "The Massless Media," *the Atlantic*, 2005 **BB**
 - John Harris and Jim VandeHei, "Why Reporters Get it Wrong," Politico, 1/9/2008 **BB**
 - Reread Beam and Marx articles from class one.
- **July 20th Campaigns and Elections**
 - Textbook Chapter 10
 - Samuel Popkin from *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*, **BB**
 - Louis Menand, "The Unpolitical Animal, How Political Science Understands Voters", **BB**
 - Lisa Taddeo, "The Man Who Made Obama", *Esquire Magazine*, <http://www.esquire.com/features/david-plouffe-0309>, **BB**
 - Andrew Gelman and John Sides, "Stories and Stats" **BB**
http://bostonreview.net/BR34.5/gelman_sides.php
 - Andrew Kohut, "Getting it Wrong," *The New York Times*, 1/10/2008 **BB**
 - Guest Blog: Who's to Blame for Inaccurate Election Polls?, Freakonomics **BB**
Blog, 5/9/2007
- **July 21st X - Hour review session**
- **July 22nd or 23rd - EXAM ONE - Two Hour Take Home NO Class**
- **July 27th - The Financial Crisis and Public Policy**

- Michael Lewis, *The Big Short*, 2010 - Whole Book!
 - This reading is substantially longer than normal but I'm willing to bet you would vote to read 250 pages in this book over our normal readings.
 - We will discuss the book in class today and then we will all have the basics of the financial crisis in the background as a shared public policy example for the second half of the course.
 - This will be helpful to you all since you will need to write a paper about this
- **July 29 Congress and Representation**
 - Roderick Kiewiet and Matthew McCubbins, from *The Logic of Delegation*, **R**
 - Edmund Burke, Speech to the Electors of Bristol... **BB**.
 - John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Too Much of a Good Thing: More Representative is Not Necessarily Better*, **BB**
 - David M. Herszenhorn, "Hero to Conservatives Often Follows Centrist Path", *the New York Times*, June 1, 2010
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/02/us/politics/02brown.html>
 - David Mayhew, from *Congress, the Electoral Connection* **R**
 - Richard Fenno, from *Home Style*, **BB**
 - Anthony King, "Running Scared", *the Atlantic Monthly*, **BB**
 - Safe House - *Inclubents Face Worry Free Elections*, **BB**
 - David Price, *The Congressional Experience*, **BB**
- **Aug 3 Congressional Lawmaking**
 - Textbook Chapter 5
 - Christopher Beam, "Meet the New Boss, Same as the Old Boss," *Slate Magazine*, May 13, 2010 **BB**
 - John Ellwood and Eric Patashnik, *In Praise of Pork*, **BB**
 - Gary Cox and Matthew McCubbins, from *Setting the Agenda....* **R**
 - David Rohde, Committees and Policy Formulation, **BB**
- **August 5 The Presidency**
 - Textbook Chapter 6
 - Richard Neustadt, from *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents....* **R**
 - Samuel Kernell, from *Going Public, New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*, **BB**
 - William Howell, from *Power Without Persuasion*, **R**
 - Aaron Wildavsky, "The Two Presidencies," *Transaction*, 1966, **BB**
 - Charlie Savage, "Kagan's Writings Back Wider Executive Powers", *The New York Times*, 5/21/10, **BB**
<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/22/us/politics/22power.html>
 - Noah Feldman, "Who Can Check the President," *the NY Times Magazine*, **BB**
- **August 10 The Bureaucracy**
 - Textbook Chapter 7
 - Matthew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz, "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms," **R**

- David E. Lewis, *The Politics of Presidential Appointments*, 2008, Chapter 6 “Politicization and Performance, the Case of the Federal Emergency Management Agency,” **BB**
- Kara Scannell, “Madoff Chasers Dug For Years to No Avail”, *the Wall Street Journal*, January 5, 2009 **BB**
- David Stout, “Report Details How Madoff’s Web Ensnared S.E.C.,” *The New York Times*, 9/2/2009 **BB**
- **August 12 Interest Groups**
 - Textbook Chapter 12
 - Ken Kollman, *from Outside Lobbying, Public Opinion and Interest Group Strategies*, **R**
 - Bara Viada and Lisa Caruso, Blunt’s K Street Team, **BB**
 - Jonathan Rauch, The Hyperpluralism Trap, **BB**
 - William Greider, Who Will Tell the People **BB**
 - **Beginning of “the Courts”**
 - Lochner v. New York, **BB**
 - Griswald v. Connecticut, **BB**
- **August 17 The Courts – Special Visitor – Justice Hicks, NH Supreme Court**
 - Textbook Chapter 8 (and review Chapter 4)
 - Alexander Bickel *from The Least Dangerous Branch... R*
 - Michael Klarman, “Brown v. Board of Education: Law or Politics?” in Peter Lau, *From the Grassroots to the Supreme Court: Brown v. Board of Education and American Democracy*, 2004, **BB**
 - Lee Epstein and Jeffrey Segal, “Changing Room, The Court’s Dynamics Have a Way of Altering A Justices’ Approach to the Law,” *The Washington Post Weekly Review*, Nov 20, 2005, **BB**
 - Linda Greenhouse, “How Long is Too Long for the Court’s Justices?” *The New York Times*, January 16, 2005 **BB**
- **August 18th and 19th – Policy Making Simulation**
- **August 24th Salvaging Good Policy and Effective Democracy?**
 - John Mueller, “Democracy and Ralph’s Pretty Good Grocery: Elections, Equality, and Minimal Human Being”, *American Journal of Political Science*, 1992 **BB**
 - R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, Chapter 4 **BB**
 - Brandice Canes-Wrone, *Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public*, 2006, Part II Intro, Chapter 5, **BB**
 - David Karol, “Has Polling Enhanced Representation? Unearthing Evidence from the Literary Digest Issue Polls,” *Studies in American Political Development*, 2007 **BB**