

Power and Politics in America (POL-UA 300)

What is this course about?

Is media bias a problem in American politics? How much do campaigns matter for national election outcomes? Why do we have the political institutions that we do, and how does our governmental process compare with other countries around the world? And, most importantly: in a society where different groups and individuals harbor diverse goals and preferences, who decides how resources will be allocated and which public policies will prevail? This course will provide you with an analytical framework to answer these questions while deepening your understanding of the complexities and contradictions of the American political system. You will be introduced to a variety of empirical and theoretical tools that political scientists use to study politics and government. By the end of the semester, you will be able to use these tools to analyze historical and contemporary political phenomenon.

Why is this course important?

This course will change the way you think about government and politics. You will sharpen your ability to thoughtfully approach texts, interpret scholarly arguments, study effectively, and synthesize information. You will begin to think like a social scientist, and I hope that the course inspires many of you to pursue additional training in formal and quantitative research methods. Whether or not you pursue a major in political science, the analytical skills you develop will be invaluable to anyone considering a career in law, journalism, public policy, data science, consulting, government service, or any professional field that requires critical thinking.

Logistics:

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11am – 12:15pm
 Cantor Room 102 (36 E. 8th St)

Recitations: Please see recitation schedule at end of this syllabus.

Contact Info: Professor Julia Payson
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 Taylor Mattia (Sections 2 and 3)
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Note: please **always email your TA first** with questions or comments about course content and logistics.

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 2:00pm-4:30pm
Fridays: by appointment (email me at julia.payson@nyu.edu with your availability, and I'm happy to arrange a time to meet)

Location: 19 West 4th St, Office 220 (2nd floor)

TA Office Hours: TBA

How will I be graded?

Recitation Participation and Homework: 20%

- You are allowed **one unexcused absence from recitation**, no questions asked. If you must miss a class for a medical or family emergency, please email your TA as soon as possible. After one unexcused absence, each additional missed recitation will lower your participation grade by 10%.
- Occasionally, the TAs or I may ask you to complete short written responses or exercises in conjunction with the course material. These will generally be graded as simply "complete" or "incomplete" and provide you with an easy opportunity to earn points.

In-Class Quizzes: 20%

- There will be 5 short quizzes over the course of the semester. Quizzes will take place at the **beginning of recitations**, and your **lowest quiz grade will be dropped**. Missed quizzes will receive a score of zero. If you have a medical or family emergency, you may make up a maximum of one quiz within one week of the original quiz date if you can work out an alternate time with your TA.

Course Paper: 15%

- You will complete a 5-7 page course paper that will draw from the course themes and provide you with an opportunity to synthesize what you have learned. Additional details will be provided later in the semester.

Midterm Exam: 20%

- The midterm will be a 75 minute closed-note exam held in-class on **Thurs. 10/17**

Final Exam: 25%

- The final will be a two-hour written exam that will cover the entire semester, with a focus on the material presented after the midterm. Our final is scheduled for:
Tues. 12/17 10am – 11:50am

How do I access the course readings?

The following textbook is required:

Ken Kollman, The American Political System (Core Third Edition, 2018 Election Update)

ISBN: 978-0393675290

<https://www.amazon.com/American-Political-System-Election-Update/dp/0393675297/>

Students are encouraged to rent the textbook or buy a used version from Amazon or other on-line seller to save money. The Amazon eTextbook rental is an excellent and affordable option. The textbook is also available at the NYU Bookstore and is on reserve at Bobst Library for a 4 hour loan period (JK276.K66 2017). The 2017 Core Third Edition (without the 2018 election update) is also an acceptable version.

All chapters assigned in the schedule below are from the textbook unless otherwise noted. Additional readings and section readings will be posted to the **NYU classes lecture website** at least a week before they are due.

What if I require special accommodation?

New York University is committed to providing equal educational opportunity and participation for students with disabilities. It is the University's policy that no qualified student with a disability be excluded from participating in any University program or activity, denied the benefits of any University program or activity, or otherwise subjected to discrimination with regard to any University program or activity. **Students requesting accommodations must document their disability** with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities:

<https://www.nyu.edu/students/communities-and-groups/students-with-disabilities.html>

Academic Integrity

I expect the work you do for this class to be your own. According to university policy, students who violate NYU's core principles of academic integrity by plagiarizing or cheating may fail a particular assignment, fail the course, or face suspension or expulsion.

Class Schedule

The readings and content below are subject to minor revisions and updates as we assess how the course is proceeding. Please **always consult the most current version** of the syllabus posted on the course website – otherwise you may miss important updates.

Reading assignments are due **before** each class. This is especially important for recitation readings, which will form the basis of the section discussion. Please carefully review the recitation schedule attached at the end of the syllabus; **Monday recitations will generally cover material from the previous week.**

Week 1: What Can the Tools of Political Science Tell Us That We Don't Already Know?

Tues. 9/3 First day of class
 No reading

Thurs. 9/5 Chapter 1: Introduction (30 pgs.)

No recitations this week

Week 2: The Constitution and Federalism

Tues. 9/10 Chapter 2: The Constitution (36 pgs.)

Thurs. 9/12 Chapter 3: Federalism (34 pgs.)

Recitation: Debating the Issues: Should the Constitution Be Fundamentally Changed? (16 pgs.)

Week 3: What Rights and Freedoms Do Americans Have?

Tues. 9/17 Chapter 4: Civil Rights & Liberties (38 pgs.)

Thurs. 9/19 Normative Frameworks (skim)

Recitation: Should There Be A Religious Exemption to Nondiscrimination Laws? (13 pgs.)
 How Battles Over Serving Same-Sex Couples Play Out in Court (5 pgs.)
 Quiz #1

Week 4: How Do Legislators Rise Above Self-Interest to Pass Important Legislation?

Tues 9/24 Chapter 5: Congress (50 pgs.)

Thurs. 9/26 Chapter 5: Congress (continued)

Recitation: Exploration: The Center For Effective Lawmaking
Women Actually Do Govern Differently

Week 5: How And Why Has Presidential Power Grown?

Tues. 10/1 Chapter 6: The Presidency (42 pgs.)

Thurs. 10/3 Chapter 6: The Presidency (continued)

Recitation: Should the Electoral College Be Replaced With A Popular Vote? (11 pgs.)
A Case for the Electoral College (3 pgs.)
Quiz #2

Week 6: Are the Courts Above Politics?

Tues. 10/8 Chapter 8: The Judiciary (38 pgs.)

Thurs. 10/10 Catch up and midterm review

Recitation: Midterm Review

Week 7: Midterm Exam

Tues. 10/15 Legislative Day (no class – classes meet according to a Monday schedule)

Thurs. 10/17 **Midterm Exam**

Week 8: What Is The Link Between Public Opinion and Politicians' Behavior?

Tues. 10/22 Chapter 9: Public Opinion (44 pgs.)

Thurs. 10/24 Chapter 9: Public Opinion (continued)

Recitation: Fundamentals of Polling and Interpreting Poll Results

Week 9: Do Campaigns Matter in National Elections?

Tues. 10/29 Chapter 13: Elections and Campaigns (42 pgs.)

Thurs. 10/31 Case Study: 2020 Election

Recitation: Do Campaigns Matter? A New Study Argues That Much of the Work Campaigns Do Doesn't Change Voters' Minds At All (6 pgs.)
Quiz #3

Week 10: Which Political Institutions Matter Most For Participation?

Tues. 11/5 Chapter 10: Political Participation (38 pgs.)

Thurs. 11/7 Chapter 10: Political Participation (continued)

Recitation: A New Study Finds Voter ID Laws Don't Reduce Voter Fraud – Or Voter Turnout (8 pgs.)

Weeks 11: The Role of Political Parties

Tues. 11/12 Chapter 12: Political Parties (42 pgs.)

Thurs. 11/14 Chapter 12: Political Parties (continued)

Recitation: Want to know more about political polarization? The Monkey Cage has answers—and questions (14 pgs.)
Quiz #4

Week 12: Mass Media and the Press

Tues. 11/19 Chapter 14: Mass Media and the Press (36 pgs.)

Thurs. 11/21 Twitter bots can fight racism — if they're white and popular

Recitation: Is Partisan Media Exposure Bad For Democracy? (14 pgs.)

Week 13: Interest Groups and Social Movements

Tues. 11/26 Chapter 11: Interest Groups (34 pgs.)

Thurs. 11/28 No Class -- Happy Thanksgiving!

No Recitations This Week

Week 14: Is There a Logic to American Public Policy?

Tues. 12/3 **No Lecture:** Extra Office Hours with TAs to Discuss Papers

Thurs. 12/5 The Logic of American Politics (22 pgs.)

Final Papers Due Friday 12/6 @ 4pm

Recitation **Quiz #5**

Week 15: American Politics in the Age of Trump

Tues. 12/10 American Politics in the Age of Trump

Thurs. 12/12 Final Exam Review

Final Exam: Tues. 12/17 10am – 11:50am

Recitation Schedule

Monday Recitation:

Week 1: Mon. 9/2	No Section
Week 2: Mon. 9/9	No Section
Week 3: Mon. 9/16	Debating the Issues: Should the Constitution Be Fundamentally Changed?
Week 4: Mon. 9/23	Should There Be A Religious Exemption to Nondiscrimination Laws? How Battles Over Serving Same-Sex Couples Play Out in Court Quiz #1
Week 5: Mon. 9/30	Exploration: The Center For Effective Lawmaking Women Actually Do Govern Differently
Week 6: Mon 10/7	Should the Electoral College Be Replaced With a Popular Vote? Quiz #2
Week 7: Tues. 10/15	Legislative Day: Midterm Review
Week 8: Mon. 10/21	No Section
Week 9: Mon. 10/28	Fundamentals of Polling and Interpreting Poll Results
Week 10: Mon. 11/4	Do Campaigns Matter? A New Study Argues That Much of the Work Campaigns Do Doesn't Change Voters' Minds At All Quiz #3
Week 11: Mon. 11/11	A New Study Finds Voter ID Laws Don't Reduce Voter Fraud – Or Voter Turnout
Week 12: Mon. 11/18	Want to know more about political polarization? The Monkey Cage has answers—and questions Quiz #4
Week 13: Mon. 11/25	Is Partisan Media Exposure Bad For Democracy?
Week 14: Mon. 12/2	No Section – Happy Thanksgiving!
Week 15: Mon. 12/9	TBD Quiz #5

Tuesday Recitations:

Week 1: Tues. 9/3	No Section
Week 2: Tues. 9/10	Debating the Issues: Should the Constitution Be Fundamentally Changed?
Week 3: Tues. 9/17	Should There Be A Religious Exemption to Nondiscrimination Laws? How Battles Over Serving Same-Sex Couples Play Out in Court Quiz #1
Week 4: Tues. 9/24	Exploration: The Center For Effective Lawmaking Women Actually Do Govern Differently
Week 5: Tues. 10/1	Should the Electoral College Be Replaced With a Popular Vote? Quiz #2
Week 6: Tues. 10/8	Midterm Review
Week 7: Tues. 10/15	Legislative Day: No Section (Meet According to Monday Schedule)
Week 8: Tues. 10/22	Fundamentals of Polling and Interpreting Poll Results
Week 9: Tues. 10/29	Do Campaigns Matter? A New Study Argues That Much of the Work Campaigns Do Doesn't Change Voters' Minds At All Quiz #3
Week 10: Tues. 11/5	A New Study Finds Voter ID Laws Don't Reduce Voter Fraud – Or Voter Turnout
Week 11: Tues. 11/12	Want to know more about political polarization? The Monkey Cage has answers—and questions Quiz #4
Week 12: Tues. 11/19	Is Partisan Media Exposure Bad For Democracy?
Week 13: Tues. 11/26	No Section – Happy Thanksgiving!
Week 14: Tues. 12/3	TBD Quiz #5
Week 15: Tues. 12/10	No Section

Wednesday Recitations:

Week 1: Weds. 9/4	No Section
Week 2: Weds. 9/11	Debating the Issues: Should the Constitution Be Fundamentally Changed?
Week 3: Weds. 9/18	Should There Be A Religious Exemption to Nondiscrimination Laws? How Battles Over Serving Same-Sex Couples Play Out in Court Quiz #1
Week 4: Weds. 9/25	Exploration: The Center For Effective Lawmaking Women Actually Do Govern Differently
Week 5: Weds. 10/2	Should the Electoral College Be Replaced With a Popular Vote? Quiz #2
Week 6: Weds. 10/9	Midterm Review
Week 7: Weds. 10/16	No Section
Week 8: Weds. 10/23	Fundamentals of Polling and Interpreting Poll Results
Week 9: Weds. 10/30	Do Campaigns Matter? A New Study Argues That Much of the Work Campaigns Do Doesn't Change Voters' Minds At All Quiz #3
Week 10: Weds. 11/6	A New Study Finds Voter ID Laws Don't Reduce Voter Fraud – Or Voter Turnout
Week 11: Weds. 11/13	Want to know more about political polarization? The Monkey Cage has answers—and questions Quiz #4
Week 12: Weds. 11/20	Is Partisan Media Exposure Bad For Democracy?
Week 13: Weds. 11/27	No Section – Happy Thanksgiving!
Week 14: Weds. 12/4	TBD Quiz #5
Week 15: Weds. 12/11	No Section

Thursday Recitations:

Week 1: Thurs. 9/5	No Section
Week 2: Thurs. 9/12	Debating the Issues: Should the Constitution Be Fundamentally Changed?
Week 3: Thurs. 9/19	Should There Be A Religious Exemption to Nondiscrimination Laws? How Battles Over Serving Same-Sex Couples Play Out in Court Quiz #1
Week 4: Thurs. 9/26	Exploration: The Center For Effective Lawmaking Women Actually Do Govern Differently
Week 5: Thurs. 10/3	Should the Electoral College Be Replaced With a Popular Vote? Quiz #2
Week 6: Thurs. 10/10	Midterm Review
Week 7: Thurs. 10/17	No Section
Week 8: Thurs. 10/24	Fundamentals of Polling and Interpreting Poll Results
Week 9: Thurs. 10/31	Negative Campaigning in the Social Media Age Quiz #3
Week 10: Thurs. 11/7	What Makes A Good Neighbor?
Week 11: Thurs. 11/14	Party Polarization in American Politics Quiz #4
Week 12: Thurs. 11/21	Is Partisan Media Exposure Bad For Democracy?
Week 13: Thurs. 11/28	No Section – Happy Thanksgiving!
Week 14: Thurs. 12/5	TBD Quiz #5
Week 15: Thurs. 12/12	No Section

Friday Recitations:

Week 1: Fri. 9/6	No Section
Week 2: Fri. 9/13	Debating the Issues: Should the Constitution Be Fundamentally Changed?
Week 3: Fri. 9/20	Should There Be A Religious Exemption to Nondiscrimination Laws? How Battles Over Serving Same-Sex Couples Play Out in Court Quiz #1
Week 4: Fri. 9/27	Exploration: The Center For Effective Lawmaking Women Actually Do Govern Differently
Week 5: Fri. 10/4	Should the Electoral College Be Replaced With a Popular Vote? Quiz #2
Week 6: Fri. 10/11	Midterm Review
Week 7: Fri. 10/18	No Section
Week 8: Fri. 10/25	Fundamentals of Polling and Interpreting Poll Results
Week 9: Fri. 11/1	Do Campaigns Matter? A New Study Argues That Much of the Work Campaigns Do Doesn't Change Voters' Minds At All Quiz #3
Week 10: Fri. 11/8	A New Study Finds Voter ID Laws Don't Reduce Voter Fraud – Or Voter Turnout
Week 11: Fri. 11/15	Want to know more about political polarization? The Monkey Cage has answers—and questions Quiz #4
Week 12: Fri. 11/22	Is Partisan Media Exposure Bad For Democracy?
Week 13: Fri. 11/29	No Section – Happy Thanksgiving!
Week 14: Fri. 12/6	TBD Quiz #5
Week 15: Fri. 12/13	No Section