Power and Politics in American (POL-UA 300) – Fall 2021 -rv3 [Syllabus - Sep 21, 2021]

Building: Cantor Room 102   **Tues/Thurs 11:00-12:15**
Professor Jonathan Nagler   **Office: Room 307 (see pg 2 - ZOOM)**
jonathan.nagler@nyu.edu
Teaching Assistants:

- **Trellace Lawrimore, tml410@nyu.edu**
- **Giacomo Lemoli, gl1759@nyu.edu**
- **Zoe Xincheng Ge, xg762@nyu.edu**
- **Alex Demin, a.demin@nyu.edu**

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!** Also note that **additional readings may be assigned**, when they are they will generally be made available electronically.

Your grade will be based on the following:

Midterm	20%
Short During-Class Exams (5-8 exams [*])	15%
Short Papers (3-4 papers)	20%
Final Exam	35%
Section Participation	10%
[*] Lowest During-Class Exam Grade is dropped. During-Class Exams can be done remotely - but only during class time. No notice is given for During-Class Exams, they are `pop-quizes'.	

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.

Attendance in section is required.

You should be aware that the lectures are recorded on Zoom. By attending the lecture you are agreeing for your participation to be part of that recording.

Required Texts:

Lowi, Theordore, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. (16th edition; **FULL edition**). [Referred to throughout as *LGSA*.]

Kollman, *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*, 5th edition. [Referred to throughout as *RAP*.]

There are **many** versions of *LGSA*! 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 two chapters that we will cover. Norton bundles *LGSA* with *RAP* for a substantial discount - so be on the look out for that. And, *pay attention to the edition numbers*.

The key thing to note: be sure your edition includes `16th' (NOT 15th or earlier), and that it is `full' : not `core' nor `brief'.

For *RAP* book, you can get by with the 4th edition.

Readings Provided Online:

Readings listed in the syllabus not from *LGSA* or *RAP* will be provided online at the BRIGHTSPACE course website.

Note that the dates below *may be updated!* Pay attention to announcements in lecture and made via BRIGHTSPACE. However, in the absence of announced changes - you should follow the reading schedule below.

Professor Nagler's Office Hours:

I am holding remote office hours on Fridays from 3:00pm to 4:00pm (https://nyu.zoom.us/j/94628568169) **.** You can sign up online: Nagler-Appointment-Blocks **.** [It is important you sign up in advance - it is a coordination mechanism. If you have trouble signing up - email jonathan.nagler@nyu.edu .] If you have a conflict then, email me to set up a different time.

[**Week 0: 9/2**] **Introduction - Why We have Government**: We will look at the role of government.

[**Week 1: 9/6 - 9/10**] **Introduction - Why We Have Government (continued):** 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.

- **Reading:** Selection from Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pages 446-465.
- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 1 "Five Principles of Politics."

[**Week 2: 9/13 - 9/17**] **Collective Action, Public Goods, Market Failure:** You should learn about government's role in dealing with *market failure*, in addressing problems of *collective action*, and in providing *public goods*.

- **Reading:** "Introduction to Game Theory," Osborne.

- **Reading:** *RAP*, Section 1.2. "Logic of Collective Action," Olson.
- **Reading:** *RAP*, Section 1.3. "Tragedy of the Commons," Hardin.

[**Week 3: 9/20 - 9/24: Part 1:**] **The Making of the Constitution and Federalism: 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. **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*, Appendix - "Federalist Papers 10 and 51."
- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 2 - "Constructing a Government: The Founding and the Constitution"
- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 3 - "Federalism and the Separation of Powers"
- **Reading:** United States Constitution (entire document!).

[Week 4: 9/27 - 10/1] 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"
- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 5 - "Civil Rights"
- **Reading: TBA** : Additional Readings

PART II: Public Opinion, Mass Behavior, Elections

[Week 5: 10/04 - 10/08] Public Opinion and Polling: We look at how public opinion is measured, and what it represents.

- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 10 - "Public Opinion"

[Week 6: 10/11 - 10/15] The Median Voter Theorem: We consider one of the foundations of the study of voting - the median voter theorem. And we consider one of the more interesting properties of voting: cycles.

- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 10, Selected Pages (Median Voter Theorem).
- **Reading:** Spatial Models of Majority Rule, *Analyzing Politics*, Shepsle, Chapter 5.

[Week 7: 10/18 - 10/22] Spatial Models and Issue Voting: We look at the impact of issue positions of candidates on how people vote, and we introduce The Spatial Model, an analytic way to incorporate issue voting into the voter's calculs.

- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 11 - "Elections".
- **Reading:** *Change and Continuity in the 2016 and 2018 Elections*, Chapter 6, pgs 167-192.

[Week 8: 10/25 - 10/29] Interest Groups and the Media

- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 14, "Media"
- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 13, Groups and Interests

Week 9: 11/1 - 11/5 : MIDTERM

PART III: Institutions, and Public Policy

[Week 10: 11/8- 11/12] 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"
- **Reading:** Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics*, Chapter 2, "A Theory".

[Week 11: 11/15 - 11/19] The President and the Bureacracy: We consider what powers the president actually has, and what the president can do to influence policy. And we study the part of the federal government that does things. This includes all the federal agencies. You should learn what incentives bureacrats have, and what the legislature can do to ensure that the bureacracies behave as the legislature intended. You should also understand the `standard operating procedure' of bureacracies.

- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 7 - "The Presidency as an Institution"
- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 8 - "The Executive Branch: Bureaucracy in a Democracy"
- **Reading:** *RAP*, Section 7-1 - "What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It," James Q. Wilson.
- **Reading:** *RAP*, Section 7-2 - "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs Fire Alarms", McCubbins and Schwartz.

[Week 12: 11/22 - 11/26 (THANKSGIVING WEEK)] Social Policy Politics comes together to produce government outputs. Here we look at domestic social 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:** *RAP*, Section 9.4, Cramer, Katherine, "The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker."

[Week 13: 11/29 - 12/3] Economic Policy: The Outputs of all of this: Here we look at domestic economic policy.

- **Reading:** *LGSA*, Chapter 15 - "Economic Policy"

- **Reading:** *RAP*, Section 11.3, Bartels, Larry, "Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the Gilded Age."
- **Reading:** *TBA*

[Week 14: 12/6 - 12/10] Social and Economic Policy Continued:

- **Reading**: TBA

[Week 14.5: 12/14] : RECAP

  [FINAL EXAM: Sometime during Thursday Dec 16 - Tuesday Dec 22]

File translated from T$_E$X by [T$_T$H](#), version 4.05.
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