

## **PSCI 1120: Introduction to American Government**

Monday/Wednesday 2:00PM-3:20PM

Physics 2000

Winter 2024

Instructor: David Miller

Email address: dmiller@ucr.edu

Website: <http://www.davidryanmiller.com/>

PollEverywhere URL: <http://www.PollEv.com/davidmiller665>

Office location: Watkins Hall Room 2209

Office hours: Monday 12:30PM-1:30 PM (in-person), 7:00PM-8:00PM (virtual) ([reserve via Calendly](#))

### ***Course Description***

While living in the midst of a contentious period in American politics, it is critical to have a working knowledge of the American political process and to hone analytical skills with which to interpret contemporary events. This course is designed to accomplish these dual objectives. In our first few sessions, we will explore both key principles of social scientific thinking and the historical and intellectual origins of the American system of government. Then, we will use this foundation to explore the workings of the American political system in both its core institutions and the mass public. Additionally, as a Writing Across the Curriculum course, we will emphasize written communication by requiring students to complete a series of essays that apply the substantive information and analytical skills we cover. At the end of the semester, students should be able to understand and critically engage with information about American politics, as well as actively engage with the American political system (should they choose to do so).

### ***Course Goals***

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:

- Describe the historical and intellectual underpinnings of the American political system and its evolution over time.
- Understand how citizens form and express political opinions, make political decisions, and exert influence in the American political process.
- Explain the functions of American political institutions and how those institutions condition political and policy outcomes.
- Analyze contemporary political phenomena through a social scientific lens.
- Synthesize substantive information about American government and social scientific concepts through written communication.

### ***Required Texts, Materials, or Equipment***

- Krutz, Glen and Waskiewicz, Sylvie. *American Government*. OpenStax. (3rd Edition). ISBN-13 (digital): 978-1-951693-38-1. [Available on OpenStax](#).

## ***Assignments and Grading***

Course grades will be determined by students' performance on the following assignments and tasks:

- Writing assignments (75%): As a Writing Across the Curriculum course, your final grade will be based primarily on your completion of four writing assignments during the quarter. These writing assignments will be posted *at least* two weeks before they are due and will be graded on the basis of a rubric accompanying each assignment. To help students complete these assignments, discussion sections and the course's ENGL007 workshop will both reinforce the substantive content associated with each assignment and emphasize writing skills relevant for each assignment. **Writing assignment #1 will be worth 15% of your final grade, and assignments #2-4 will be worth 20% of your final grade each.**
- Attendance and participation (25%): In order to succeed in this class, you need to be present for class sessions, which includes lecture, discussion sections, and ENGL007 workshops. At the same time, I recognize that 1) all students are adults free to make their own choices about how they spend their time and 2) unexpected/unavoidable conflicts do arise. Accordingly, this class does expect (and grade) based on attendance, but with some "excused absences" built in. **All students start the quarter with the following number of excused absences for each meeting type:**
  - Main lecture: 3 excused absences
  - Discussion section: 1 excused absence
  - ENGL007 workshops: 0 excused absences

**If a student exceeds the number of allowable excused absences for any meeting type, the student will be deducted 3 percentage points for each additional absence in that category, up to a maximum of 25 percentage points.** Attendance in the main lecture will be tracked through PollEverywhere questions presented during lecture. Attendance in discussion sections and ENGL007 workshops will be tracked by teaching assistants. Additionally, active participation in discussion sections and ENGL007 workshops will be considered when calculating this portion of students' grades.

- Extra credit (?): I reserve the right to provide opportunities for extra credit throughout the semester. Extra credit opportunities may consist of finding current events examples of class concepts, offering responses to supplemental readings, and attending civic engagement events on campus or remotely. The value of each extra credit opportunity towards students' final grades will be provided in writing when each opportunity is announced (or shortly thereafter).

Final grades will be assigned according to the following cutoffs:

Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
≥ 94	A	≥ 83	B	≥ 73	C	≥ 60	D
≥ 90	A-	≥ 80	B-	≥ 70	C-	< 60	F
≥ 87	B+	≥ 77	C+	≥ 65	D+		

### *Course Policies*

- A link to the current version of the course syllabus will be posted on the course’s Canvas page. Please refer to the most current version of the syllabus for information about the course schedule, course policies, etc.
- All other course readings will be made available through either the course syllabus, the UCR Library, and/or the course Canvas page at least one week in advance of the class for which they are expected to be completed.
- We will often refer to contemporary political events both in lectures and class activities. In order to participate fully, I strongly encourage you to spend at least 10 minutes each day familiarizing yourself with recent news about American politics. You may consult the news source(s) of your choice; recommended sources (in no particular order) include The New York Times, the Washington Post, CNN, NPR, CBS, NBC, ABC, and the BBC.
- All readings and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day specified on the course syllabus and/or by the instructor in class. Late assignments will be accepted, but will be assessed a 10% penalty for each 24 hour period the assignment is late.
- *Communication Outside of Class*
  - I encourage you to contact your teaching assistants and me to discuss topics we are covering in class, concerns about the course, or other related issues outside of class. The primary mode of communication outside of class will be email. When you email us, please include the course number in the subject line. We will do our best to reply to emails within 48 hours, and we will *not* respond to emails about assignments or exams sent less than 24 hours before they are due.
  - Your initial point of contact for all questions related to the course (absences, assignment information, substantive content, etc.) should be your teaching assistant. Your teaching assistants will forward your question to me if they cannot answer your question.
  - My office hours scheduling will take place via Calendly. If you would like to come to office hours, please visit my Calendly schedule and reserve an available time for us to meet. Drop-in visits are permitted during in-person office hours (if the slot is not already booked), but virtual office hours must be reserved at least 6 hours in advance. If there are no available appointments or if you are not able to

see me during office hours, please contact me so that we can find an alternative time to meet.

- Your teaching assistant will share information with you about their own office hours scheduling.
- *Grade Appeals*
  - If you have reason to believe that the grade you received on a written assignment does not appropriately reflect the work you submitted, you may appeal your grade under the following conditions:
    - You must wait at least 24 hours after your TA has provided you with your grade before making an appeal. You should take this time to review the assignment rubric, your TA's feedback, and applicable readings and lecture content to determine whether your grade does not in fact reflect the work submitted.
    - After the initial 24 hour window has elapsed, you may contact your TA to appeal your grade. In doing so, you must explain **in writing** why you think the grade you received does not reflect the quality of work submitted (e.g., how the rubric was misapplied, how the content accurately reflects course content, etc.). You and your TA may correspond via email and/or meet to discuss the appeal.
    - If after your TA resolves your appeal you still feel that your grade does not accurately reflect the quality of the work submitted, you may contact me to appeal the grade. In doing so, you must again explain **in writing** why you think the grade you received does not reflect the quality of work submitted AND why your TA's response to your initial appeal was unsatisfactory. I will then regrade your assignment taking into account your written explanation. My regrade of your assignment may result in a higher **or** lower grade than you initially received. **My regrade of your assignment constitutes a final grade for the assignment.**
- *Technology*
  - Phone/laptop computer/tablet use is permitted only for the purposes of taking notes and retrieving materials/resources relevant to the course. Please be mindful that when you use your devices
  - If any students would like to record lectures, please speak with me in advance to obtain permission.
- *Academic Integrity*: Here at UCR we are committed to upholding and promoting the values of the Tartan Soul: Integrity, Accountability, Excellence, and Respect. As a student in this class, it is your responsibility to act in accordance with these values by completing all assignments in the manner described, and by informing the instructor of suspected acts of academic misconduct by your peers. By so doing, you will not only affirm your own integrity, but also the integrity of the intellectual work of this

University, and the degree which it represents. Should you choose to commit academic misconduct in this class, you will be held accountable according to the policies set forth by the University, and will incur appropriate consequences both in this class and from Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Programs. For more information regarding University policy and its enforcement, please visit: [conduct.ucr.edu](http://conduct.ucr.edu).

- *Generative AI:* Generative AI (such as Google Bard or ChatGPT) can be a potentially useful and powerful information source and thought partner which can enhance productivity and learning. However, over-reliance or dependence on generative AI can undermine your education, limit opportunities for intellectual growth, and impact your performance in venues like job interviews, meetings, and presentations. Therefore, this course has been designed to emphasize authentic learning and utilizes assessment methods that reduce the potential usefulness of generative AI in your work. Furthermore, all work submitted in this course must be your own. Although generative AI may be used like any other source of information that supports your work – such as a book, article, video, interview, etc. – it must be properly quoted and cited each time it is used. Failure to properly cite the use of AI in your work will be viewed as a potential academic integrity violation.

### ***Disclaimer***

I reserve the right to make modifications to this information throughout the semester. In the event of a conflict between syllabus versions, the most recent version will always supersede previous versions.

### ***Preliminary Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments<sup>1</sup>***

<b>DATE</b>	<b>LECTURE TOPIC</b>	<b>READINGS &amp; ASSIGNMENTS</b>
January 8	Introductory Session Fundamentals of Political Science	N/A
January 10	Fundamentals of Political Science	Lebow (2007)— <b>ON CANVAS</b>
January 15	<b>MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY (NO CLASS)</b>	
January 17	Founding, the Constitution, and Democracy	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 2
January 22	Founding, the Constitution, and Democracy	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 2 <a href="#">“How do we survive...” (The New Yorker)</a>

<sup>1</sup> All readings are expected to be completed at the beginning of class on the date specified.

		<a href="#">"Is America uniquely..." (Vox)</a>
January 24	Congress	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 11
January 26		<b>ESSAY 1 DUE AT 11:59PM PT</b>
January 29	Congress	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 11 <a href="#">"Members of Congress are..." (3Streams)</a> <a href="#">"How Constituent Contact..." (Good Authority)</a>
January 31	Public Opinion	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 6
February 5	Public Opinion	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 6 <a href="#">"The Less Americans Know..." (WaPo)</a>
February 7	Elections	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 7.1-7.2, 7.4-7.5
February 9		<b>ESSAY 2 DUE AT 11:59PM PT</b>
February 12	Elections	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 7.1-7.2, 7.4-7.5 <a href="#">"The political science of shark attacks" (Vox)</a>
February 14	Interest Groups	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 10
February 19	<b>PRESIDENTS' DAY (NO CLASS)</b>	
February 21	Interest Groups	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 10 <a href="#">"Here's the evidence..." (3Streams)</a>
February 23		<b>ESSAY 3 DUE AT 11:59PM PT</b>
February 26	The Presidency	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 12.1, 12.3-12.5
February 28	The Presidency	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 12.1, 12.3-12.5 <a href="#">"How a Stronger Presidency..." (WaPo)</a>
March 4	The Bureaucracy	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 15

March 6	The Bureaucracy	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 15 <a href="#"><u>“Trump wasn’t the first…” (The Conversation)</u></a>
March 11	The Courts	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 13 pg. 447-451, 454-473
March 13	The Courts	Krutz & Waskiewicz Ch. 13 pg. 447-451, 454-473 <a href="#"><u>“When the Supreme Court loses…” (The Conversation)</u></a>
March 18		<b>ESSAY 4 DUE AT 11:59PM PT</b>