Professor: Ryan J. Vander Wielen
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E-mail: ryan.vanderwielen@temple.edu
Office Hours: MW 1:30-3pm and by appointment

**Contacting the Instructor:** Students are encouraged to use office hours. If students are unable to attend office hours, but would like to meet with me, please contact me via email to arrange an appointment. I am typically quick to respond to such emails. I, unfortunately, cannot guarantee that I will be able to meet with students that come to my office without first scheduling a time to see me.

**Course Objective:** This course provides an overview of the politics of the American system of government and introduces students to seminal works in the study thereof. Students taking this course will be exposed to the fundamental tools used to study American politics, including basic game theory and quantitative political methodology, *although no prior knowledge in these areas is required*. Among the topics to be covered are the historical developments of American politics, political participation, and public opinion. A particular emphasis, however, is placed on American political institutions and writings in the genre of new institutionalism – a theoretical approach that examines the impact that institutions have on behavior and outcomes. A principle theme underlying our examination of these and other topics will be the concept that political actors are purposive in their strategic pursuit of various objectives.

**Approach to Teaching:** This course will entail a combination of lecture and discussion. Lecturing is reserved for conveying important background information and for explaining the theoretical/empirical methods used in researching American politics. All literature will be handled in a seminar format (see below), with students presenting the works and discussion to follow. My goal is to facilitate critical evaluation of the works discussed. Active participation is highly encouraged during both lecture and discussion.

**Disability Policy:** This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215-204-1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities.

**Statement of Academic Freedom:** Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has adopted a policy on Student
and Faculty Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link:
http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=.03.70.02.

**Course Materials:** There are two required texts that we will draw from throughout the semester, both of which are available at the Temple University Bookstore and on-line. I have also listed some recommended texts that I strongly encourage you to read. Required readings not contained in the texts will be posted on Blackboard. Keep in mind that readings may be added or dropped according to the progress of the class.

**Required Books:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Course Evaluation:** Grading will be done on the basis of four components – a midterm exam, a final exam, class participation, and a final project. The midterm exam will account for 15% of the total course grade, and the final exam for 25%. Given that the success of a seminar style class rests significantly upon the active participation of those involved, class participation makes up 35% of the final grade. Please be cognizant of the obvious implications that absenteeism has upon your evaluation (see below). The research project will account for the remaining 25% of the grade.
Final letter grades for the course will be assigned as follows:

- 92.5% ≤ A
- 80% – 82.49% = B-
- 67.5% – 69.99% = D+
- 90.0% – 92.49% = A-
- 77.5% – 79.99% = C+
- 62.5% – 67.49% = D
- 87.5% – 89.99% = B+
- 72.5% – 77.49% = C
- 60% – 62.49% = D-
- 82.5% – 87.49% = B
- 70% – 72.49% = C-
- 59.99% ≤ F

**Attendance and Class Participation Policies:** As evidenced by the considerable weight placed on class participation in student evaluation, attendance and preparedness are imperative to success in this course. Students will be evaluated in each session according to their overall contribution to class discussion. I expect students to engage in conversation in a manner informed by the course readings and the theoretical constructs explored throughout the course. SUCH PARTICIPATION DOES NOT EQUATE TO MERELY REGURGITATING THE CONTENTS OF THE READINGS. Rather, students are expected to think critically about the readings and to examine their applicability to the modern political context. Although there will certainly be greater opportunity for students to participate in the discussion sessions, participation in the lecture sessions is also important. Evaluation of class participation in each session is according to a five-point scale as follows:

- 5 points: Present, with active participation, and adds own insight, integrates or relates topic with other topics and concepts in this and other classes
- 4 points: Present, with minimal participation (may only answer when called on), and a strong understanding of ALL readings
- 3 points: Present, with active participation, and demonstrates reasonable competence with the readings
- 2 points: Present, with minimal participation (may only answer when called on), and with little or no real understanding of the material
- 1 points: Present, with no contribution (functions mainly as a person warming a chair)
- 0 points: Absent (no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absence)

The two lowest participation grades of the semester will be dropped in calculating the final participation grade.

**Seminar Format:** For each topic, one session will be dedicated to discussing seminal works in the area of study. For each discussion session, approximately three students will be responsible for leading class discussion. Students within these groups are intended to work together to plan these sessions. DO NOT DIVVY UP READINGS AMONG THE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP. Discussion leaders are expected to outline the readings according to the basic structure of scientific inquiry, as follows: question addressed in the work, theoretical approach, method used to test theory, and conclusion (some readings may not contain all of these steps). Following this, discussion leaders are to offer critical analyses of the works. What are the shortcomings, if any, of the works? Where do the works excel where others have failed? What do you find interesting/uninteresting about
the works? In addition, groups charged with leading discussion should prepare a series of questions (8-10) that spur class discussion. Do not prepare questions that merely quiz the class on the content of the readings, but rather prepare questions that probe the class to think analytically about the readings. For example, how do the readings relate to one another? Do the theories/findings of the readings support or contradict one another? How would the authors square [insert a political event/phenomenon] with their theories/findings? Moreover, all participants in the seminar are expected to be attentive to current political events and come to class prepared to discuss their relevance to the readings. I strongly encourage students to bring newspaper articles or other periodicals that effectively convey or call into question the principles in the readings. As always, I welcome students to visit me in preparing for these tasks.

**Course Policies:** Assignments are to be handed in at the beginning of class. If you are unable to attend class, you remain responsible for handing in assignments before the time that class begins. Only under extraordinary circumstances, in which students have made previous arrangements with me, will I accept late work. If previous arrangements are not made, students will receive no credit for late assignments. Similarly, students will not be granted additional time to prepare for exams, except where there is compelling reason for doing so. A request for an extension must be arranged in advance, and must be accompanied by a recommendation from a recognized authority (i.e., physician or an academic dean). Grades of incompletes will only be granted for the most severe circumstances (i.e., death in family, health complications, etc.) that prevent students from completing the course as scheduled. A request for a grade of incomplete must be supported with a recommendation from a recognized authority, as in the case of a request for an extension. In addition, it will not be possible for students to submit extra assignments intended to offset missing work or work on which students performed poorly (including exams).

If you will be observing any religious holidays this semester that will prevent you from attending a regularly scheduled class or interfere with fulfilling any course requirement, I will offer an opportunity for you to make up the class or course requirement provided that you inform me in a timely fashion.

A sizeable component of this course is class discussion. As such, it is important that students are respectful of one another, so as to facilitate a comfortable classroom environment. Hostile behavior of any sort will NOT be permitted. Students engaging in such behavior will be penalized by a severe reduction in the their participation grade, and further action if necessary.

**Academic Integrity:** No form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated in this course. Discussion of course material with fellow students is a valuable learning technique and is strongly encouraged. However, copying or plagiarizing another person’s work or cheating on an assignment or an examination is unacceptable. Anyone found guilty of cheating, plagiarism or of any other violation of academic integrity will automatically receive a grade of 0.0 for the assignment or exam. Depending on the circumstances, a
course grade of 0.0 may be given with the matter referred to the University Dean for further action.

**Schedule of Topics and Readings:** Readings listed in italics are not contained in the required texts and will be posted on Blackboard in pdf format. A bibliography of readings not contained in the texts can be found below. Discussion sessions are denoted by (D) under the “topic” heading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/29/2006</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8/31/2006</td>
<td>Designing Institutions (D)</td>
<td>Olson (K&amp;S); Hardin (K&amp;S); <em>Shepsle &amp; Boncheck</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>9/7/2006</td>
<td>The Constitution &amp; Federalism (D)</td>
<td>Federalists 10 &amp; 51 (K&amp;S); Buchanan (K&amp;S); Kettl (K&amp;S)</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/12/2006</td>
<td>Bureaucracy</td>
<td>K &amp; J: Ch. 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/14/2006</td>
<td>Bureaucracy (D)</td>
<td>Wilson (K&amp;S); Moe (K&amp;S); <em>Chaney &amp; Saltzstein</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/19/2006</td>
<td>Presidency</td>
<td>Neustadt (K&amp;S); Kernell (K&amp;S); Wildavsky</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/21/2006</td>
<td>Presidency (D)</td>
<td></td>
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<td>9/26/2006</td>
<td>Congress – Legislative Organization</td>
<td>K &amp; J: Ch. 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/28/2006</td>
<td>Congress – Legislative Organization (D)</td>
<td><em>Krehbiel; Aldrich &amp; Rohde; Cox &amp; McCubbins</em></td>
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<td>10/3/2006</td>
<td>Congress – Representation</td>
<td><em>Smith, Roberts, &amp; Vander Wielen: Ch. 5</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/5/2006</td>
<td>Congress – Representation (D)</td>
<td>Mayhew (K &amp; S); <em>Fenno; Fiorina</em></td>
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<td>10/10/2006</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/12/2006</td>
<td>Review Midterms &amp; Film</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/17/2006</td>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>K &amp; J: Ch. 9</td>
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<tr>
<td>10/19/2006</td>
<td>Judiciary (D)</td>
<td><em>Segal &amp; Spaeth; Kahn; Epstein &amp; Knight</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>10/24/2006</td>
<td>Public Opinion</td>
<td>K &amp; J: Ch. 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/26/2006</td>
<td>Public Opinion (D)</td>
<td>Stimson, MacKuen &amp; Erickson (K &amp; S); Asher (K &amp; S); <em>Zaller</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/31/2006</td>
<td>Voting Behavior &amp; Elections</td>
<td>K &amp; J: Ch. 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/2/2006</td>
<td>Voting Behavior &amp; Elections (D)</td>
<td>Popkin (K &amp; S); <em>Downs; Rosenstone &amp;</em></td>
</tr>
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11/7/2006 Parties Hansen; Franklin K & J: Ch. 12
11/9/2006 Parties (D) Aldrich (K & S); Valelly (K &S); Schlesinger
11/14/2006 Interest Groups K & J: Ch. 13
11/16/2006 Interest Groups (D) Wright; Walker; Hall & Wayman
11/21/2006 **Due: Final Projects**
**Discuss Projects in Class**
11/23/2006 No Class (Thanksgiving Break)
11/28/2006 Media K & J: Ch. 14
11/30/2006 Media (D) Iyengar, Norpoth, & Hahn; Nelson, Clawson, & Oxley; Iyengar, Peters, & Kinder; Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, & Valentino
12/5/2006 Review for Final
12/14/2006 **FINAL EXAMINATION (11am-1pm)**

*The instructor reserves the right to alter the syllabus in a timely fashion.*

**Bibliography of Readings Not in Texts:**


