

# PO 111: Introduction to American Politics

Summer 2016

BU Summer Session 1: May 23 - June 29

Prof. Laura Blume

Email: [blumel@bu.edu](mailto:blumel@bu.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday 10:30 am - 1:30 pm, or by appointment

Office Location: 404A, 232 Bay State Road (the Political Science Building)

Class Time: Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:00 am - 12:30 pm

Class Location: CAS B06B

## Course Overview

This course examines American politics and government. We begin by reviewing the historical foundations of the US government. Then, we spend a class exploring each of the key institutions that structure American government: Congress, the Presidency, the Bureaucracy, and the Judiciary. Next, we explore numerous facets of American politics while paying close attention to how they are shaped by history and institutions. We look at campaigns and elections, political parties, the media, civil rights and liberties, public opinion, and interest groups. Finally, we examine domestic public policy and the American welfare state. The assignments and readings are intended to offer you a foundation in political science, as well as to develop your writing and analytical skills. While the class is meant to be challenging, I also hope it will get you excited about US politics!

## Required Books

Ginsberg, Lowi, Weir, Tolbert, Spitzer (eds.), [We The People](#) 10<sup>th</sup> Essentials Edition

Kollman (ed.), [Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives](#) 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition

*All other readings can be accessed via Blackboard ([learn.bu.edu](http://learn.bu.edu))*

## **Class Policies & Expectations**

### ***Attendance***

Attendance is mandatory and you will lose points for every unexcused absence. Excused absences require emailing me in advance (i.e. before missing class). You also must plan to come to office hours to make up any work you missed in class.

### ***Technology***

Please refrain from using your cell phone in class. Laptops are allowed to take notes only. If it becomes apparent you are using your laptop to check email/Facebook/Twitter/etc during class I reserve the right to request that you stop using your laptop in my class since this is not only detrimental to your learning it is also highly distracting to those seated around you.

### ***Academic Honesty***

Do not cheat or plagiarize. It is not worth it. You will be caught and punished. If you have questions about this please come see me and/or consult the [BU Academic Conduct Code](#).

## **Grading**

### ***Reading Quizzes - 25%***

You are expected to come to class having read the assigned material for that day. To make sure you are staying on top of the reading there will be 5 reading quizzes throughout the course, 4 of which will count for your quiz grade (I will drop your lowest score). Quizzes will consist of multiple choice and/or very short answer questions. If you have done the reading, the quizzes will be very quick and painless. Quizzes will happen at the beginning of class on the day noted so make sure to be on time.

### ***Participation -- 15%***

Every class will have some time devoted to student discussion. Please come prepared to discuss the readings for that day.

### ***Response papers -- 30%***

For response papers, you must find a news article on US politics and connect it to the readings for that week. You have to write 3 response papers during the course (1 - 2 pages each). You can pick when you do these, but you may only do 1 response paper per topic/class so you will need to plan in advance! Example response papers and more detailed instructions will be provided.

### ***Final Exam - 30%***

There will be a cumulative exam at the end of the semester (June 29). The exam will be written to take approximately 2-2.5 hours. You will have the entire class time to complete the exam.

## Schedule & Readings

### **Class 1: Intro to American Politics & The Constitution** (May 23)

We The People, Chapter 2: The Founding and the Constitution

[The Constitution and Bill of Rights](#) (also in the back of *We The People*)

Dahl, from *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* (Kollman 2.4)

### **Class 2: Federalism** (May 25)

\*Reading Quiz -- readings from classes 1 & 2

We The People, Chapter 3: Federalism

Riker, *Federalism: Origins, Operation, Significance* (Kollman 3.2)

Trounstine, "[How racial segregation and political mismanagement led to Flint's shocking water crisis](#)," *The Monkey Cage*.

Rouke, Debate: Federalism - Arizona's Law Encouraging Citizen Identity Checks By Police: State Intrusion Into National Policy Or Permissible State Action?, *You Decide! 2012: Cultural Debates in American Politics* [pdf on Blackboard]

Monday, May 30 - **No Class, Memorial Day Holiday**

### **Class 3: Congress** (June 1)

We The People, Chapter 9: Congress

Mayhew, *The Electoral Connection* (Kollman 5.1)

Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda* (Kollman 5.4)

Binder, "[Single-minded seekers of re-nomination](#)," *The Monkey Cage*.

**Class 4: The Presidency** (June 3, *Note: this is a Friday that follows a Monday schedule to make up for the Memorial day holiday*)

\* Reading Quiz -- readings from classes 3 & 4

We The People, Chapter 10: The Presidency

Kernell, *Going Public* (Kollman 6.5)

Neustadt, *Power to Persuade* (Kollman 6.1)

Canes-Wrone, *Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public* (Kollman 6.3)

### **Class 5: The Bureaucracy** (June 6)

We The People, Chapter 11: Bureaucracy

McCubbins and Schwartz, *Congressional Oversight Overlooked* (Kollman 7.2)

Moe, "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure," in *Principles and Practice of American Politics* [pdf on Blackboard]

Light, [Fact Sheet on the Continued Thickening of Government](#), *Brookings Heck of a Job Appointee!*, *Wilson Quarterly*

### **Class 6: The Supreme Court** (June 8)

\*Reading Quiz -- readings from class 5 & 6

We The People, Chapter 12: Supreme Court

[Federalist No. 78](#)

Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope* (Kollman 8.1)

Marbury v. Madison (Kollman 8.2)

**Class 7: Civil Rights & Civil Liberties (June 13)**

We The People, Chapter 4: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

[Brown v. Board](#)

[Gideon v. Wainwright](#)

Horwitz, [More than half a million registered Texans don't have the right ID to vote on Super Tuesday](#), *Washington Post*.

\***OPTIONAL**\* Rouke, Debate: Civil Liberties: The Phrase "Under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance: Violation of First Amendment or Acceptable Traditional Expression?, *You Decide! 2012: Cultural Debates in American Politics* [pdf on Blackboard]

**Class 8: The Media & Public Opinion (June 15)**

\*Reading Quiz -- readings from class 7 & 8

We The People, Chapter 5: Public Opinion

\***SKIM**\* We The People, Chapter 6: The Media

Kinder and Kam, *Us Against Them* (Kollman 9.3)

Lupia and McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma*, (Kollman 9.1)

**Class 9: Political Parties, Campaigns, & Elections (June 20)**

We The People, Chapter 7: Political Parties, Participation, and Elections

Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, "*The American Voter*" (Kollman 12.2)

Thorson, "[5 Political Myths Trump Is Exploding](#)," *Politico*.

Azari, "[When Political Parties Splinter](#)," *FiveThirtyEight*.

Roller. "[Willie Horton's Heirs](#)," *The New York Times*.

**Class 10: Interest Groups & Money (June 22)**

\*Reading Quiz -- readings from class 9 & 10

We The People, Chapter 8

[Citizens United v. FEC](#)

Jeffrey Toobin, "[Money Unlimited](#)," *The New Yorker*.

\***OPTIONAL**\* Hall and Wayman, "[Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees](#)" *APSR*.

**Class 11: Social and Economic Policy (June 27)**

We The People, Chapters 13

Mettler, *The Submerged State* (Kollman 16.1)

Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* (Kollman 16.2)

**NOTE:** There will be a review session(s) for the final exam either Monday afternoon (6/27) or on Tuesday (6/28). Attendance will be optional. Information on time/location TBA.

**Class 12: Last Day of Class (June 29)**

Final Exam