

INTRODUCTION TO GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Last revised: January 8, 2019 (Check Sakai for the latest)

Poli 100H: Spring 2019

Meeting time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30 – 4:45pm

Professor Timothy Ryan, tjr@email.unc.edu; 919-962-0403

Office hours: Wednesdays, 1-4pm, provided UNC has classes (and by appointment)

Office: 307 Hamilton Hall

Classroom: Dey 412

Final Exam: April 30, 4-7pm

“A republic—if you can keep it.” ~Benjamin Franklin

In May of 1787, William Richardson Davie, a North Carolina lawyer and Revolutionary War hero, trekked four hundred miles from Raleigh to Philadelphia. On arrival, he and fifty-four contemporaries began daily to congregate in a small assembly room downtown. As the climate in the room shifted from temperate June to the swelter and stench of July and August, these men crafted the document that we now know as the United States Constitution. People contest the legacy of that summer’s work. According to some, it is an ugly patchwork of concessions, accommodations, and compromises, twisted to serve narrow interests and blemished by more than one moral tragedy. By other accounts, this congregation accomplished, on the fly and in the face of enormous outside pressures, an advance in the art of statecraft without peer.*

This course aims to equip you to think about such weighty matters through the lens of social science. We have three broad objectives:

1. Understand the major institutions (e.g. Congress, the courts) and processes (e.g. campaigns and elections) in the American political system, making you a more sophisticated consumer of current events and laying the groundwork for more advanced study in these areas.
2. Convey how social scientists think about and analyze the world, and provide examples of how they apply the scientific method to political topics.
3. Cultivate the fruits of a liberal arts education. Among these are efficiently reading and assimilating information; making clear written and verbal arguments and supporting them with evidence; understanding perspectives contrary to your own; critiquing arguments respectfully; and finding common ground.

* Davie was an important figure in the Constitutional Convention: he was part of the “Grand Committee” that forged a compromise on how to apportion representatives to the national legislature. In the following years, he played an instrumental role in founding UNC Chapel Hill. The building that houses our Psychology Department bears his name.

Requirements and Evaluation

First exam:	15%
Second exam:	15%
Final exam (Dec. 14 at 4pm):	20%
Two constitutional amendment proposals	2 × 10%
Two committee reports (group-written)	2 × 7.5%
Participation (incl. pop quizzes):	15%

A separate document (available on Sakai) details the requirements for the constitutional amendment proposals and committee reports.

Participation is graded as follows. At each class meeting, you will give yourself 0 to 3 points, depending on how prepared you are for class and how much you intend to participate. (0 = absent from class; 1 = attended class but did not do reading; 2 = attended class but reading was partial or rushed; 3 = attended class, completed reading with care, *and commit to being proactive in asking questions and contributing to discussion.*) The semester-long score generated by these reports is advisory to the instructor-assigned participation grade—I can and do adjust self-reports that are inconsistent with what I see in class—but I take them seriously.

Because attendance is a course requirement (see the Undergraduate Bulletin) and critical to having a lively discussion, more than three unexcused absences can have a negative effect on your grade—potentially a drastic one—outside the scheme above. (That is, it can affect more than just your 15% participation grade.) If you have missed more than three classes, you should talk to me. Note that partial absences, such as leaving class twenty minutes early to attend a special event, count toward this tally.

Finally, all students who enroll in Poli100 must complete a ‘research activity’ (a departmental requirement). This activity can take either of two forms. The first (much more popular) option is to participate in studies conducted by researchers in the Political Science Department. The total time commitment to such studies will not exceed three hours. Alternatively, you may write a 4-page research paper with guidance from the instructor. You should alert me by September 10 if you wish to avail yourself of the second option. If you do not satisfy the research participation requirement, you will receive a course grade of ‘incomplete’ until you do it.

Course Texts

Most readings are available online, but we are reading substantial parts of three books, and you should purchase them. They are:

1. *Gideon’s Trumpet* by Anthony Lewis. As I write this syllabus, a new copy costs \$13.56 on [Amazon](#).
2. *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign* by Frances E. Lee. \$30.00 new / \$8.86 used on [Amazon](#).
3. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity* by Lilliana Mason. \$20.57 new on [Amazon](#).

Other Policies

Technology in the classroom. I usually allow the use of laptops in class—I can ask you to turn them off as circumstances require—but Wi-Fi must be turned off. For what it’s worth, most people [take better notes, remember more, and get better grades](#) when they take notes on paper rather than a computer. If I see you using your computer for extraneous purposes—e.g. chat—you can lose one point from your course grade. (I probably won’t say anything in the moment; I’ll just email you after class to let you know it happened.)

Email. You can certainly contact me by email, and I will usually respond within 24 hours. But note that email is best for concise correspondence—something that I can plausibly answer in a few sentences. (E.g. “Why isn’t reading X on Sakai?”) For questions that require a more elaborate response (“What does Madison really mean where he writes...”), I will likely ask you to come to office hours, or to ask your question in class, so that everyone might benefit from hearing it. I usually will not use email to repeat information that was missed because of an absence; I’ll direct you to correspond with a classmate. Hence, I encourage you to get to know your classmates early-on in the semester.

Academic integrity. Academic integrity is always important in the academy, and an especially proud part of our culture at UNC, as exemplified by the honor system. Cheating and plagiarism are serious business and very sad for student and instructor alike. When in doubt, cite your sources or ask the instructor. Be assured that if I identify a case of cheating or plagiarism, I will handle it 100% “by the book,” which means (at a minimum) that you will fail the relevant assignment and that I will refer your case to the Student Attorney General. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please refer to the [explanation](#) from the UNC writing center. (I am also at your disposal.)

Students with disabilities. If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know. I will work with the Office of Accessibility Resources and Services to determine appropriate accommodations. I will treat any information you provide as confidential. Barring unusual circumstances, I require notice of a need for accommodation within the *first two weeks* of the semester.

Grade grievances. Requests for regrades have a time window. They cannot be submitted until at least 72 hours have passed since the assignment was returned (a cool down period), and then they will only be accepted within three weeks of an assignment being returned (a statute of limitations). To request a regrade, you must submit a written memo (two pages max) explaining what aspect of your original grade you think was in error.

Absence during key classes. Generally, absences on exam days will be excused for reasons of religious observance, illness, or family emergencies. The same goes for the amendment workshop and convention days listed below, as attendance on these days is an important component of a major assignment. I will generally require a written request for an absence. It must come as far in advance of the absence as possible if the absence is foreseen, or as soon after as possible if it is not foreseen. Per university policy, only your academic advisor can provide an official final exam excused absence.

Course Schedule

January 10 – Course Introduction

- Friedersdorf, Conor. 2016. “[The Highest Form of Disagreement.](#)” *The Atlantic*.
- Research Activity Requirement document (Sakai)
- Constitutional Convention Exercise document (Sakai)

January 15: The Constitution, Part 1

- The [United States Constitution](#)

January 17: The Constitution, Part 2

- Madison, [The Federalist No. 10](#).
- Madison, [The Federalist No. 51](#).
- Brutus, *Anti-Federalist* No. 1. (It’s various places online, but read the PDF on Sakai.)

January 22: Congress’s Inner Workings, Pt. 1

- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, pp. 81-140. (Sakai)

January 24: Congress’s Inner Workings, Pt. 2

- Lee, *Insecure Majorities*, ch. 1-3

January 29: Congress’s Inner Workings, Pt. 3

- Lee, *Insecure Majorities*, ch. 5 (pp. 112-131 only); 6 (entire)

January 31: Congressional Elections

- Vox [explainer](#) on gerrymandering
- Klarreich, Erica. “[Gerrymandering is Illegal, But Only Mathematicians Can Prove It.](#)”
- Stephanopoulos, Nicholas and Eric McGhee, “Partisan Gerrymandering and the Efficiency Gap.” Pp. 831-838; 849-884. (Sakai)
- Republican National Committee *Amici Curiae* Brief, *Gill v. Whitford*. (Sakai)

February 5: The Electoral College

- Hamilton, [The Federalist](#) No 68.
- Berns, Walter. 2001. “[Two-and-a-Half Cheers for the Electoral College.](#)”
- Koza, John R., et al. 2013. [Every Vote Equal](#), pp. 1-56.

February 7: Presidential Power

- Hamilton, [The Federalist No. 70](#). (First version only.)

- Neustadt, Richard E. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (Selection, On Sakai).
- Dominguez, Casey, et al. “[Presidential Power and the Unitary Executive](#)” (*A Few Reasonable Words* Podcast). 43 minutes.
- Parker, Ashley. 2014. “[House G.O.P. Files Lawsuit in Battling Health Law.](#)” *The New York Times*.
- Bagley, Nicholas. 2017. “[Trump’s Ominous Threat to Withhold Payments From Health Insurers, Explained.](#)” Vox.com.
- Shear, Michael D. 2014. “[Obama, Daring Congress, Acts to Overhaul Immigration.](#)”
- Shear, Michael D. and Helene Cooper. 2017. “[Trump Bars Refugees and Citizens of 7 Muslim Countries.](#)”

February 12: The Bureaucracy

- Kernell et al. chapter on the Bureaucracy, from *The Logic of American Politics*. (Sakai)
- Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2017. “[Why Trump Can’t Undo the Regulatory State so Easily.](#)” Brookings Series on Regulatory Process and Perspectives.
- Eilperin, Juliet, et al. 2017. “[Resistance from Within: Federal Workers Push Back Against Trump.](#)” *The Washington Post*.
- Rappeport, Alan and Jim Tankersley. 2018. “[Trump Administration Mulls a Unilateral Tax Cut for the Rich.](#)”
- Tankersley, Jim. 2018. “[Steel Giants with Ties to Trump Officials Block Tariff Relief for Hundreds of Firms.](#)”

February 14: The President and Congress Reconsidered

- Howell, William G. and Terry M. Moe. 2016. *Relic*, pp. 47-75; 95-112; 143-163. (On Sakai.)

February 19: Exam 1

February 21: Federalism

- Kollman chapter on Federalism, from *The American Political System*. (Sakai)
- Epstein, Richard A. and Mario Loyola. 2014. “[Saving Federalism.](#)” *National Affairs*.

February 26: The Supreme Court

- Lewis, Anthony. 1964. *Gideon’s Trumpet*, ch. 1-5 (Skim pp. 67-81)

February 28: The Supreme Court

- Lewis, Anthony. 1964. *Gideon’s Trumpet*, ch. 6-12 (Skim ch. 7, 11)
- Amendment proposal #1 due

March 5: Amendment workshop #1

March 7: Jurisprudence

- Scalia, Antonin. 1998. “Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System: The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws,” pp. 3-25; 37-47 (On Sakai).
- Breyer, Stephen. 2011. “Making Our Democracy Work,” *Yale Law Journal* 120, pp. 1999-2026. (On Sakai).

March 8, 6pm: Committee Report #1 due

March 19: Spotlight on a Case

- Listen to [oral arguments](#) in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, Question 1 (90 minutes).
- [Decision of the Court](#), PDF pp. 6-33 (Kennedy’s opinion); 40-68 (Roberts’s dissent).

March 21: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

- Rauch, Jonathan. 2017. “[Nondiscrimination for All.](#)” *National Affairs*.
- Feuer, Alan. 2017. “[Justice Dept. Weighs In Against Protections for Gays in the Workplace.](#)” *The New York Times*.
- Oosting, Jonathan. 2018. “[Judge: Michigan GOP ‘Intentionally Discriminated’ with Straight-ticket Ban.](#)” *The Detroit News*.
- Barbaro, Michael. 2018. “[Cracking Down on Leaks.](#)” *The New York Times Daily Podcast*. (25 minutes.)

March 26: Amendment Convention #1

- Read amendment proposals posted to Sakai and write a 150-word comment on one of them.

March 28: Exam 2

April 2: Polarization, Pt. 1

- Rauch, Jonathan. 2016. “[How American Politics Went Insane.](#)” *The Atlantic*.

April 4: Interest Groups 1

- Hall, Richard L.[†] and Alan V. Deardorff. 2006. “Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy.” (Sakai).

April 9: Interest Groups 2

- Dominguez, Casey, et al. “[Lobbying.](#)” (*A Few Reasonable Words*). 29 minutes.
- Barbaro, Michael. 2018. “[Why the ACLU Wants to be More Like the NRA.](#)” *The New York Times Daily Podcast*. 28 minutes.
- Amendment proposal #2 due, 6pm

April 11: Amendment workshop #2

[†] UNC alumnus!

April 16: Polarization, Pt. 2

- Mason, Lilliana, *Uncivil Agreement*, ch. 1-3

April 18: Polarization, Pt. 3

- Mason, Lilliana, *Uncivil Agreement*, ch. 4, 5, 7
- Committee Report #2 due at 6pm

April 23: Amendment Convention #2

- Read amendment proposals posted to Sakai and write a 150-word comment on one of them.

April 25: Review and Conclusions

- Assign reading to the professor. (I'll say more about this in class.)

April 30, 4pm: Final exam