

POL SCI 40: Introduction to American Politics

9:00 am - 5:00 pm MTWRF
UCLA Summer Institute 2025
Course Syllabus



Instructor: Dr. Chase Privett
Email Address: chaseprivett4@gmail.com
Office: TBD
Office hours: During Study Hall by Appointment
Course Website: TBD
Lecture Location: TBD

Welcome to Political Science 40: Introduction to American Politics! This is an introduction to the key American national political ***institutions***, the factors that motivate political ***behavior***, and the ***limitations*** that shape politics, policymaking, and democracy. Topics to be covered include the logic of collective action, the Constitution, civil rights and civil liberties, the legislature, the presidency, the judiciary, political parties, campaigns and elections, public opinion and polling, and the media.

The course is designed to make you think about the logic of the institutions of our government and the consequences – both intended and unintended – of these institutions on the political behavior of citizens, legislators, and other political leaders and activists. We will focus on how American political institutions are designed to solve coordination and collective action problems, and why change is ultimately slow.

Daily attendance of all lectures, in-class exercises, study hall, field trips, and guest speakers is required. You are responsible for all material in assigned readings and discussed in class, as well as completing daily hands-on activities and the group project.

Required Books

Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, Lynn Vavreck, and Timothy R. Johnson. 2025. *The Logic of American Politics*, 12th Edition. Washington, DC: CQ Press. PDF, e-book, or hard copy.¹

The textbook is referred to as LAP below. Additional readings will be distributed as PDF documents via the course webpage.

¹ Feel free to use a slightly older version of the textbook. The page numbers will be different, but the chapters should be largely the same.

Course Requirements and Grading

The course will have daily in-class exercises, a Campaign Advertisement project, one midterm exam, and one Final Exam during the quarter. Both exams will be administered in-person during class time. The Grading breakdown is as follows:

Percentage	Assignment	Description
20%	In-class Exercises	To be distributed and collected in class throughout the term.
25%	Campaign Advertisement Project	More information provided below.
25%	Midterm Exam	Exam will be held on Thursday, July 3rd.
30%	Final Exam	Exam will be held on Friday, July 11th.

Campaign Advertisement Group Project

The Campaign Advertisement Project is designed to immerse students in the practical aspects of American politics by engaging them in the creation of a comprehensive campaign advertisement for a candidate. Through the development of a fictional candidate, a slogan, mailer, and campaign video, students will explore the art of political communication and persuasion. You will complete this project in groups of five.

You will be assessed based on the creativity and effectiveness of the campaign slogan, mailer, and video advertisement in conveying the candidate's message. Be sure to consider the visual appeal, clarity, and coherence of each portion of the project. This project allows students to apply their understanding of political communication while delving into the nuances of crafting a compelling campaign message for a fictional candidate. More information about the individual parts of the Campaign Advertisement Project, including instructions and the respective due dates are posted on the next page.

Task	Instructions	Due Date
Group Formation	Form a group of five students in the class who will collaborate on the project. Students who do not submit a group to me will be randomly assigned a group.	June 23rd at 3:30pm
Candidate Selection	Choose a fictional candidate for whom you will create the campaign advertisement. Consider the candidate's background, policy positions, and target audience. Create a one-page, single-spaced write-up describing your candidate.	June 26th at 3:30pm
Slogan Development	Craft a memorable and impactful slogan that encapsulates the candidate's key message. Ensure the slogan is concise, easy to remember, and resonates with the target audience. Provide a one-page, single-spaced explanation of the rationale behind the chosen slogan.	June 30th at 3:30pm
Mailer Design	Every campaign sends mailers to prospective voters and supporters. Develop a visually appealing mailer that would enhance your candidate's chances of winning. You should include the candidate's image, the campaign slogan, and key policy highlights. Utilize color schemes, typography, and imagery strategically to convey the desired message. Consider the layout and placement of elements for maximum impact. In addition, provide a one-page, single-spaced write-up arguing why your mailer would be effective.	July 3rd at 3:30pm
Campaign Video	Create a video advertisement for the candidate, with a recommended duration of 1-2 minutes. Combine visuals, music, and narration to convey the candidate's narrative effectively. Highlight key policy positions, personal attributes, and the overall campaign message. Ensure the video is engaging and aligned with the campaign's tone. We will present these video advertisements during the last day of class on Friday, July 11th.	July 10th at 3:30pm

Assessment of Group Members	After submitting and presenting the video advertisement, I will provide an evaluation form for all students. The evaluation form will ask about each member's level of contribution and extent of participation, as well as an overall grade for each team member (only I will see these evaluation forms). These evaluations will count for half of a student's grade for the project. The remaining half will consist of my assessment of the other portions of the campaign advertisement project (i.e., the write-ups, slogan, mailer, and campaign video).	July 11th at 3:30pm
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Late Work

Unexcused late assignments will have a 10% deduction for every 24-hours that they are late. I highly recommend that you turn in all work on time due to the intensive three-week format of this course. Late work that would be considered "excused" must be accompanied by a doctor's note or a note from a UCLA administrator.

Attendance Policy

Attendance at each class is mandatory. If a student misses more than two classes for any reason, they will automatically be dropped from the course. Class attendance will be taken at the beginning of every day and immediately following lunch.

Office Hours

Office hours will be held during study hall every day. If you would like to schedule a time to meet, please email me to do so. Please visit me sooner rather than later! I am always happy to help.

Email

I will be emailing the class occasionally, so please check your email frequently to stay up to date with our class. When sending emails to me, please include "**POL SCI 40**" on the subject line to help me respond quicker. I will do my best to respond within 24 hours to your emails, but it may take longer on the weekends. Email should be used for logistical purposes (e.g., setting up an appointment, etc.) or answering a quick question. If you want to discuss course materials, please ask during class! I'm always happy to help you understand the material! Also, federal law prohibits discussing grades and such via email.

Grade Dispute Policy

If you have a good reason to believe that an exam was graded incorrectly, you may submit a grade dispute, but only through the following process. First, wait at least 24 hours but no more than one week after the exam is returned to you. Second, explain in writing why the assignment was not graded correctly. Third, return the exam to me, along with the written explanation. Three points bear emphasis. First, you should not attempt to dispute your grade unless you can clearly show that something marked incorrect is actually correct. Second, if you ask for a regrade, your entire exam will be regraded, not just the part you are disputing. Regrade requests may result in a lower grade. Finally, if you make any attempt to dispute or negotiate about grades in person (during lecture or Office Hours), rather than in writing, you forfeit your ability to request that the grade be reconsidered.

Academic Integrity

Your work should consist of your own ideas and your own words. Quotations and ideas used from other authors must be properly cited. If you are unfamiliar with the University's policy on academic dishonesty and associated penalties, see <http://deanofstudents.ucla.edu/>. Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated and will result in an immediate "F" in the course and will be reported to the Dean of Students. If you are unclear about this policy or what constitutes as plagiarism, please feel free to ask me for clarification.

Accommodations

Accessible Education: Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu. Please contact me if you have accommodations with CAE.

Religious Observances: In the event of a religious holiday or any other form of observance, please email me regarding your absence so we can make accommodations for you.

Development of this Course

Learning should not happen in a vacuum. To help ensure the best chance for success for the students of this course, this course draws on the format, syllabus, and materials from similar successful courses. I am incredibly thankful to Professor Lynn Vavreck, Professor Chris Tausanovitch, William "Ajax" Peris, Thomas Scherer, Igor Geyn, and all those who influenced them, for their gracious help. Many of my materials draw on theirs for inspiration and guidance.

Final Remarks

I reserve the right to make changes to the course syllabus at any point in the quarter should I feel that it would better enhance our class. If any problems should arise, please contact me so that we can address these problems early.

Resources

- Social Sciences Undergraduate Writing Center: Powell 238
- Political Science Dept. Undergraduate Affairs Officer: 4269 Bunche Hall
- CAPS 24/7 Hotline: (310) 825-0768
- CARE Advocate: (310) 206-2465
- UCLA Title IX Coordinator: (310) 206-3417
- Rape Treatment Center at Santa Monica (UCLA Medical Center): (424) 259-6700

Title IX Office

Title IX prohibits gender discrimination, including sexual harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence, you can receive confidential support and advocacy at the CARE Advocacy Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Website: CAREadvocate@careprogram.ucla.edu

Phone: (310) 206-2465

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS provides counseling services to students who are in need of support in any way 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Appointment can be made by contacting CAPS during their office hours Monday - Friday 9 am - 4 pm. Crisis support is available 24/7 by phone at 310-825-0768.

Website: www.counseling.ucla.edu

Phone Number: (310) 825-0768

Campus Location: John Wooden Center West, 221 Westwood Plaza

Undergraduate Writing Center (UWC)

The Undergraduate Writing Center offers UCLA undergraduates one-on-one sessions available by appointment through 25-minute to 50-minute appointments to support your academic writing needs. They may also have 25-minute same-day drop-in appointments available. The Center is staffed by peer learning facilitators (PLFs), undergraduates who are trained to help at any stage in the writing process and with writing assignments from across the curriculum. PLFs tailor appointments to the concerns of each writer. Book your appointment at uwc.ucla.edu or email UWC at wcenter@g.ucla.edu. The UWC is open Mondays/Wednesdays from 2 pm – 9 pm and Tuesdays/Thursday 10 am - 5 pm.

Website: <https://uwc.ucla.edu/>

Phone Number: 310-206-1320

Email: wcenter@g.ucla.edu

Campus Location: Kaplan Hall A61

Suggestions

When preparing for class, think about how the assigned reading(s) fits in with the lecture’s theme(s) for the day. If you are struggling with how you should approach the readings and course material, here are some guiding questions that may facilitate your learning.

- What is the main argument of the reading?
- What are the key terms presented?
- How does this connect with other readings from class? How does this connect with the concepts presented during lecture?

Typical Daily Schedule

Time	Activity
9am - 10:15am	Instruction
10:15am - 10:30am	Break
10:30am - 12:00pm	In-Class Exercise
12:00pm - 1:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm - 3:30pm	Study Hall, Time for Reading, Campaign Ads Project, Office Hours
3:30pm - 3:45pm	Break
3:45pm - 5:00pm	Guest Speaker

Schedule of the Course

Day	Topic	Readings
June 23 (M)	Introduction and The Logic of American Politics	LAP Ch. 1, Federalist 10
June 24 (T)	The Constitution	LAP Ch. 2, The Constitution and the Amendments, Optional: Federalist 51
June 25 (W)	Federalism	LAP Ch. 3, Optional: Dahl, Ch. 3
June 26 (R)	Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	LAP Ch. 4 Optional: Ch. 5, Nyhan, "Norms Matter"
June 27 (F)	FIELD TRIP	Ronald Reagan Library
June 30 (M)	Congress	LAP Ch. 6, Optional: Mahew, p. 49-67
July 1 (T)	The Presidency	LAP Ch. 7
July 2 (W)	The Federal Judiciary	LAP Ch. 9, Optional: Federalist No. 78 Start reviewing for the Midterm!
July 3 (R)	MIDTERM EXAM	
July 4 (F)	NO CLASS	Independence Day Holiday – No Class
July 7 (M)	Campaigns and Elections	LAP Ch. 11 Optional: The Bitter End, Chapter 1
July 8 (T)	The News Media	LAP Ch. 14 Sides vs. Cillizza in the Washington Post Optional: Identity Crisis, Chapter 4
July 9 (W)	Political Parties	LAP Ch. 12
July 10 (R)	Public Opinion	LAP Ch. 10
July 11 (F)	FINAL EXAM	