

POL 106 – United States Government and Civic Practices  
Spring 2013  
Tuesday-Thursday, 3:35-4:50 PM  
Schroeder 130

**Instructor:** Dr. Carl L. Palmer  
**Office:** 433 Schroeder Hall  
**Office Hours:** Tuesday/Thursday 2:00-3:30, or by appointment  
**Email:** clpalme [at] ilstu [dot] edu

**Course Objectives:**

The purpose of this course is to provide students with an introduction to American Politics. We will move from the founding of the Republic to modern politics, examining the development and evolution of institutions and actors in the political system. As citizens of a Republican Democracy, you are expected to be informed about and engaged in the workings of day-to-day politics, so as to best exercise your rights and make your voice heard. This course will serve as a stepping stone to do so, as we discuss the relationships among governmental institutions, the relationship between citizens and government, and why political actors behave the way they do.

By the end of the course, students should be able to critically examine the behavior of actors and institutions, and be able to apply that understanding to an explanation of current political debates, such as President Obama's use of executive order, Congress' attempts to overturn Obamacare, and the 2016 Presidential race. You should also understand and be able to discuss the normative implications of civic engagement, or the lack thereof among much of the electorate, for the future of the American Republic.

To accomplish these goals, it is expected that students will attend class having already done the required reading for that day's class. Coming prepared to engage the material is imperative in order to get the most out of lecture.

**Required Readings:**

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavreck. 2016. *The Logic of American Politics*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

**Course Policies:**

1. Exams must be taken at the times specified in the syllabus; makeup exams will be given only in the most extreme circumstances, with provided documentation of the absence. Makeup exams will consist of four essay questions. If you know you cannot make any one of the exam dates listed in the syllabus, you should not take this class.
2. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please see the university's policies regarding plagiarism and cheating online at the Dean of Students Office website.

3. All assignments must be submitted *at the beginning of class* on the due date in the syllabus; late assignments will lose 10% credit per day late. All assignments *must* be typed unless otherwise instructed.
4. To be considered for a regrade assignments or exams must be accompanied by a no greater than 1 page (single spaced) memo detailing your claim. Memos must provide justification for a change of grade using examples from course material, and will only be accepted after a 24-hour *cooling-off* period. Memos must be submitted within one week of the initial return date for the assignment or exam.
5. Usage of cell phones in lecture will not be permitted. Please silence all cell phones before coming to class. If I see anyone using a cell phone in class I will administer a pop quiz which will affect your participation grade. Laptop computers and tablets are permissible so long as they are used for *academic* uses during lecture.
6. If you have special needs that require accommodation for exams, please let me know early on so that the appropriate measures can be taken. You will be required to provide documentation of your requirements.
7. If you have any questions at any point in the class, PLEASE ask. I will be happy to answer any questions about the course material. This includes if lecture is moving too quickly, or simply do not understand something. Keep in mind that this is YOUR responsibility.
8. Email: I strongly encourage email questions and comments. However, when you write you are expected to write as you would in any professional correspondence: Capital letters to start the first word of a sentence, “Dear Professor Palmer” (or “Hi Professor Palmer”) to open the email, correct spelling, capital letters in the correct places, punctuation, etc. (“Hey” is not appropriate.) It is likely that I will not answer emails phrased inappropriately or that include misspellings, etc., or I may give you a two word response, “Course Expectations,” meaning that you should re-write your email in a more appropriate form and resend it. I will not answer questions that can be answered if you read the syllabus. I will either not answer or write back a one-word response: “syllabus”.

### **Course Requirements:**

#### Participation (10%):

There is no strict attendance policy for the course, but you will be graded on your participation in lecture. Your participation grade will be based on your completion in in-class discussion activities. These activities will not be announced, and cannot be made up if absent.

#### Exams (90%)

There will be 4 non-cumulative exams consisting of 50 multiple-choice questions each. Exams are equally weighted, and you will be able to drop your lowest exam.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Week 1**

Jan. 12 – Introductions and syllabus

Jan. 14 – The “Logic” of American Politics (*Logic*, Ch 1)

**Week 2: The Articles of Confederation and the Constitution**

Jan. 19– The Articles and Drafting the Constitution (*Logic*, Ch 2)

Jan. 21 – Advocating the Constitution

**Week 3: Federalism, State and Local Government**

Jan. 26 – Federalism (*Logic*, Ch 3)

Jan. 28 – Federalism cont.

**Week 4:**

Feb. 2 – State and Local Politics

Feb. 4 – Exam 1

**Week 5: Civil Rights**

Feb. 9 – Civil Rights (*Logic*, Ch 4)

Feb. 11 – Civil Rights cont.

**Week 6: Civil Liberties**

Feb. 16 – Civil Liberties (*Logic*, Ch 5)

Feb. 18 – Civil Liberties cont.

**Week 7: The Congress**

Feb. 23 – Congress (*Logic*, Ch 6)

Feb. 25 – Congress cont.

**Week 8:**

Mar. 1 – Congress cont.

Mar. 3 – Exam 2

**Week 9: Spring Break**

Mar. 8 – no class

Mar. 10– no class

**Week 10: The President/Bureaucracy**

Mar. 15 – The Presidency (*Logic*, Ch 7)

Mar. 17 – The Bureaucracy (*Logic*, Ch 8)

**Week 11: Judiciary**

Mar. 22 – The Judiciary (*Logic*, Ch 9)

Mar. 24 – The Judiciary cont.

**Week 12: Parties and Interest Groups**

Mar. 29 – Political Parties (*Logic*, Ch 12)

Mar. 31 – Interest Groups (*Logic*, Ch 13)

**Week 13: Exam 3**

Apr. 5 – Exam 3

Apr. 7 – MPSA meeting – no class

**Week 14: Public Opinion**

Apr. 12 – Public Opinion (*Logic*, Ch 10)

Apr. 14 – Public Opinion cont.

**Week 15: Voting and Elections**

Apr. 19 – Vote Choice (*Logic*, Ch 11 pp. 486-505)

Apr. 21 – Campaigns and Elections (*Logic*, Ch 11, pp. 506-530)

**Week 16: The Media/Evaluating American Democracy**

Apr. 26 – The Media (*Logic*, Ch 14)

Apr. 28 – Do our institutions work? (*Logic*, Ch 15)