This course offers an introduction to the major institutions, participants, and processes in American politics. The focus is on how the structure of our political system conditions the practice of politics at the national level -- the ongoing struggles among competing groups and individuals for influence over government activities and public policy. We will examine the principles underlying the constitutional framework of American government, and analyze the three branches (Congress, the Judiciary, and the Executive) while trying to understand the advantages and problems inherent in a system of "checks and balances." We will also consider important extra-governmental actors, such as political parties, interest groups, and the media. In the final part of the course, we will look into important issues of public policy, and focus on economic, budget, end social welfare policies.

My goals in this class are (1) to show you that politics can be interesting -- even fascinating -- (2) give you the skills to become informed consumers of political information, and (3) introduce you to the ways that political scientists see the world.

My position is that there is no such thing as a boring time to study politics, and every year presents important controversies and challenges. We are on the cusp of the 2016 presidential election season (after what seems like 3 years of warm up), with the first primaries and caucuses taking place early next year. We have 17 Republican candidates (18 if you count DeeZ Nuts, but since he is a 15 year old kid from Graettinger, IA, and that's not his real name, it's hard to see things working out for him), and at least 6 Democrats (Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and 4 others few people know are actually running, though that doesn't include Joe Biden, who is currently in 3rd place ). The campaign can seem ridiculous, and it doesn't help that the question most reporters apparently want to ask of both the Democratic and Republican frontrunners is "what's up with your hair?"

At the same time, the issues at stake in this campaign are, to put it mildly, significant. Terrorism, economic growth, nuclear threats, ISIS, climate change, income inequality, Russia, China, health care, taxes, immigration, the future of Social Security, the national debt, and on and on. Even under "normal" times, these would be challenging. In a highly polarized climate in which Democrats and Republicans seem to despise each other and "compromise" is a filthy word, it is even harder.

The particulars of these political disputes appear to be unique and new, but they are not. Rather, they reflect deep tensions about the role of government, conflicts over values, the nature of the social contract, and the particular distribution of costs and benefits of government action that have shaped American politics since the beginning of the Republic.

You should purchase the following books, which available at the University bookstore (though you're free to purchase them elsewhere if you can get a better deal. Make sure you have the correct editions):
I will place additional readings on Learn@UW along with information about scheduling and assignments, and will from time to time send current events readings over email.

You are also required to read a national news source. You can obtain reduced-rate subscriptions to either the New York Times or the Wall St. Journal, and you can get easy access to most national newspapers via the web (Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com. The New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com). The Wall St. Journal has gone entirely behind a pay wall. The exams will include questions about current national political events.

Grade Components

Your grade will be determined by your performance in four areas: section attendance and participation, section assignments, 4 short quizzes, and two in class exams (a 12 week midterm and a final). Quizzes will be online, and you’ll have a 24 hour window in which to complete them. The weights for each are:

Section attendance and participation 15%
Section assignments 10%
Quizzes 3 @ 6.67% each, total 20%
12 week midterm 25%
Final exam 30%

Section attendance is required. The sections are a critical part of the course: they are a useful way to stay current with the class material, and are also a good place to seek help if you have questions. Your TA will provide you with more details about what is expected.

Students enrolled in Comm-B sections (302, 312, 1nd 317) will have a different grade weighting system, and will receive additional information in section.

The reading load for this class is moderate (it averages about 90-100 pages per week), and it is vital that you stay current. Some of the readings are difficult, and you can’t expect to sail through them 2 days before the exams. Readings for each week are listed in the syllabus, and you should be prepared to discuss them in section. Discussion Sections will not meet the first week of class.

2 There are two other editions (a “Brief” and a “Core”), which do not have all of the chapters we will cover. Don’t buy them.
Course Administration

This is a large class. You may feel overwhelmed by the number of students and be tempted to fade into the background. That is understandable, but not necessary. Please see your TA or me if you have any questions or problems about the class, lectures, or readings (honest, we don’t bite), or if you are facing other difficulties. It is always easier to deal with things when they come up, we’re actually pretty good at helping, and we can direct you toward appropriate resources.

Here is a list of guidelines that will help us both make it through the class.

1. Don’t be reluctant to ask questions during lecture. If there is something that you don’t understand, if I’m talking too fast, or if you want clarification, don’t be bashful: Let me know. Trust me on this – if you have a question, other people do, too.

2. A significant chunk of course activities will be online: the quizzes, section activities and submitted assignments, and even some discussion. This is the first time I have instituted these activities, and there may be technical glitches. I can’t promise everything will work perfectly. I can promise that problems, if they occur, won’t affect your grade.

3. There are three graded quizzes, which you will take online during a specific time window (currently it is Thursday 5PM through Friday 10AM in quiz weeks, although that might change). These are open book and open note, though you will not have time to do much with the book or notes. You must also complete these on your own, and refrain from discussing the questions or answers until the quiz window closes. I expect an honor system to suffice, but there are protocols to detect collaboration or other forms of poor decision making.

4. Lectures are a connectivity-free zone. You will have to go off the grid during class: no phones, no texting, no email, no Snapchat/Buzzfeed/Facebook/YouTube/eBay/ESPN/Twitter/Reddit/Instagram/LinkedIn/WordPress/Amazon/World of Warcraft, etc.

I have a reason for this: There is solid evidence that your being distracted by online activities not only leads to poor understanding of class material (duh), but it also hurts the people sitting around you. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254. Note that research also shows that students who take notes on a computer do worse that students who use paper and pen (http://www.ugr.es/~victorhs/recinfo/docs/10.1.1.9.9018.pdf).

I’m not going to prohibit all laptop use in class, though I will declare a couple of lectures “technology free” and require everyone to go without a computer.¹ I’ll provide notice so nobody is surprised.

Going offline be difficult at first, and your friends may worry that you have fallen down a well or been abducted by aliens when you don’t respond their messages in 15 seconds. But I assure you that you will not, in fact, die from disconnecting (although it may feel that way initially). You may also come to realize that you can’t pay attention in class when you are online, that multitasking is a myth, and that you don’t really need to know if Fox is serious about bringing back Firefly, at least not right this minute.

I will ask you to put away your phones and disconnect at the beginning of each lecture. The TAs will help me monitor this.

Remember what the Dalai Lama says (or probably would say) about this kind of thing: if you’re here, be here.

¹ If you have accommodations through McBurney, you may be exempt from this rule, depending on the specifics of your Visa
4. **There are no make-up exams; this size of the class simply precludes this.**

The dates of the midterm and final are listed below. Clear your calendars now. Exceptions to the no-make-up rule will be made only for cases of (1) absence due to membership on an officially recognized University group or athletic team that will be out of town on the day of an exam; (2) unexpected and serious illness or injury; (3) *bona fide* family emergencies. Be ready to provide documentation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exam Type</th>
<th>Date and Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 week exam</td>
<td>Thursday, November 12th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>Tuesday, December 22nd, 12:25-2:25PM</td>
</tr>
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</table>

If you know you have a schedule issue that falls into one of the excepted categories, see me as soon as you can.

McBurney Students: Please see me right away so we can make arrangements for accommodation. I’ll need a copy of your Visa.

3. Your TA and I will always be willing to talk with you about your exam and assignment grades and suggest ways for you to improve your performance. We do our best to be consistent and fair in our grading. However, we do not bargain over grades or points, or provide extra credit assignments. Period. Barring clerical error, grades are final.

4. I expect all of you to conduct yourselves with integrity, and have some simple advice for those of you who may be tempted to rely on short-cuts and cheat your way through this class: *don’t do it.* It is a disgrace, and grossly unfair to your fellow students. Cheating encompasses, among other things: (1) plagiarism; (2) turning in work in your name that is not your own; (3) referring to notes or other written or electronic materials during exams; and (4) collaborating with others, copying someone else’s work, or providing answers to others in any fashion during exams or quizzes. If you need more information about the nature of misconduct and university procedures, refer to the [Dean of Students web site on academic misconduct](#). This site also provides information about your rights in the event that you are accused of misconduct.

If I catch you cheating, you will receive an F for the course, and I will report your misconduct to the Dean of Students. This could prevent you from getting into some undergraduate programs here, may complicate plans to attend graduate or professional school, could bar you from obtaining a job that requires a government security clearance or complicate gaining admission to a state bar, and might result in suspension or expulsion (in which case it becomes part of your transcript). That’s an enormous price to pay for a single act of stupidity. Let’s not go there.

I take this very, very seriously.

If you have any questions about these guidelines or need further clarification, please see me or your T.A.

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2 A few examples what doesn’t count: nonrefundable plane tickets, family vacations, activities of non-University groups such as fraternities or sororities, 3 finals in 24 hours, or hangovers.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Sep. 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction and Administration. Complete online survey by Sunday, September 6th. Details provided in email when survey opens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>None</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 2</th>
<th>Sep. 8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is politics? What is American politics? What is American political culture? Values, interests, and the dilemmas of politics. A famous political scientist Harold Lasswell (1902-1978) wrote that “politics is who gets what, when, and how.” Is this true? What does it really mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Sep. 10                             | Analyzing political outcomes Individual choice, rational actors, institutions, and principles |
|                                    | **Readings**                |
|                                    | TEXT: chapter 1             |

| Quiz #0                             | Complete ungraded demonstration quiz, which will open at 5PM on Thursday, September 10th and close at 10AM on Friday, September 11th. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3</th>
<th>Sep. 15</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Context and Structure of American Politics: Culture, Context, and the Constitution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TEXT: chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reader: chapters 1, nos. 2-6.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| Sep. 17                             | Context and Structure of American Politics, continued |
|                                    | **Readings**               |
|                                    | Reader: chapter 2, nos. 7, 8, 10, 11 |

| Quiz #1                             | Take the quiz from 5:00PM on September 17th to 10AM on September 18th, on Learn@UW. It will take 5 minutes. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>Sep. 22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions and Structure I: Separation of Powers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TEXT: chapter 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sep. 24  
**Institutes and Structure II: Federalism**

**Readings**  
Reader: Chapter 3, nos. 12-14  
Learn@UW

**Week 5**  
Sep. 29  
**Balancing Government Power and Individual Rights – Civil Liberties**

**Readings**  
TEXT: chapter 4  
Reader: chapter 4, no. 20  
Learn@UW

Oct. 1  
**Civil Rights**

**Readings**  
TEXT: chapter 5  
Reader: chapter 4, nos. 18-19  
Additional: Selected pages from *Obergfell v. Hodges* (2015), Learn@UW

**Quiz #2**  
Take the quiz from 5:00PM on October 1st to 10AM on October 2nd, on Learn@UW. It will take 10 minutes.

**Week 6**  
Oct. 6  
**Congress: Structure and Process**

**Readings**  
TEXT: chapter 6  
Reader: chapter 5, nos. 24-25

Oct. 8  
**Contemporary Challenges for Congress: The Tension Between Lawmaking and Representation**

**Readings**  
Reader: chapter 5, nos. 26-29

**Week 7**  
Oct. 13  
**The Presidency: The office and Powers**

**Readings**  
TEXT: chapter 7  
Reader: chapter 6, nos. 30,31
Oct. 15  The Presidency: Contemporary controversies 
Reader:  chapter 6, nos. 33, 34  
Additional:  Ezra Klein, “The Unpersuaded,” The New Yorker, March 19, 2012. Learn@UW

**Week 8**  
Oct. 20  The Courts: Interpreting the Constitution 
**Readings**  
TEXT:  chapter 9  
Reader:  chapter 8, nos. 39, 42, 43. Marbury v. Madison, pp. 589-594

Oct. 22  The Courts, continued 
**Readings** 
Reader:  chapter 9, nos. 40,41  
Additional:  James Ho, “Defining ‘American’: Birthright Citizenship and the Original Understanding of the 14th Amendment.” The Green Bag 9 (Summer 2006). Learn@UW.  
Statement of John Eastman, Claremont Institutes Center for Constitutional Jurisprudence, statement before the House Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Immigration and Border Security, Birthright Citizenship: Is It the Right Policy for America? April 29, 2015. Learn@UW

**Quiz # 3**  
Take the quiz from 5:00PM on October 22nd to 10AM on October 23rd, on Learn@UW. It will take 10 minutes.

**Week 9**  
Oct. 27  Organizing to Promote Group Values and Interests. The Problem of Collective Action. 
**Readings**  
TEXT:  chapter 13  
Reader:  chapter 12, nos. 60-62

Oct. 29  Political Parties 
**Readings**  
TEXT:  chapter 12  
Reader:  chapter 11, nos.

**Week 10**  
Nov. 3  Public Opinion and the Media 
**Readings**  
TEXT:  chapter 10, 14
Reader: chapter 9, nos. 45-50

Nov. 5  Elections and Campaigns
\textbf{Readings}

Nov. 10  Elections and Campaigns, continued
\textbf{Readings}
TBA (depends on what happens in September and October)

Nov. 12  \textbf{12 Week Exam, in class}

\textbf{Part III: Policy and Process}

Nov. 17  Introduction to Analyzing Policy
\textbf{Readings}
Reader: chapter 13, nos. 68, 71, 72

Nov. 19  An Application: Examining Health Care Reform
\textbf{Readings}
Reader: chapter 14, nos. 73-75

Nov. 24  Bureaucracy and Implementation
\textbf{Readings}

Nov. 26  Thanksgiving

Dec. 1  Economic and Budget Policy
\textbf{Readings}

Dec. 3  Contemporary Controversies in Economic and Regulatory Policy
\textbf{Readings}
Congressional Budget Office, \textit{An Update to the Budget and Economic Outlook: 2015 to 2025}; selected pages. Learn@UW
Veronique de Rugy, “Yes, We Do Have a Debt Problem,” \textit{Reason}, August/September
2013. Learn@UW

Week 15
Dec. 8  Social Policy
Readings
TEXT: chapter 16

Dec. 10 Entitlement Reform: the Future of Social Security and Medicare
Readings
Reader: chapter 14, no. 71

Week 16
Dec. 15 Foreign Affairs and Defense Policy
Readings
TEXT: chapter 17
Reader: chapter 15, nos. 78-79
I don’t expect anyone to read it, but in case you are curious about what an international agreement looks like, [here’s the text of the Iran Deal](https://www.state.gov/t/av/rls/ln/2015/240914.htm) (called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA).

Final Exam: Tuesday, December 22nd, 12:25-2:25pm, Room TBA