

# INTRODUCTION TO U.S. POLITICS

POLITICAL SCIENCE 21A  
SPRING QUARTER  
2015

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, IRVINE

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Course Information  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00 – 12:20  
Social Science Lecture Hall 100

Office Hours:  
Th 9:30-10:30 (Peets Coffee) & by appt.

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## TEACHING ASSISTANTS

### *TA*

John Emery  
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## COURSE DESCRIPTION

Because resources are scarce and people's opinions differ, policy disagreement is inevitable. Politics is the means by which people resolve such debates. This course examines the history, theory, and practice of politics in the United States.

We will first study early American democracy – its philosophical bases and constitutional foundations. From there we will turn to examining the contemporary practice of American democracy, doing so by breaking up the overall picture into its constituent parts. Having carefully considered American politics from a variety of perspectives, we will conclude by bringing our informed insight to bear on some of the most important questions confronting scholars, leaders, and citizens alike: How representative is America's representative democracy? What can we expect of "ordinary" citizens? What role should "leaders" play?

## REQUIRED READINGS

James Morone and Rogan Kersh, *By the People: Debating American Government*  
Richard Brookhiser, *James Madison*  
+ selections as we go

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS

This course is designed to introduce you to American politics, and to help you develop the analytical skills necessary to be thoughtful, active political participants. I hope you'll finish this course not only able to understand what politicians and pundits are talking about, but also to be able to assess and evaluate their competing proposals, claims, and evidence. In short, this course helps you become savvy political consumers.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I take integrity issues very seriously, largely because I trust you to act honorably. Suffice it to say, you should abide by the highest standards in this course. I expect you to act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can thrive through the fruits of their efforts. Cheating, plagiarism, or any other violations of these principles will result in a failing grade for the course and a referral to the Dean's office.

## ROCKETMIX (<https://my.rocketmix.com/enrollcourse.aspx?coursecode=67030-S15>)

Complementing the work we do in class, I have assigned a series of online modules related to course lessons. These modules offer a series of analytical exercises that give students (and me) immediate, direct feedback. The whole batch costs \$25, which you pay when signing up at the link above. To get full credit, you must complete the module *before lecture* on the date it is due.

The nine modules for this course are....

Problems of Collective Action	Open Date 3/30	Due Date 4/2*
The Founding - Creating Congress	Open Date 4/2	Due Date 4/7
The Founding - Slavery	Open Date 4/2	Due Date 4/9
The Founding - The Bill of Rights	Open Date 4/13	Due Date 4/16
Civil Rights Act of 1964	Open Date 4/20	Due Date 4/23
Congress: The Hastert Rule	Open Date 5/7	Due Date 5/12
The Pollster's Puzzle	Open Date 5/11	Due Date 5/14
What is "Non-Discretionary" Spending?	Open Date 5/21	Due Date 5/26
Presidential Elections	Open Date 6/28	Due Date 6/2

\* Because this is Week 1, you will get full credit as long as you complete this module by 4/7.

## SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If you have a special circumstance that affects your ability to meet the course's expectations – e.g., a brother's wedding, a learning disability, or anything else – contact me about it right away. So long as it does not compromise fairness for all, I am happy to help.

## ELECTRONICS

There is a plague overrunning UCI: electronics in class. As research has shown (per UCLA and Princeton students), not only is the temptation to check the news, scan facebook, or email a friend often overpowering. This not only undercuts the user's performance, but it also distracts classmates who want to pay attention and otherwise would. So I am banning all electronic devices in class.

## COURSE GRADING (I'll provide more information about each as it approaches)

Section	10 %
Research	10 %
Rocketmix	15 %
Midterm	30 %
Final	35 %

## U.S. Government in Theory

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- T 3/31      Introduction  
- *By the People*, Ch 1
- Th 4/2      Why Do We Need Government?  
- Angier, “Why We’re So Nice” in the NYT  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*PROBLEMS OF COLLECTIVE ACTION?*) DUE
- T 4/7      What Kind of Government Do We Want?  
- *By the People*, Appendix (Declaration; Federalist 10 & 51)  
- Brookhiser, Intro and Chapter 1  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*THE FOUNDING - CREATING CONGRESS*) DUE
- Th 4/9      The U.S. Constitution – The Ideals & The Politics  
- *By the People*, Chapter 2  
- Brookhiser, Chapters 2-3  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*THE FOUNDING - SLAVERY*) DUE
- T 4/14      The “Founding Fathers” and Early American Democracy  
- Brookhiser, Chapters 4-7, 11 & Epilogue
- Th 4/16      Civil Liberties  
- *By the People*, Chapter 4  
- Gawande, “Hellhole” in *The New Yorker*  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*THE FOUNDING – THE BILL OF RIGHTS*) DUE
- T 4/21      Video: *Spying on the Home Front* (PBS, Frontline)
- Th 4/23      Civil Rights & Southern Politics  
- *By the People*, Chapter 5  
- MLK, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” selection  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964*) DUE
- T 4/28      The Courts (esp. Supreme Court)  
- *By the People*, Chapter 13  
- Senior, “In Conversation with Antonin Scalia” in *New York Magazine*

**\*\*Thursday 4/30**

**Midterm (bring bluebook and pen)**

## U.S. Government in Practice

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- T 5/5            Research Assignment – The Nixon Presidency  
BRING ASSIGNED MATERIALS (INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE EMAILED AROUND)
- Th 5/7            Congress – A Representative Body  
- *By the People*, Chapter 10  
- Greenhouse, “The Numbers Don’t Lie” in *Bloomberg* 2/20/15
- T 5/12            Congress – A Decision-Making Body  
- Arnold, “Can Inattentive Citizens Control Their Elected Representatives?” in *Congress Reconsidered*  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*CONGRESS: THE HASTERT RULE*) DUE
- Th 5/14            Do “The People” Speak (Intelligently)?  
- *By the People*, Chapter 6  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*THE POLLSTER’S PUZZLE*) DUE
- T 5/19            Money in Politics – Lobbying  
- *By the People*, Chapter 9  
- Drutman, “Despite Citizens United...” in the *WaPo*, 3/27/15
- Th 5/21            The Presidency – Decision-Making (w/ Data from Research)  
- *By the People*, Chapter 11  
- Mazzetti et al., “Behind the Hunt for Bin Laden” in the *NYT*, 5/2/11
- T 5/26            The Federal Budget  
- Mettler & Sides, “We are the 96 Percent” in the *NYT*, 9/24/12  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*WHAT IS “NON-DISCRETIONARY” SPENDING?*) DUE
- Th 5/28            Mass Media and Politics  
- *By the People*, Chapter 7  
- Prior, “The Real Media Divide” in the *WaPo*, 7/16/07
- T 6/2              Presidential Campaigns and Elections  
- *By the People*, Chapter 8  
ROCKETMIX MODULE (*PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS*) DUE
- Th 6/4            Representation and Leadership in American Politics  
- Angier, “Of Altruism, Heroism, and Evolution’s Gift” in the *NYT*, 9/18/01

**\*\* Tuesday 6/9 10:30-12:30 Final (bring bluebook and pen)**