

2016

# 140 Introduction to American Politics

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**POLI 140: Introduction to American Politics**  
**Xavier University**  
**Summer 2016**

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**Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Mack Mariani, Associate Professor of Political Science

**Preferred method of contact:** E-mail

**Email:** marianim@xavier.edu

**Cell:** 513-508-6849

**Office:** 710 Schott Hall

**Office Hours:** By appointment. To set up an online meeting, contact me by text or e-mail and let me know your availability over the next day or two. I will respond to e-mails and requests for a meeting within 12 hours in most cases.

**Course Description**

Introduction to the study of American political institutions and the policy making process. The first half of the semester will focus on institutions, founding ideas, political culture, civil rights and civil liberties. The second half of the semester will examine the development of parties and interest groups, ideological and partisan polarization, trends in civic participation in the American political system, and evaluate the impact of proposed changes to American political and electoral institutions.

**Course Learning Outcomes**

After taking this course:

1. Students will be able to describe the history, structure and significance of major institutions in American politics.
2. Students will be able to clearly explain the major theories in American politics discussed in the course.
3. Students will be able to critically evaluate competing explanations (theories) of political phenomenon.
4. Students will be able to apply major theories in American politics to contemporary political events and debates.
5. Students will be able to generate well-developed political arguments backed by evidence from books, journals, and secondary sources.

**Required Books**

We will be using a version of Thomas Patterson's *We The People* textbook that has been modified for this course to make it more affordable. If no print copies are available at the bookstore, you should purchase the book online through the McGraw Hill Connect website at: <http://connect.mheducation.com/class/m-mariani-poli-140>

Thomas Patterson, *We The People*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, McGraw Hill. POLI 140 Create E-Book Edition. ISBN: 9780077763442 (Approximate Cost: \$85.00).

## Online Materials

Course assignments and discussions will take place on Canvas. Course materials will also be posted on Canvas.

## Time Commitment Expectations

- This is a six-week online course and will be very intensive, as it includes the same amount of work (for the same number of course credits) as a full semester long course.
- You should expect to spend, on average, 15 hours per week on this course (sometimes more, sometimes less), with about half of the time on course readings, videos and other content and the other half of the time on course assignments.
- You should log into the course each day to make sure you are keeping track of any important announcements. The syllabus and the reading schedule will provide you with the information you need on assignment deadlines.

## Technical Requirements

- Internet connection (DSL, LAN, or cable connection desirable)
- Access to Canvas through a supported Web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari). To ensure that you are using a supported browser and have required plug-ins please run the [Check Browser Tool](#) from the Technology Services Web site.
- Check your computer against Xavier's suggested minimum computer requirements: <http://www.xavier.edu/ts/students/Computer-Recommendations.cfm>

## Technical Assistance

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem with Canvas, contact the HELP Desk at (513) 745-HELP/4357 or visit the [HELP Desk Web site](#).

## Course Schedule

Although modules will run Monday through Sunday, you will be able to access most modules on the Friday beforehand so you can get a head start on course readings and assignments and so you can plan out your week.

There are six modules in this course.

Module 1: Course Introduction and the Scope of Conflict (May 16 – May 22)

Module 2: The Founding (May 23 – May 29)

Module 3: Institutions (May 30 – June 5)

Module 4: Parties and Elections (June 6 - June 12)

Module 5: The Media and Public Opinion (June 13 - June 19)

Module 6: Ideological Origins of the Parties (June 20 – June 26)

Online open-book Final Exam: Due by Sunday June 26 at 11:59 pm

Paper assignment (5-6 pages): Due by Sunday, July 3 at 11:59 pm

Important Note: The schedule is subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. You are expected to check announcements regularly and adhere to the established course deadlines.

## **Grading**

Your grades will be based on the following assignments, papers, tests and activities:

### **Course Assignments and Activities (various dates)**

Short writing, reading and research assignments and discussion board activities will be due throughout the semester. Your grade in this area will be the average of all grades that you receive on the assignments and activities. This is worth 20% of your grade.

### **Reading Quizzes (due on Sundays)**

For the first five modules, you are expected to complete a short, open-book quiz on the reading assignments for that week. This will make up 20% of your course grade.

### **Scope of Conflict Paper (Due Sunday, July 3)**

A 5-6 page research or argumentative paper on a topic to be announced. This will be worth 30% of your grade.

### **Final Exam (Sunday, June 26)**

The final exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. The final exam will account for 30% of your course grade.

### **Grade Overview**

- Graded Course Assignments & Activities: 20%
- Module Quizzes: 20%
- Research or Argumentative Paper: 30%
- Final Exam: 30%

Please note that the grade scheme is available on the canvas site.

### **Unfrozen Caveman Lawyer Rule**

For open ended questions, if you don't know the answer to a question, tell me what you do know and you will receive partial credit. For the origins of this rule, check out this video: <http://videosift.com/video/SNL-Unfrozen-Caveman-Lawyer>.

### **Viewing Grades in Canvas**

Points you receive for scored activities will be posted to the Canvas Grade Book. Click on the Grades link, or the Assignments link in the course menu to view your assignment scores.

## **Grade Posting Policy**

In general, you should expect to receive feedback on assignments within 48 hours of submission. Exceptions to this will be noted in the course announcements on Canvas.

## **Assignment Submission**

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas unless otherwise instructed. PLEASE DO NOT E-MAIL ME YOUR ASSIGNMENTS!

## **Late Work/Make-Up Work**

- If you are going to be late, or miss an assignment due to a family, work or health-related conflict, contact me ASAP.
- Late papers and assignments will receive a 1-letter grade penalty; those that are more than one day late will receive a 2-letter grade penalty. It is always better to hand in a late assignment than not.
- Please try to avoid late work for discussion board activities, as the discussions only work if people participate. Late discussion board activities receive a one letter grade penalty.

## **Course Policies/Guidelines**

### **Plagiarism**

Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Handing in work that is not your own, or failure to properly acknowledge sources, will result in a failing grade in the course and potential sanctions from the university.

### **Treating others with respect**

The discussion boards are created to provide an opportunity for students to actively engage in meaningful conversation on a particular topic or issue. You are encouraged to provide an honest viewpoint, while also being respectful of your classmates. Engage in a civil conversation, even when you disagree. Keep it professional and avoid any personal attacks.

### **Discussion Forums are Public**

In the discussion forums you will post assignments and discuss your work with others in the class or in your groups. These are public forums, so whatever is posted can be seen by everyone in the course, including the instructors. If you want to send a private message, use individual email. The Class Lounge discussion forum is a public space for conversation with your classmates on any topic or question.

## **Academic Support**

### **Learning Assistance Center**

The Learning Assistance Center (LAC) provides support services to facilitate learning. The LAC has two main purposes: tutoring and disability services. The tutoring services include

subject specific tutoring, drop-in sessions, study skills assistance, and Supplemental Instruction (SI). For students with documented disabilities, services include accommodations such as extended time on exams, reduced distraction testing environment, note-taking assistance, and assistive technology. Services are provided in a positive and encouraging environment, which promotes appreciation for diversity and *cura personalis*. Students in an online course can contact the LAC at (513) 745-3280 to set up an appointment. The LAC is located in the Conaton Learning Commons room 514. <http://www.xavier.edu/lac/>

### **Writing Center**

The Writing Center offers free one-on-one tutoring on writing assignments for all Xavier students. Students in an online course can contact the Center at (513) 745-2875 to set up an appointment. Sessions can be conducted in multiple ways, including discussions by phone and by email at [writingcenter@xavier.edu](mailto:writingcenter@xavier.edu). The Writing Center is located in the Conaton Learning Commons room 400. <http://www.xavier.edu/writingcenter/>

### **University Policies**

#### **Academic Honesty Policy**

The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation. All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student's own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another's efforts is prohibited, as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one's own.

#### **Copyright Policy**

Copyright laws and fair use policies protect the rights of those who have produced the material. To help you familiarize yourself with copyright and fair use policies, the University encourages you to visit the [library copyright Web page](http://www.xavier.edu/library/copyright/copyright_policy_2009.pdf) and download the following for reference purposes: [http://www.xavier.edu/library/copyright/copyright\\_policy\\_2009.pdf](http://www.xavier.edu/library/copyright/copyright_policy_2009.pdf). Xavier University, Canvas course sites contain copyrights held by the instructor, other individuals or institutions. Such material is used for educational purposes in accord with copyright law and/or with permission given by the owners of the original material. You may download one copy of the materials on any single computer for non-commercial, personal, or educational purposes only, provided that you (1) do not modify it, (2) use it only for the duration of this course, and (3) include both this notice and any copyright notice originally included with the material. Beyond this use, no material from the course web site may be copied, reproduced, re-published, uploaded, posted, transmitted, or distributed in any way without the permission of the original copyright holder. The instructor assumes no responsibility for individuals who improperly use copyrighted

material placed on the web site.

**Students with Disabilities**

Any student who feels he/she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should notify the course instructor and contact Cassandra Jones in the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 or e-mail [jonesc20@xavier.edu](mailto:jonesc20@xavier.edu) to coordinate reasonable accommodations.