



Australian  
National  
University

# POLS 2127

## U.S. Politics

SEMESTER 1 2014

### CONTACT

Course Convener	Professor Jeffrey Karp
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Office hours for student consultation	Haydon-Allen 1181 on Wednesday 2-4pm
Class location and time	John Dedman 102 Thursday 10-1pm

### COURSE OVERVIEW

The aim of this course is to introduce students to American political behaviour and institutions. We will also examine how reforms to governmental institutions and processes influence the way citizens interact with government. Throughout the module we will make comparisons between the American system and other democracies around the world.

Some of the questions that we will be looking at include:

- What is the rationale for the design of the American system what implications does it have for both citizen involvement and governing?
- How do citizens form opinions about government and public policy and what impact do they have on public policy?
- Why do so many Americans choose not to vote?
- What are some potential problems with the way that the American political system works and how can it be improved?

### WORKLOAD

Students are expected to attend three hours of class per week. This will consist of a two hour lecture followed by a one hour forum. You will also be expected to contribute to the online discussion forum on a weekly basis. Students are also expected to undertake 7 hours of independent study a week including reading and preparing essays.

### WATTLE

Announcements, lecture notes and recordings, readings, discussion forum, links to web sites and news items, and other information will be available on the POLS2127 Wattle site. You should be actively involved on this site weekly.

### LEARNING OUTCOMES

Having successfully completed this course, students should have acquired the following skills:

1. **Knowledge:** a good working knowledge of the American political system and its institutions, public opinion and elections

2. **Empirical:** ability to integrate evidence from different sources in order to generalise about American politics and behaviour

3. **Analysis:** ability to explain the consequences of America's unique design

4. **Evaluation:** ability to explain how political attitudes and behaviour are affected by institutional arrangements.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Week	Date	Day	Summary of Activities
1	20 February	Thursday	Introduction and Overview
2	27 February	Thursday	The U.S. Constitutional Framework
3	6 March	Thursday	Ideology and Public Opinion
4	13 March	Thursday	Political Parties and Interest Groups
5	20 March	Thursday	Voting and Elections
6	27 March	Thursday	Direct Democracy
			Holiday Break [29 March-12 April]
7	17 April	Thursday	Reading Week
8	24 April	Thursday	Representation
9	1 May	Thursday	Congress and the Legislative Process Essays due
10	8 May	Tuesday	Presidential Power
11	15 May	Thursday	Presidency and Foreign Policy
12	22 May	Thursday	Reforming the American Political System
13	29 May	Thursday	Conclusions
15	11 June	Wednesday	Take-home exam distributed
15	13 June	Friday	Take-home exam due

## REQUIRED RESOURCES

There is no required text for this course. Instead we will rely on a collection of contemporary readings from a variety of prominent scholars in the field. All of these can be assessed online via Wattle listed under the relevant topic.

## ASSESSMENT SUMMARY AND REQUIREMENTS

Assessment Task	Value	Learning Outcome	Due Date
1. Forum participation	10%	1-4	Weekly
2. Discussion forum (online)	10%	1-4	Weekly
3. Essay	40%	1-4	1 May at 5pm
4. Take-home exam	40%	1-4	13 June at 5pm

### 1. FORUM PARTICIPATION

**Details:** Each week following the lecture we will consider a problem or controversy. You will break into assigned groups where your group will identify a solution or position. Representatives from each group will then join a panel where we will debate the issue.

## 2. ONLINE DISCUSSION FORUM

**Details:** Each week there will be a question on Wattle based on the lecture and readings. You are required to answer the question in 200 words or less. Your answer is to be uploaded to the Wattle class forum in the form of a 'posting'. Your posting should try to engage with the lecture and readings. It is also a good idea to engage constructively with other students' comments. In your posting you can also ask questions about the readings and other students are welcome to try and answer your questions.

## 3. ESSAY

**Details:** You will be expected to write an original essay of up to 2500 words from the topic of your choice. Details about the essay will be posted on Wattle in the second week of class. You should commence your reading for the essay with the essential readings in the weekly topics. Then use the further reading suggestions to extend your bibliography. You should base your essay on no less than five academic readings (journal articles or book chapters). Essays marked at Distinction or High Distinction level usually draw on a wider range of reading than this. There is no magic number of items to read. What matters most is the way you make use of that material in making your argument.

## 4. TAKE-HOME EXAM

**Details:** You will be given 48 hours to complete a take home exam which will be comprehensive covering all material from lectures and readings in the course. You should be fully prepared in advance. The exam will be distributed on 11 June and due on 13 June.

## ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION

**Online Submission:** All assignments are to be submitted using the course Wattle site. Submitted assignments must include the cover sheet provided on Wattle. Please keep a copy of the assignment for your records.

## EXTENSIONS

Students seeking an extension of the essay deadline must submit their request to the course convener before due date. Extensions will be granted only on medical or other reasonable grounds supported by evidence. Extensions for the take-home exam will only be allowed under exceptional circumstances and only before the exam is distributed to the class.

## PENALTIES

In fairness to students who meet the deadlines, the School has a policy of penalising assignments that are not submitted by the due date. That policy is as follows:  
It is the policy of the School that all undergraduate assignments worth 10 percent or more of the final mark for the Course. Essays will be penalised for late submission at the rate of 2 percent for each working day. Penalties are thus not incurred on Saturdays and Sundays. Essays in excess of 2500 words will also attract a penalty. We will allow a ten percent tolerance (250 words), but beyond this there will be a five percent penalty for an essay that exceeds 2750 words and a ten percent penalty for an essay of up to 3000 words. Essays above this length will not be accepted. In text-citations and explanatory footnotes are included the word count.

## ACADEMIC HONESTY

This course, and the ANU, takes academic honesty seriously. It is your responsibility to read and understand the Code of Practice for Student Academic Honesty:

<http://academichonesty.anu.edu.au/>

## ESSAY MARKING CRITERIA

The marking scale used in the University is:

- High Distinction 80% and above
- Distinction 70-79%
- Credit 60-69%
- Pass 50-59%
- Fail 49% and below

**High Distinction (80 and above):**

Work is of exceptional quality showing a command of subject matter and appreciation of issues; Has a clearly formulated argument which is developed throughout the work; Engages the question or topic throughout the assignment; Demonstrates wide reading of relevant literature; Very well expressed; High level of intellectual work.

**Distinction (70-79):**

Work of high quality showing strong grasp of subject matter and appreciation of major issues though not necessarily of the finer points; Has a clear argument with supporting evidence but which may not be fully sustained throughout the work; Masters most of the concepts and issues raised by the question; Shows diligent research; Clearly expressed; Good intellectual work.

**Credit (60-69):**

Work of good quality showing an understanding of subject matter and appreciation of main issues though possibly with some lapses and inadequacies; Has an argument which may not be fully sustained throughout the essay and is possibly marred by minor weaknesses and insufficient evidence; Fair range of reading; Well prepared and presented; Expression may need improvement in places; Solid intellectual work.

**Pass (50-59):**

Work of fair quality showing awareness of the main issues in the question but has difficulty framing a relevant response; Argument may be weak; makes assertions unsupported by evidence Takes a factual approach and does not attempt to interpret the findings; Modest level of research; Written expression and scholarly conventions need improvement; Competent intellectual work.

**Fail (Below 50):**

Work of poor quality; A lack of understanding or misconception of the issues and concepts raised in the question; little relevance to the question. No clear argument is presented; little attempt to provide evidence or examples; Insufficient grasp of the relevance and interrelatedness of the material being presented; Poorly researched; Expression that is difficult to understand; Careless about scholarly conventions, spelling and other aspects of presentation.

**Resubmission of Failed Essays**

You may re-submit a failed essay for a maximum mark of 50%. The resubmitted essay must be received by Week 13. Any late marks incurred on your essay will apply to that essay should it be resubmitted.

**Feedback**

Students will be given feedback in the following forms in this course:

- written comments
- verbal comments
- feedback to groups and individuals

### **Student Feedback**

ANU is committed to the demonstration of educational excellence and regularly seeks feedback from students. One of the key formal ways students have to provide feedback is through Student Experience of Learning Support (SELS) surveys. The feedback given in these surveys is anonymous and provides the Colleges, University Education Committee and Academic Board with opportunities to recognise excellent teaching, and opportunities for improvement.

For more information on student surveys at ANU and reports on the feedback provided on ANU courses, go to

<http://unistats.anu.edu.au/surveys/selt/students/> and  
<http://unistats.anu.edu.au/surveys/selt/results/learning/>

### **Policies**

ANU has educational policies, procedures and guidelines, which are designed to ensure that staff and students are aware of the University's academic standards, and implement them. You can find the University's education policies and an explanatory glossary at:

<http://policies.anu.edu.au/>

Students are expected to have read the [Code of Practice for Student Academic Integrity](#) before the commencement of their course.