

# PLS 338

## U.S. Government and Politics

Nazarbayev University  
Fall 2019  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:00 to 10:15 AM  
Block 8, Room 141

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Office Hours: Thursdays, 2:00 to 4:00 PM or By Appointment

### Course Description:

- The purpose of this course is to acquaint students with the history and conduct of the U.S. system of governance. Specifically, this course will examine topics such as the American Revolution, the founding of the Republic, and the Constitution of the United States of America; the institution of slavery and the American Civil War of 1861-1865; the U.S. Presidency, Electoral College, U.S. House of Representatives, U.S. Senate, and U.S. Supreme Court; America's two-party system, the concept and practice of federalism within the U.S. political context, and the U.S. bureaucracy; as well as a range of contemporary political issues such as race relations, gun control, immigration policy, drug policy, and wealth inequality. This is a 300-level undergraduate course designed to enhance students' knowledge of U.S. politics.

### Course Objectives:

- This course is designed to provide students with the necessary analytical skills so that they are able to:
  - Identify various challenges facing the United States in historical and contemporary contexts.
  - Critically evaluate the historical development and conduct of America's democratic form of rule.
  - Compose a research paper based upon a detailed analysis of some defining aspect of a recent presidential administration (from Franklin D. Roosevelt up to and including Barack Obama).

### Course Readings:

- All assigned readings for this course are available via hyperlink in the syllabus or the NU Library online academic databases. Readings are not available on Moodle. Students need to locate assigned readings.

## Course Requirements:

Students are encouraged to participate in class by asking questions. Students are also encouraged to meet with the professor during office hours to discuss course materials. The professor reserves the right to revise the listed readings on the syllabus. Students are expected to arrive to class on-time. Failure to do so by the time attendance is taken will result in a student being marked as absent. Please silence all phones before class starts. **Any more than TWO unexcused absences will result in failing the course.**

Students will sit for **THREE** in-class examinations during the semester. The first in-class examination will take place on September 10<sup>th</sup>; the second in-class examination will take place on October 10<sup>th</sup>; the third in-class examination will take place on November 14<sup>th</sup>. The first in-class examination covers all course materials from Weeks 1 to 4 on the syllabus. The second in-class examination covers all course materials from Weeks 5 to 8 on the syllabus. The third in-class examination covers all course materials from Weeks 11 to 13 on the syllabus. In-class examinations are based on lecture material plus assigned readings and consist of multiple-choice questions as well as define/describe key concepts questions.

Students are required to write **ONE** critical reaction memo consisting of approximately 1,500 words.

- Memos should critically analyze and synthesize **ALL** of a given week's assigned readings.
- In writing memos, students should strive to provide answers to the following questions:
  - i. **What are the questions the authors are addressing?**
  - ii. **What are the shortcomings of the authors' main arguments?**
- Each memo should consist of: (1) a brief introductory paragraph summarizing the topic which you intend to discuss; (2) followed by several paragraphs which emphasize the assigned readings; along with (3) a critical discussion of the readings; and (4) a conclusion.
- Memos are to be submitted by the start of class (9:00 am) online via Moodle on the day of the last scheduled seminar meeting of a given week. **Late memos for any week will receive a grade of 0.** Students are encouraged to bring a printed copy of their work to class with them. **The professor will not accept memos submitted after the start of class or by email.**
- Students will sign-up for the weeks in which they intend to write memos at the start of the semester. The professor will place a sign-up sheet outside his office on **August 13, 2019.** Memos should analyze and synthesize **ALL** assigned readings for a given week. **It is not necessary to conduct a review of other works outside of the syllabus for this assignment.** **NOTE:** No more than **FIVE** students may write their reaction memos on any given week. Students may only choose to write their reaction memos for **Weeks 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, and 12.**
- Students are required to cite assigned readings in their memos. Students must use footnotes for citations (any style), 1-inch margins, double-spaced pages, and any legible 12pt. size font.

The formulation of a research paper constitutes the main assignment for this course. Students are tasked with writing an essay of approximately 3,000 words based on a detailed analysis of some defining aspect of a recent presidential administration (from the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration (1933-1945) up to and including the Barack Obama administration (2009-2017)). Papers require an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Students are encouraged to meet with the professor to discuss topic ideas during office hours. Students must use footnotes for citations (any style), 1-inch margins, double-spaced pages, and any legible 12pt size font. Research papers are to be submitted by 5:00 PM on **November 26, 2019** via Moodle. Students are encouraged to submit a copy of their paper to the professor via email. All late research papers will be penalized a full letter grade for **EACH DAY** after the passage of the due date.

Each student is required to deliver in-class a 10-minute oral presentation on their research paper towards the middle of the semester. Oral presentation grades will reflect presentation content and delivery (see rubric below). While not required, students are encouraged to utilize Microsoft PowerPoint for their oral presentations. The scheduling of oral presentations will be announced to the class on **August 27, 2019**.

Reaction Memos and Research Papers will be graded by the professor according to the following rubric:

<b>Grading</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
<p style="text-align: center;">A Research Paper: 135-150 Critical Reaction Memo: 23-25</p>	<p>Student writes in a very coherent and creative manner; usage of proper citation format; research paper/memo adheres to professor's guidelines; few/no grammatical/spelling errors in student's work; student references scholarly articles/texts outside of the syllabus to supplement his/her research paper and critically analyzes the works of other scholars.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">B Research Paper: 120-134 Critical Reaction Memo: 20-22</p>	<p>Student writes in an intelligible manner but his/her work is also somewhat lacking in creativity; citation format is evident but not fully consistent either; research paper/memo adheres to professor's guidelines to a considerable but not full extent; noticeable grammatical/spelling errors; student references some scholarly articles/texts outside of syllabus to supplement his/her research paper and analysis of scholarly works is adequate.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">C Research Paper: 105-119 Critical Reaction Memo: 18-19</p>	<p>Student barely writes in a satisfactory manner; research paper/memo is lacking in terms of adhering to professor's guidelines; citation format is inconsistent; grammatical/spelling errors are prevalent; few references to scholarly articles/texts outside of syllabus; critical analysis of other works is inadequate.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">D Research Paper: 90-104 Critical Reaction Memo: 15-17</p>	<p>Student writes in an unsatisfactory manner; citation format suffers from serious flaws; research paper/memo does not adhere to professor's guidelines; grammatical/spelling errors; few references to articles/texts outside of syllabus or critical analysis of other works.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">F Research Paper: 0-89 Critical Reaction Memo: 0-14</p>	<p>Student writes in an unintelligible manner; citation format is nearly nonexistent; research paper/memo does not adhere to the professor's guidelines; multiple grammatical/spelling errors; few/no references to scholarly articles/texts outside of syllabus; critical analysis of scholarship is inadequate in scope.</p>

Oral presentations based upon research papers will be graded according to the following rubric:

<b>Grading</b>	<b>Assessment</b>
A 23-25	Student speaks in a clear and concise manner; presentation of information and discussion of research paper topic and plan of action are conducted by the student in a masterful manner; efficient time management by student.
B 20-22	Student speaks in an intelligible manner but presentation of information and discussion of research paper topic and plan of action lacks clarity; time management is just satisfactory.
C 18-19	Student speaks in a manner which reveals that s/he did not adequately prepare for the oral presentation; time management is not satisfactory; presentation is difficult to follow in terms of the research paper topic and plan.
D 15-17	Student speaks in an unintelligible manner; oral presentation suffers from a serious lack of preparation; research paper topic and plan not discussed in detail; student's inefficient time management undermines presentation quality.
F 0-14	Student speaks in an unintelligible manner; inefficient time management; little or no discussion of research paper topic and plan of action; unprofessional behavior in presentation.

**Grading:**

In-Class Examinations (3)	300 (100 Points per Examination)
Oral Presentation	25
Critical Reaction Memo	25
Research Paper	150
Total	500 points

**Scale:**

	A: 475-500	A-: 450-474
B+: 425-449	B: 400-424	B-: 375-399
C+: 350-374	C: 325-349	C-: 300-324
D+: 275-299	D: 250-274	F: 249 and below

**Academic Integrity:**

- Students are required to ensure that the work which they submit for grading is their own. Students must provide citations in the form of footnotes when referencing the works of other scholars. Instances of

plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in receiving a score of **0** for an assignment. All instances in which plagiarism is suspected will be referred to SSH for disciplinary committee review. **Copying, rephrasing of text without citations, as well as submitting unoriginal work constitutes plagiarism.** Any instances of cheating during in-class examinations will also result in a student (or students) receiving a 0 score for an examination in addition to referral to SSH for disciplinary committee review.

Students who fall ill on/near the dates of assignments/examinations need to contact the professor immediately. Students who fall ill will need to provide SSH administration with a valid medical excuse from a licensed doctor within 3 business days of returning to class in order to sit for a make-up exam. Failure to follow directions will result in a student receiving a score of 0 for any missed examination.

All students are expected to treat one another with dignity and respect in the classroom. Students are encouraged to voice their opinions on various political issues, albeit in a polite and courteous manner.

## **Class Schedule:**

### **Week 1: America's Founding Fathers and the Revolutionary War**

#### **Tuesday (August 13) and Thursday (August 15)**

- Sebastian Junger, *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* (New York, NY: Twelve, 2016), pp. 1-34.
- Saul K. Padover, "The World of the Founding Fathers," *Social Research* 25.2 (1958): 191-214.
- Jack N. Rakove, "The Madisonian Moment," *The University of Chicago Law Review* 55.2 (1988): 473-505.
- Gregg Frazier, "The American Revolution: Not a Just War," *Journal of Military Ethics* 14.1 (2015): 35-56.

### **Week 2: Slavery and Civil War**

#### **Tuesday (August 20) and Thursday (August 22)**

- Warren E. Burger, "Obstacles to an American Constitution," *The Journal of Legal History* 8.3 (1987): 237-243.
- Brian H. Reid, "The Origins of the American Civil War," *RUSI Journal* 154.6 (2009): 88-94.
- Brian H. Reid, "The American Civil War and the Strategy of Attrition," *RUSI Journal* 156.3 (2011): 88-95.
- Brian Dirck, "Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief," *Perspectives on Political Science* 39.1 (2010): 20-27.

### **Week 3: The Presidency, the Electoral College, and Impeachment**

#### **Tuesday (August 27) and Thursday (August 29)**

- Christina Villegas, "Electing the People's President: The Popular Origins of the Electoral College," *Perspectives on Political Science* 47.4 (2018): 201-209.
- Gerald R. Webster, "The Purpose, Structure, and Limitations of the Electoral College," *The Geography Teacher* 13.3 (2016): 101-105.
- Steven G. Koven and Julie C. Kunselman, "Trust in Government: Lessons from the Clinton Impeachment," *International Journal of Public Administration* 26.2 (2003): 197-212.

## **Week 4: U.S. Congress and U.S. Senate**

### **Tuesday (September 3) and Thursday (September 5)**

- Ross M. English, *The United States Congress* (Manchester University Press, 2003): pp. 1-15, 39-60, 61-86.

## **Week 5: Federalism**

### **Tuesday (September 10) and Thursday (September 12)**

- **In-Class Exam on Tuesday (9/10)**
- James Madison, "Federalist Papers No. 10," *The Federalist Papers* (1787).
- Ralph C. Hancock, "Tocqueville on the Good of American Federalism," *Publius* 20.2 (1990): 89-108
- John Kincaid, "Federal Democracy and Liberty," *Publius* 32.2 (1999): 211-216.

## **Week 6: U.S. Supreme Court**

### **Tuesday (September 17) and Thursday (September 19)**

- Michael Nelson, "The President and the Court: Reinterpreting the Court-Packing Episode of 1937," *Political Science Quarterly* 103.2 (1988): 267-293.
- Jeffrey A. Segal and Albert D. Cover, "Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Justices," *The American Political Science Review* 83.2 (1989): 557-565.
- Jonathan P. Kastellec, Jeffrey R. Lax, and Justin H. Philips, "Public Opinion and Senate Confirmation of Supreme Court Nominees," *The Journal of Politics* 72.3 (2010): 767-784.

## **Week 7: Republicans and Democrats**

### **Tuesday (September 24) and Thursday (September 26)**

- James C. Charlesworth, "Is Our Two-Party System 'Natural'?" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 259 (1948): 1-9.
- Craig R. Smith, "Ronald Reagan's Rhetorical Re-Invention of Conservatism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 103:1-2 (2017): 33-65.
- David J. Siemers, "Bill Clinton's Contractarian World View: The Intellectual Origins and Public Face of the Clinton Philosophy," *Congress and the Presidency* 35.2 (2008): 65-86.

## **Week 8: Bureaucracy**

### **Tuesday (October 8) and Thursday (October 10)**

- Michael Nelson, "A Short, Ironic History of American National Bureaucracy," *The Journal of Politics* 44.3 (1982): 747-778.
- Charles M. Wiltse, "The Representative Function of Bureaucracy," *The American Political Science Review* 35.3 (1941): 510-516.
- **In-Class Exam on Thursday (10/10)**

## **Week 9: Oral Presentations on U.S. Presidential Administrations**

**Tuesday (October 15) and Thursday (October 17)**

**Week 10: Oral Presentations on U.S. Presidential Administrations**

**Tuesday (October 22) and Thursday (October 24)**

**Week 11: Poverty and Inequality**

**Tuesday (October 29) and Thursday (October 31)**

- Daniel L. Sandoval, Mark R. Rank, and Thomas A. Hirschl, “The Increasing Risk of Poverty across the American Life Course,” *Demography* 46.4 (2009): 717-737.
- Lisa A. Keister and Stephanie Moller, “Wealth Inequality in the United States,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000): 63-81.
- Joseph G. Peschek, “The Obama Presidency and the Great Recession: Political Economy, Ideology, and Public Policy,” *New Political Science* 33.4 (2011): 429-444.

**Week 12: Race and Immigration**

**Tuesday (November 5) and Thursday (November 7)**

- **VIDEO:** Barack Obama, “A More Perfect Union,” (March 18, 2008).
- Elijah Anderson, “The Iconic Ghetto,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 642 (2012): 8-24.
- Peter Schuck, “The Great Immigration Debate,” *The American Prospect* (Fall 1990).
- Douglas S. Massey, “Understanding America’s Immigration ‘Crisis’,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 151.3 (2007): 309-327.

**Week 13: Drug Policy and Gun Control**

**Tuesday (November 12) and Thursday (November 14)**

- Polly F. Radosh, “War on Drugs: Gender and Race Inequalities in Crime Control Strategies,” *Criminal Justice Studies* 21.2 (2008): 167-178.
- Mark Gius, “The Effects of State and Federal Gun Control Laws on School Shootings,” *Applied Economics Letters* 25.5 (2018): 317-320.
- **In-Class Exam on Thursday (11/14).**

**Week 14: Trump**

**Tuesday (November 19) and Thursday (November 21)**

- Thomas Rudolph, “Populist Anger, Donald Trump, and the 2016 Election,” *Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties* (2019).
- Jerry Harris, Carl Davidson, Bill Fletcher, and Paul Harris, “Trump and American Fascism,” *International Critical Thought* 7.4 (2017): 476-492.
- Pei Shaohua, “White Supremacism and Racial Conflict in the Trump Era,” *International Critical Thought* 7.4 (2017): 592-601.