

Political Science 385: American Government

Fall, 2016

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Class Meetings:

Final Exam:

This is a course in the workings of American Government. We will use a modern textbook that happens to have very good hyperlinks to contemporary news videos. The text is:

Matthew Kerbel, *AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: Your Voice, Your Choice*, 5/e, Academic Media Solutions. The publisher's link to video clips is given here:

<http://www.academicmediasolutions.com/#!kerbel-amer-govt-5e-video-labs--worksh/cjfi>.

The UH Bookstore will carry the textbook. It is also available on-line from the publisher with the instructions given below. Please note that the eTextbook is the least expensive, and the version with color illustrations is the most expensive.

Student order instructions from the publisher.:

TO THE STUDENT: HOW TO ORDER THE TEXTBOOK DIRECTLY FROM ACADEMIC MEDIA SOLUTIONS TO GET THE BEST DEAL - Go

to <https://academicmediasolutions.textbookmedia.com>. Register. It will take about 60 seconds. You will be taken to My Account. You will see "You currently have no books to view." To find Kerbel, AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: Your Voice, Your Future, Fifth Edition book, click on Booklist. Locate the book and click on Pricing Details. You will have four options for the format (e-book, pdf, and print:: paperback or loose-leaf). Read the descriptions and make your choice. Click on Add to Cart, then Checkout. Then you'll see a page for Review Order. Once processed, eBook orders will be in My Account. Print orders may take up to seven business days, but you'll have the online book immediately in My Account.

Critical Monographs: A week in the middle of the semester will be devoted to presentations on one of two critical monographs. Please pick one to prepare a presentation for class sessions during the period (tba) More details on the presentations will be forthcoming.

Thomas Frank. *Listen, Liberal: Or, What Ever Happened to the Party of the People?* Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Co., 2016. ISBN 9781627795395.

Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson. *American Amnesia: How the War on Government Led Us to Forget What Made America Prosper.* Simon and Schuster, 2016. ISBN-10: 1451667825; ISBN-13: 978-1451667820

(Both available from Amazon as paper or Kindle editions, and in the used book trade as paper editions.)

Plan of the Course: The reading schedule is intended to take us through texts on the structure and operation of American government, the institutions of American politics, and the origins and flow of the folks who participate in American politics at all levels. At about the 2/3 point in the semester, we will commit to mastering one of the two critical books on American political culture listed above. Both were written by relatively conservative scholars driven by great disappointment in changes in

American culture and institutions. One attacks what we have come to know as “Liberalism.” The other addresses events that have changed the Republican Party in ways that lifelong Republicans could not accept as neutral, but see as destructive to democracy in the United States.

Each of you will select one of the two books listed above (Frank or Hacker and Pierson). Our assessment of the material will be given in oral presentations. You may choose to present some segment of the work alone, or with up to three other students, dramatize one or more segments of the work. We shall allocate two class sessions for the presentations at the end of March. Sometime in Mid-March we will collect a list of the individuals and/or teams making the presentations and schedule the presentations.

Policy Analysis and Assessment

The following list of URLs identify the most widely consulted think-tanks in the United States. Each is a hub of expertise, often with a clear ideological or theoretical mission. All of them publish a series of research reports as well as a variety of other documents. For our purposes, we want to focus on the *research reports*. The research reports from each of these agencies are comprehensive, well documented, and well argued (whether I agree with the authors or not). The other publications, such as newsletters or “in brief” or other more immediate notes are short, do not provide complete introductions, models or explanations or develop alternate viewpoints. On most of these sites, the “reports” section is listed under “reports” or “research.”

Over the course of the semester, you will write reaction papers to fifteen research reports from these organizations—three from each one. I commend to you the practice of writing one per week and delivering it in the Wednesday class session. Your evaluation should be entered as a “discussion” item in the POLS 385 Lulima site. Please be sure to put the institution short name (e.g., urban, heritage, etc.) and a short title of the research report you are analyzing as the title of your piece. Please include in your report the exact URL which leads to the document.

We are looking for half-page reaction papers here. Please pay attention to the University plagiarism rules—do not simply copy an abstract or take wholesale slices from the original report. Note that you benefit yourself by doing your reports weekly—you have more reports available to review. Waiting till the end of the semester will pretty much take all the current year’s research off the table for you—in addition to leading you to somewhat mindless work. I will generally grade your contribution each week. Since the reviews are due on Wednesday by the beginning of class, I may call upon any of you to talk about the reading on any given Wednesday.

Note that posting your review on the Lulima discussion page takes the article off the list for everyone else.

www.cato.org

www.urban.org

www.brookings.edu

www.heritage.org

www.rand.org

Political Critique Performance

Political engagement is essential in any democracy, as is the ability to voice criticism and as necessary, to make fun of our institutions. This course is about engagement. In about the middle of the semester (TBA), you will be putting your dramatization of one of the critical monographs on American politics on the boards. Naturally, we all present materials in the discussion of political events, policies and personalities. Most of our presentation forms can be a bit boring. Verdi, one of the greatest Italian composers used opera as the vehicle for putting his political arguments on the streets—in other words, performance. A quarter of a million people marched through Rome demanding Italian unity to the song of the Hebrew Slaves from Verdi's Nabuko. Keeping with the tradition of the Italian revolutionary (or if you will, the Broadway musical Hamilton) if you set your presentation to music and sing it, you will automatically get an A for the presentation.

Reading and Discussion Schedule: To follow in the syllabus revision.

The Usual Boilerplate:

- 1. The University of Hawaii provisions on plagiarism.**
- 2. The University of Hawaii provisions on harassment.**
- 3. Good taste and polite exchange, even when spirited**

Basis for Grading:

<i>Research Reviews</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>Mid-term</i>	<i>30%</i>
<i>Political Critique Performance</i>	<i>30 %</i>
<i>Final Exam</i>	<i>25%</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>