

# Political Science 385: *American Government*, Fall 2018

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Class Meetings: MW. 1030-11:45, Saunders 624.

Final Exam: December 14, 2018, 9:45-11:45, Saunders 624

This is a course in the workings of American Government. We see American government as a participant sport—or, if you are convinced that you do not see the sport, participant calisthenics. Democracy is about responsible criticism, creative alternatives, and above all, participation. We will use a modern textbook that happens to have very good hyperlinks to contemporary news videos of just these kinds of participation.

## Textbook.

Matthew Kerbel, *AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: Your Voice, Your Choice, 6th Edition*, Academic Media Solutions, 2018.

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

## Student order instructions from the publisher.:

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

The publisher provides ample video clips, news segments and snippets from political satire. Please browse these, as they expand the issues in the text in a most captivating way. The publisher's links to video clips for the most recent editions are linked to the text on the textbook web site.:

<http://www.academicmediasolutions.com/#!/kerbel-amer-govt-6e>.

**Critical Monographs:** One of the hallmarks of people in a genuinely democratic society is that they have access to and take advantage of critical reviews of the society, its cultures, its institutions, actions and policy outcomes. The most complete of these are detailed, and typically presented as books addressed to the average non-academic reader. I have selected three very insightful books, not all of which are new, but all of which are contemporary classics. We will base course discussion on the following critical treatments of key issues in the American political system.

*Bring Back the Bureaucrats.* John J. Dilulio, Jr. Templeton Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-59947-467-0 (Paper)

*What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America.* Thomas Frank. Henry Holt, 2005. ISBN: 9780805077742

*How Markets Fail: The Logic of Economic Calamities.* Cassidy, John. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2009. ISBN: 0374173206

(The UH Bookstore will carry copies of these books. They are generally available from Amazon as paper or Kindle editions, and in the used book trade as printed versions.)

### **Textbook Reading Schedule**

The textbook reading schedule for Kerbel's *American Government* is intended to take us through material 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. We will commit to mastering the three critical books on American political culture listed above, which will serve as the basis for class discussion. All three were written by relatively conservative scholars driven by great disappointment in changes in American culture and institutions. The first, by J. D. Vance traces the history of generations of those folk who have grown up poor in America, examining the way class in a "classless society" has been constructed to keep a population "in its place." The second is a serious examination of the movement that calls itself "conservatism." The third assesses the false promises of simplistic economic sloganeering.

We will discuss the three books in the order listed. I will announce specific topics in class before the discussion.

### **Policy Analysis and Assessment**

The following list of URLs identify some of 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**. Your evaluation should be entered in the week's open assignment item in the POLS 130 Lualima 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. The report window opens every Monday at Noon and closes every Sunday at 5:00 PM. Once the window is closed, you may no longer submit your comments for that week.

### **Policy Organization Websites**

[www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org), [www.cbpp.org](http://www.cbpp.org), [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu), [www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org), [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org)

### **Quizzes:**

Lectures will touch on material pertinent to the text, but generally not on the text itself. Kerbel's book, though, is one of the clearest short treatments of American Government available on the e-book and alternative format market. The framework is a coherent presentation of the essentials of our institutions and their functions. To keep us all on track, I have assigned a set of quizzes, one on each chapter, on the Lualima course site for POLS 130. There are 16 segments of questions, one for each chapter. There is no time limit for the segments, and you may submit each segment as many times as you wish. The quizzes are open book, but subject to the University of Hawaii intellectual honesty code that you do your own work.

There is an obvious trap in this kind of assignment. If you put off taking the quizzes until the end of the semester, you will likely do poorly, and will not have time to make them up. The wise student is advised to do a chapter test with each

chapter in the reading schedule. There are 320 points available for the full set of quizzes, which will be scaled to make up 25% of the final grade.

### **Political Critique Performances**

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. At random points in the semester I will ask you individually or as small groups to organize discussions or presentations on segments of the three critical books listed above. We will use a variety of formats: short debates, policy conferences with short position papers, interviews or panel discussions. As models, you may draw on any commonly presented public genre. This includes typical CSPAN panel discussions, debates, and humor after Trevor Noah, Bill Maher, Samantha Bee, Fareed Zakaria, or similar commentators.

### **Reading Schedule for Kerbel, *American Government***

**Political Science 130: TR, 1200-1315, in WEB 112,**

**Monday, August 20, 2018**  
Wednesday, August 22

**Start of Semester**  
Kerbel Chapter 1

**I did my quiz on the chapter**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**I submitted my research reading on:**  
\_\_\_\_\_

Thursday, November 22, Thanksgiving Day

**Friday December 14 2017**

**Final Exam**

**9:45-11:45 AM**

Please fill in the schedule for the 15 weeks of the semester. We shall read one chapter of Kernel per week, and you will do one research submission per week. Please plan to have read the three monographs by Thanksgiving weekend.

### **The Usual Boilerplate:**

- 1. The University of Hawaii provisions on plagiarism and student conduct code provisions on harassment**  
[http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct\\_code/proscribed\\_conduct.php](http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/proscribed_conduct.php)
- 2. Good taste and polite exchange, even when spirited**

### **Basis for Grading:**

<i>Research Reviews</i>	<i>15%</i>
<i>Quizzes on Textbook</i>	<i>25% Political</i>
<i>Critique Performances</i>	<i>40 % Final</i>
<i>Exam</i>	<i>20%</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>