PSC 120
Government: United States, State, and Local
MSSU, Fall 2013
MWF: 9:00 - 9:50 am

1 Class Information

⇒ Professor: Nicholas P. Nicoletti
⇒ Office: 229 Webster Hall
⇒ Phone: (417) 625-9572
⇒ Email: nicoletti-n@mssu.edu
⇒ Class Time: Monday, Wednesday, Friday: 9:00 — 9:50 AM
⇒ Room: 208 Webster Hall
⇒ Office Hours: Monday 12:00 — 3:00 PM; Tuesday 2:30 — 4:30 PM; Wednesday 12:00 — 3:00 PM; and Thursday 2:30 — 4:30 PM

2 Course Description

This course is designed to give students an understanding of their governments, enabling them to keep up with political developments with the goal of becoming informed citizens needed to sustain democracy. Successful completion of this course fulfills the requirements for the state-mandated Missouri Constitution Test. As Harrison, Harris and Deardorff (2011) note, the United States was founded by individuals who believed in the power of democracy to respond to the will of citizens but also a system where the majority could not tyrannize over the minority. Citizens that participate share the belief that their government listens to people like them. This concept is called political efficacy and is vital if individuals are to have an impact on their government; people who don’t believe they can have any influence rarely try. In order to make a difference, one must understand the operation of the political system under which they reside. In a federal system, such as the United States, this involves knowledge of national, state, and local systems.

The U.S. Constitution has been a great experiment in self-government which began more than two centuries ago. PSC 120 is designed to explore the theory and practice of American political systems. We will cover the three government branches (Congress, the Courts, the Presidency), federalism, political parties, interest groups in the electoral and governmental process, public policy making, civil rights and liberties, state and local government, and Missouri government. This course is intended to make you think logically about our government’s institutions, and critically think about their consequences — both intended and unintended. The primary outcome of this class is to make students

1If you leave a voicemail, please leave your name, what class you are in, a description of the problem/question, and slowly leave a number where I may reach you.
more sophisticated observers of American Politics. To accomplish this, we will explore a number of political science theories that help explain political behaviors and outcomes.

3 Objectives

1. Demonstrate the ability to analyze and evaluate important writings in the history of the United States.
2. Demonstrate the ability to defend conclusions using relevant evidence and reasoned argument.
3. Compare and contrast historical movements and contrary ideological development in the United States.
4. Demonstrate a deep familiarity with the constitutions of the United States and the State of Missouri.
5. Demonstrate the ability to draw on history and the social sciences to evaluate contemporary problems.

4 Course Expectations

I expect that ALL students will come to class each week having read the material assigned for that day. Readings are due on the day they are listed in the syllabus AND you are required to bring the readings with you to class that day. Some of the readings are theoretically and analytically rigorous. Simply put, many of them are difficult and will require students to do more than skim through the pages. Students are expected to go beyond the memorization of core concepts and vocabulary words; you will be expected to apply these concepts throughout the class.

Taking attendance is required by university policy and by US federal government regulations. Attendance will be taken regularly at the start of class. However attendance is not enough to earn credit. I expect that students participate in class. Participation is worth 10% of your final grade and simple attendance is not good enough. You are required to answer and/or ask questions during this class. If you are someone that does not like to talk during class, you may want to reconsider your enrollment. If you do not participate you will not be able to earn a major portion of your grade.

Late arrivals are also annoying and disturb the class. However, I would rather a student arrive late than not come to class at all. Late students will be taking a chance. This class will include pop quizzes that I call D.I.R.T. quizzes, which stands for “Did I Read Today”. D.I.R.T quizzes are given at the very beginning of class. If you are too late to take the quiz you automatically lose the quiz points for that day, no exceptions. Thus, there are consequences for being late. Please give the class and I the courtesy of refraining from perpetual late arrivals.
Unexcused absences on exam day will result in a forfeiture of all points for that exam. Make-ups can be scheduled only for students who pre-excuse their absences (that means before the exam, not after). An absence is only excused if supported by documentation either from University personnel, your physician, or other official source. **There are absolutely no make-ups for pop quizzes; if you miss class on a day that I give a quiz, you will lose the quiz points for that day — NO EXCEPTIONS.**

This course requires students to complete a *Policy Decision Memo* assignment, which is a structured research paper. The assignment is due the final day of class which is **December 6, 2013**. The *Policy Decision Memo* is a 5 page research paper about a national, state, or local policy decision. Students will choose one specific policy decision that is critical for the political jurisdiction chosen. The policy decision must be relevant for the next several years. Students will have to answer several questions: (1) Why is the issue so important to the political jurisdiction chosen (nation, state, or local)? (2) How has the issue developed over time? (3) What are the alternative choices policy makers have to choose from? (4) Who supports and opposes each alternative? And (5) What are the benefits and costs of each alternative? **NOTE:** You must write memos that are completely fair and speak objectively about all sides of the issue. See the *Policy Decision Memo* section for the complete assignment guidelines. You will also need to get your topic/issue approved by handing in a project proposal.

For the proposal, choose a question about a public policy decision and turn in a 2-5 sentence paragraph about the issue, why it is critically important, and describe the chief alternatives. Also, you must include 2 specific potential references. The proposal is due on September 6. I have to approve your topic before you can begin the final project. The topic paragraph is worth 3 points of the Policy Decision Memo.

I expect that the following classroom norms will be followed in my class. Please refrain from listening to mp3 players/all music devices, texting, instant messaging, Facebooking, Tweeting, or typing assignments for other courses during this class. Cell Phones should remain off at the start of class. Laptop computers are a privilege and may be used for note taking or reading digital copies of the textbook; this privilege may be revoked at my discretion at any time. Disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students are expected to be respectful of their peers and various points of view. Discussion is encouraged but rude responses will not be tolerated. Finally, please refrain from holding private conversations with your peers during class; this behavior is distracting to other students and the overall classroom environment. If I become aware that you are violating any of these norms, you will be asked to leave the classroom.

Multiple students often have the same question regarding course material or administrative issues. All relevant information about the course should be contained in this syllabus. Thus, students should always consult the syllabus first when they have a general / administrative question. In the event that the answer to your question is not in the syllabus, I have setup a Discussion Forum, under the “Discussion Board” tab in Blackboard, where students can anonymously post a question about administrative issues or course.
material. Utilizing this mechanism allows all students to gain access to the answers to frequently asked questions. Hence, always check the discussion forum for the answer to your question (after you have consulted the syllabus). If the answer to your question is not in the discussion forum, create a new post and I will answer your question. Of course, students are free to email me or stop by my office hours with any questions; I understand that some questions / issues must be resolved outside of the discussion forum.

No form of video/audio recording or photography will be permitted in my class without permission. I reserve the right to request copies of any recordings in any form taken in my class.

I expect a lot from students in my class, so you ought to expect something from me. You can expect me to come to class prepared, enthusiastic, and open to questions at any time. You can expect me to always be available during my office hours and to answer emails within a 24 hour window. If you are struggling with the material do not hesitate to see me! I take my teaching responsibility seriously and I strive to be the best possible professor I can be. I will often ask for your feedback during the course and I take your input seriously.

4.0.1 Proper Email Etiquette

This is the format I expect all emails to be sent in:

To: nicoletti-n@mssu.edu
From: Your Email Address Here
Subject: Always Include a Subject Line

Dear Professor Nicoletti,

Your message should be written here using complete sentences.

Thank you (Or Other Valediction),
Jane/John Doe Student

5 Grading

* D.I.R.T. Quizzes on the Readings Due that Day: 15%
* Midterm Exam: 25%
* Final Exam: 25%
* Final Research Paper: 25%
* Participation: 10%

Each test consists of 50 multiple choice questions. The exams are not cumulative. The quizzes are in the “pop” form, so it is in your interest to read the material prior to coming
to class. See below for more information on the Policy Decision Memo and Participation.

6 Grading Distribution

√ A = 94 and Above
√ A- = 90 - 93
√ B+ = 87 - 89
√ B = 84 - 86
√ B- = 80 - 83
√ C+ = 76 - 79
√ C = 70 - 75
√ D = 60 - 69
√ F = 0 - 59

7 Required Texts


♦ The remaining readings are a mixture of scholarly articles and book chapters which will be posted on Blackboard. A “†” indicates that the reading is posted on Blackboard. A “∀” indicates that the reading is in the physical Course Reserve in the MSSU libraries.

♦ The References section of this syllabus provides a list of readings for this class in the American Political Science Association (APSA) citation style.

8 Academic Honesty

Cheating and plagiarism (using someone else’s work or ideas without proper citation) will not be tolerated. Cheating and/or plagiarism is a serious offense and can have severe consequences. Cell phones, PDAs, tablets, laptops, digital cameras or electronic devices of any kind (calculators can be utilized if necessary) are banned from all tests and quizzes. Students using electronic devices during tests and quizzes will fail the assignment. If you are taking a quiz or test and found using an electronic device, I will be forced to take your assignment away and you will receive a zero. Of course there are other ways to cheat and all of them will result in the same consequence, complete failure of the assignment. The MSSU’s policy on Academic Integrity and the plagiarism judicial process is as follows:

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Missouri Southern State University is committed to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Academic work is evaluated on the assumption that the work presented is the student’s own, unless designated otherwise. Submitting work that is not one’s own is unacceptable and is considered a serious violation of University policy. Cheating is a serious offense that invalidates the purpose of a university education. Any student who takes credit for the work of another person, offers or accepts assistance beyond that allowed by an instructor, or uses unauthorized sources for a test or assignment is cheating. Students must be conscious of their responsibilities as scholars, to learn to discern what is included in plagiarism as well as in other breaches of the Student Handbook, and must know and practice the specifications for citations in scholarly work. When dealing with cases of academic dishonesty, the course instructor may choose to use the campus judicial system; this includes filing an incident report with the Dean of Students, who may act on the report by issuing a written warning or by recommending disciplinary probation, suspension or expulsion. Penalties for academic dishonesty may include a failing grade on the assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate.

9 Special Needs (ADA Statement)

Any student who requires accommodations to complete the requirements and expectations of this course because of a disability is invited to make his or her needs known to the instructor and to the Student Disability Services Offices, Hearnes Hall Room 301 (417-659-3725). Students with special needs should bring their requirements to my attention in the first week of classes. I will make every effort to assist students with special needs. Students dealing with stress-related or other medical issues should visit the Willcoxon Health Center, Billingsly Room 242.

10 Participation

Attendance is an important part of the college learning experience. I expect students to come to class prepared (having done the readings and assignments) and ready to participate in the form of answering and asking questions. While I will not take formal attendance, I will be keeping track of average participation rates. Participation is worth approximately 10% of your grade.

I track participation using a self-report system, which is also how I track attendance. Each class, students will tear a single sheet of paper in half. The first half will be used to take the D.I.R.T. quiz for that day. The second sheet of paper will be used to track your participation and attendance. For each class, students will write their name, date, and the title “participation” on a half sheet of paper. Each time a student participates (answers a
question, asks a question, makes a comment, etc.) they will use the sheet of paper to log their contributions. I will keep track of all the logs and report participation grades at the middle and end of the end.

11 Course Schedule

Course Schedule:

Week 1: August 19 — 23, 2013

⇒ Monday, August 19: Course Introduction
   * Course Introduction and Administrative Review.
   * Acquire Textbook.

⇒ Wednesday, August 21: Foundations of American Political Thought
   * James Madison. (1787). “The Federalist No. 10”. Essay can also be found on Blackboard and in the American Democracy Now textbook on pages B-1 — B-3.†
   * James Madison. (1788). “The Federalist No. 51”. Essay can also be found on Blackboard and in the American Democracy Now textbook on pages C-1 — C-2.†

⇒ Friday, August 23: American Political Thought Continued...
   * If necessary, continue lecture on: James Madison. (1788). “The Federalist No. 51”. Essay can also be found on Blackboard and in the American Democracy Now textbook on pages C-1 — C-2.†
   * Alexander Hamilton. (1778). “The Federalist No. 78”. Essay can also be found on Blackboard.†

Week 2: August 26 — 30, 2013

⇒ Monday, August 26: Constitutional Principals/Design
   * Harrison, Harris, and Deardorff (HHD) Chapter 1: People, Politics, and Participation, pp. 2-31.

⇒ Wednesday, August 28: The Constitution
   * HHD, Chapter 2: The Constitution, pp. 32-42.

2From here on the American Democracy Now textbook will be referred to as HDD.
⇒ Friday, August 30: The Constitution Continued...

* Also read the U.S. Constitution, HDD, pp. 61-79.

Week 3: September 2 — 6, 2013

⇒ Monday, September 2: No Class, Labor Day

* Dismissal for Labor Day, NO CLASS.

⇒ Wednesday, September 4: Federalism

* HHD, Chapter 3: Federalism, pp. 80-109.

⇒ Friday, September 6: Political Socialization and Public Opinion

* HHD, Chapter 6: Political Socialization and Public Opinion, pp. 182-211.
* PUBLIC POLICY TOPIC/ISSUE PROPOSAL DUE.

Week 4: September 9 — 13, 2013

⇒ Monday, September 9: Congress

* HHD, Chapter 11: Congress, pp. 334-347.

⇒ Wednesday, September 11: Congress Continued...


⇒ Friday, September 13: What Do Members of Congress Do?

* Fenno, Home Style (S&L pages 151-156).†
* Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection (Serow and Ladd3 pages 147-150).†
* Ellwood and Patashnik, In Praise of Pork (S&L pages 190-194).†

Week 5: September 16 — 20, 2013

⇒ Monday, September 16: The Presidency


⇒ Wednesday, September 18: The Presidency Continued...


3From here on this will be denoted SSL.
⇒ Friday, September 20: The (Growing?) Power of the Presidency
   * Neustadt, Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents (S&L pages 211-217).†
   * Rimmerman, The Rise of the Plebiscitary President (S&L pages 247-255).†
   * Schlesinger, The Imperial Presidency (S&L pages 218-224).†

Week 6: September 23 — 27, 2013
⇒ Monday, September 23: The Judiciary
   * HHD, Chapter 14: The Judiciary, pp. 430-446.

⇒ Wednesday, September 25: The Judiciary Continued...
   * Continue lecture on: HHD, Chapter 14: The Judiciary, pp. 446-461.

⇒ Friday, September 27: Democracy and the Supreme Court
   * Rostow, The Democratic Character of Judicial Review (S&L pages 316-320).†
   * O’Brien, Storm Center (S&L pages 291-296).†
   * Yalof, Pursuit of Justices (S&L pages 302-308).†

Week 7: September 30 — October 4, 2013
⇒ Monday, September 30: Midterm Exam
   * MIDTERM EXAM.

⇒ Wednesday, October 2: Political Parties
   * HHD, Chapter 8: Political Parties, pp. 242-257.

⇒ Friday, October 4: Political Parties Continued...
   * Continue lecture on: HHD, Chapter 8: Political Parties, pp. 257-271.

Week 8: October 7 — 11, 2013:
⇒ Monday, October 7: Interest Groups
   * HHD, Chapter 7: Interest Groups, pp. 212-241.

⇒ Wednesday, October 2: Interest Groups Continued... And Start Elections, Campaigns, and Voting
⇒ Friday, October 4: Elections, Campaigns, and Voting Continued...

Week 9: October 14 — 18, 2013:
⇒ Monday, October 14: Fall Break, No Class
  * Fall Break, NO CLASS.

⇒ Wednesday, October 16: Civil Liberties
  * HHD, Chapter 4: Civil Liberties, pp. 110-125.

⇒ Friday, October 4: Civil Liberties Continued...
  * Continue lecture on: HHD, Chapter 4: Civil Liberties, pp. 125-145.

Week 10: October 21 — 25, 2013:
⇒ Monday, October 21: Civil Rights
  * HHD, Chapter 5: Civil Rights, pp. 146-159.

⇒ Wednesday, October 23: Civil Rights Continued...
  * Continue lecture on: HHD, Chapter 5: Civil Rights, pp. 159-181.

⇒ Friday, October 25: Cases in Civil Rights and Liberties
  * Kluger, Simple Justice (S&L pages 371-378).
  * Kettl, System Under Stress (S&L pages 331-341).

Week 11: October 28 — November 1, 2013:
⇒ Monday, October 28: State and Local Government
  * HHD, Chapter 18: State and Local Government, pp. 556-582.

⇒ Wednesday, October 30: State and Local Government Continued...
  * If necessary, continue lecture on: HHD, Chapter 18: State and Local Government, pp. 564-582.
⇒ Friday, November 1: Direct Democracy

Week 12: November 4 — 8, 2013:
⇒ Monday, November 4: Domestic Policy
   * HHD, Chapter 16: Domestic Policy, pp. 492-521.

⇒ Wednesday, November 6: Domestic Policy Continued...
   * If necessary, continue lecture on: HHD, Chapter 16: Domestic Policy, pp. 492-521.
   * Start lecture on: HHD, Chapter 17: Foreign Policy and National Security, pp. 522-537.

⇒ Friday, November 8: Foreign Policy and National Security Continued...
   * Continue lecture on: HHD, Chapter 17: Foreign Policy and National Security, pp. 537-555.

Week 13: November 11 — 15, 2013:
⇒ Monday, November 11: Economic Policy

⇒ Wednesday, November 13: Economic Policy Continued...

⇒ Friday, November 14: The Media

Week 14: November 18 — 22, 2013:
⇒ Monday, November 18: The Media Continued...

⇒ Wednesday, November 20: The Bureaucracy
   * HHD, Chapter 13: The Bureaucracy, pp. 400-416.
Friday, November 22: The Media

Week 15: November 25 — 29, 2013:
⇒ Monday, November 25: Missouri Politics
  * TBA

⇒ Wednesday, November 27: Dismissal for Thanksgiving Holiday, NO CLASS
  * Dismissal for Thanksgiving Holiday, NO CLASS.

⇒ Friday, November 29: Dismissal for Thanksgiving Holiday, NO CLASS
  * Dismissal for Thanksgiving Holiday, NO CLASS.

Week 16: December 2 — 6, 2013
⇒ Monday, December 2: Missouri Politics
  * TBA

⇒ Wednesday, December 4: Missouri Politics Continued...
  * TBA

⇒ Friday, December 6: Missouri Politics Continued...
  * TBA
  * POLICY MEMO DUE.

Week 17: December 9 — 13, 2013
⇒ Final Exam Week
  * FINAL EXAMINATION FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2013, 9:00 - 11:00 AM.

12 Policy Decision Memo

12.1 Overview of Assignment
Students will choose one specific policy decision that is critical for the political jurisdiction chosen. The policy decision must be relevant for the next several years. Students will have to answer several questions: (1) Why is the issue so important to the political jurisdiction
chosen (nation, state, or local)? (2) How has the issue developed over time? (3) What are the alternative choices policy makers have to choose from? (4) Who supports and opposes each alternative? And (5) What are the benefits and costs of each alternative? **NOTE:** You must write memos that are completely fair and speak objectively about all sides of the issue.

### 12.2 Research Paper Outline

The goal is to write a no more than five-page policy decision memo. The memo should explain:

- **(1) Why is this a critically important policy decision for the United States?** What groups of people does this issue affect? Who are they? Why should the government be involved in this (or should they)? Be specific.
- **(2) How has the issue developed over time?** What has happened in the past and the present to make this issue a policy necessity? What events and processes brought this policy to the point it is now?
- **(3) What are the chief policy alternatives on the agenda?**
- **(4) Who supports and opposes these alternatives?** Do the political parties take clear stands on this issue? What interest groups support and oppose these alternatives? How does the public feel about this choice? Be sure to use public opinion polls if possible.
- **(5) Recommended Choice:** In the final paragraph, you can indicate how this choice should be made and explain your reasoning. Be clear, logical and precise.

The Policy Decision Memo is due on December 6, 2013. Late papers will not be accepted and all points will be forfeited.

### 13 Potential Topics

Below is a list of a few topics you might choose. However it is strongly encouraged you choose a topic that interests you, and you do not need to select a topic on the list, these are simply suggestions.

- Should the U.S. government impose a tax on carbon emissions to reduce climate change?
- Should the U.S. force the largest banks to break up into smaller banks?
- Should the U.S. government do more to increase home ownership?
- Should the U.S. government allow undocumented immigrants now in the U.S. a way to become citizens?
- Should Congress eliminate the ceiling on the national debt?
- Should the U.S. government legalize gay marriage nationally?
- Should the U.S. government ban genetically modified food?
• Should the Electoral College be eliminated?
• Should citizens be allowed to decide how to invest their Social Security funds?
• Should the Affordable Care Act of 2010 (“Obamacare”) be repealed?
• Should there be a national identity card?
• Should the Social Security retirement age be raised?
• Should a national law tightly regulate access to handguns?
• Should tax breaks for the oil industry be eliminated?
• Should the U.S. provide more subsidies for wind-powered energy?
• Should medical marijuana be legalized nationally?
• Should the national government set high penalties for racial profiling?
• Should the U.S. government limit tuition increases at colleges and universities?
• Should the No Child Left Behind Act be repealed?
• Should the U.S. use military force against Iran?
• Should the U.S. allow oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge?
• Should offshore oil drilling near U.S. coasts be banned?
• Should the U.S. ban stem cell research?
• Should the U.S. dramatically increase funding to combat AIDS in Africa?
• Should there be a Constitutional amendment banning the death penalty?

13.0.1 Citations

All direct quotes, paraphrased text, and ideas must be cited in your paper. As a general rule, if you got an idea from somewhere, you should cite the source. I have given you several examples of the American Political Science Association Citation Style in this syllabus. The References section gives examples of how to cite books and journal articles. The Course Description section gives examples of how to do use “in-text” citations. You may also use footnotes or endnotes, but your paper must follow a professional citation style (APSA, APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). Instructions on how to use these styles can be found at the University Library web-site at: http://www.mssu.edu/library/citing-sources.php or here at http://dept.lamar.edu/polisci/DRURY/drury.html.

Your paper should cite approximately 5 different sources. You must have at least 1 citation from a peer-reviewed academic journal article. Academic peer-reviewed journal articles can be found using the MSSU Library databases. One of the best databases for peer-reviewed journal articles in political science (and the social sciences in general) is JSTOR. JSTOR is an online database of academic journal articles and you have access to this resource for free via the MSSU online library. Another great research tool, also available for free via the MSSU library, is CQ Researcher. CQ Researcher provides reports on current event issues written by experts. The best student papers will utilize sources from both of these databases. Another good source is Google Scholar, but it will not replace the in-depth search of JSTOR for peer-reviewed journal articles.

Other sources can include relevant newspaper articles and books. Wikipedia is not an OK citation, DO NOT CITE Wiki in your bibliography! Moreover, do not use infor-
mation from Wikipedia and fail to cite it. Citing a Wiki will result in loss of points on this assignment. Wikipedia is an OK place to look for ideas, but you should follow up with original sources.

13.0.2 Paper Format

All papers must follow these strict formatting guidelines. Your grade will be impacted if you do not follow these standards.

- √ No more than 5 double spaced pages of text (not including your endnotes or reference sheet).
- √ Times New Roman, 12 Point Font.
- √ 1 inch margins top and bottom.
- √ 1 inch margins left and right.
- √ Minimal grammatical and spelling errors (no internet/texting slang please).
- √ The paper is segmented into the appropriate sections (i.e. (1) Why is the issue so important to the political jurisdiction chosen (nation, state, or local)? (2) How has the issue developed over time? (3) What are the alternative choices policy makers have to choose from? (4) Who supports and opposes each alternative? And (5) What are the benefits and costs of each alternative?)

The last bullet is important. I want the paper to be broken up into each question/section listed above, just like this syllabus is broken-up into sections. You can choose to name the sections anything you want, but each section must answer the question assigned above. In addition, all papers should be edited for appropriate spelling and grammar. Formatting, grammar, and spelling count toward your grade.

References

