This course is a survey of the American system of government. It has two major objectives. First, it introduces students to basic concepts in political science such as “collective action problems” and demonstrates how governments address these issues. Second, it introduces students to major theoretical arguments supporting American democracy and how these ideas are put into practice in the institutions of government. Students will examine the design of the Constitution, the three branches of American government and how elections, political parties, the news media and other features of our democracy link the government and the people.

More broadly, the course will encourage students to think critically about our system of government, including questions such as: How well does it represent the preferences of the people? What kind of balance does it maintain between majority and minority rights? Do interest groups have too much power? And, why have our politics grown so polarized?

Professor: Peter Hanson
Peter.Hanson@du.edu

Office Hours: 3 – 5 pm, Tuesday and Friday, Sturm 471

Class Meetings: 2 pm – 3:50 pm, Monday and Wednesday, Margery Reed 106

OVERVIEW

Expectations: Class sessions will meet for approximately 110 minutes twice a week. You are expected to attend all classes. All course assignments must be completed in order to receive a passing grade.

Assessments
Participation 15%
Homework / Quizzes 15%
Paper (5-7 pages) 20%
Midterm 25%
Final Exam 25%

Participation includes attending class, engaging in small group discussions, and speaking up in class. Class discussions should be respectful and thoughtful. Disrespectful conduct toward other students will not be tolerated.
Multitasking (texting, Facebook, etc.) in class is a distraction to you and other students. It is not acceptable classroom behavior and is grounds for reducing your participation grade.

**Extra Credit**
The midterm and the final exam will each have an extra credit question. The question for the midterm will be based upon the documentary *Street Fight* and the question for the final will be based upon the documentary *The War Room*. Both documentaries can be viewed on the DU CourseMedia website. We will not take class time to watch these excellent films. You must do this independently if you wish to answer the extra credit questions. In addition, you may earn an additional 2% toward your class grade via extra credit opportunities I will offer during the quarter.

**Major Due Dates**

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<th>April 1</th>
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<td>April 17</td>
<td>Homework 1</td>
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<td>April 24</td>
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<td>April 29</td>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>Paper</td>
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<td>June 1</td>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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**Required Materials**
There are two required books for the course:


*Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* by Fiorina, Abrams and Pope

Both books can be found at the campus bookstore in the Driscoll Center and online from major booksellers.

**Website**
Additional course materials, including readings, podcasts and videos, will be posted on the Canvas website, which can be found at: https://canvas.du.edu/

Select videos for class are also available on DU's CourseMedia website, which can be found at: https://coursemedia.du.edu/

**Academic Honesty**
You are required to submit your own work for the course, and to ensure that it is original and properly cited. Students who are found to have plagiarized coursework will receive a failing grade for the course. It is also a violation of the DU honor code
to submit work for class that you have already submitted to another class. For additional information, please refer to DU’s policies on student conduct at: http://www.du.edu/studentlife/studentconduct/honorcode.html

**Students with Disabilities**  
Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Please visit DU's website on its Disabilities Service Program for additional information. http://www.du.edu/studentlife/disability/dsp/

**Grading Scale**

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**WEEKLY SCHEDULE**

**Week 1: Foundations**

March 23: Introduction

March 25: Theoretical Foundations

    Chapter 1, KJK

    *Second Treatise of Government*, John Locke (Canvas)

    Excerpt from *The Dark Knight*. Available on DU CourseMedia. Will screen in class.
Week 2: Constitutional Design and the People

March 30: Constitutional Design

Chapter 2, KJK

*Federalist 51* (Canvas)

*The Anti-Federalist, No. 1* (Canvas)

Recommended: *The American Revolution: A History*, Gordon Wood (Canvas)

April 1: What Do People Know About Politics?

“The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?” by Lupia and McCubbins (Canvas)

*Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, Fiorina, Abrams and Pope, Chapters 1-4

“Group of Friends Engage in Passionate, Incoherent Discussion About Current Events,” *The Onion* (Canvas)

Week 3: Organizing the People

April 6: Political Parties

Chapter 12, KJK

Excerpts from *The Politics of Women’s Rights* by Christina Wolbrecht (Canvas)

“Our political parties are networked, not fragmented,” by Seth Masket (Canvas)

April 8: No class

Week 4: Interest Groups and the Media

April 13: Interest Groups

Chapter 13, KJK

*Federalist 10* (Canvas)

“Targeting Success: The Enduring Power of the NRA,” Kelly Patterson and Matthew Singer (Canvas)

Guest Speaker: Lee Drutman

April 15: News Media and Campaign Ads

Chapter 14, KJK

“The Hyped Panic Over ‘War of the Worlds’” by Michael Socolow (Canvas)

“Monica Lewinsky’s Contribution to Political Science,” by John Zaller (Canvas)

Week 5: Campaigns

April 20: Campaigns Overview

Chapter 11, KJK

“The Hand You’re Dealt.” Excerpt from *The Gamble* by John Sides and Lynn Vavreck. (Canvas)

Excerpt from *Housequake,* “Heath Shuler.” Will screen in class. Available on DU CourseMedia.

April 22: Money in Politics


“Spending by independent groups had little election impact, analysis finds,” *Washington Post* (Canvas)


**Week 6: Midterm**

April 27: Federalism and Midterm Review

   Chapter 3, KJK


April 29: Midterm Exam

**Week 7: Congress**

May 4: Overview of Congress

   Constitution, Article 1

   Chapter 6, KJK

   *Congress: The Electoral Connection* by David Mayhew (Canvas)

May 6: Partisan Polarization

   “Spoiling the Sausages? How a Polarized Congress Deliberates and Legislates,” Barbara Sinclair (Canvas)

   “Mitigating Extreme Partisanship in an Era of Networked Parties: An Examination of Various Reform Strategies,” Seth Masket (Canvas)

   *Too Weak to Govern* excerpts, Peter Hanson, (Canvas)
**Week 8: Executive Branch**

May 11: President

Constitution, Article II

Chapter 7, KJK

“Presidential Power,” Richard Neustadt (Canvas)


Excerpt from *Lincoln*. Available on DU CourseMedia. Will screen in class.

May 13: Bureaucracy

Chapter 8, KJK


**Week 9: Courts**

May 18: Courts Overview

Constitution, Article III and Amendments 1-10

Chapter 9, KJK

*Making Our Democracy Work* by Stephen Breyer, chapters 1-3 and 5 (Canvas)

May 20: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Chapter 5, KJK

“FBI’s search for ‘Mo,’ suspect in bomb threats, highlights use of malware for surveillance,” *Washington Post*

*On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill (Canvas)

*Snyder v. Phelps* (2011) (Canvas)
**Week 10: Review**

May 25: No class (Memorial Day)

May 27: Review for Final Exam

**Final Exam: June 1st**