

# Introduction to U.S. Politics

University of Rochester, PSCI 105

Spring 2024

Tue/Thur, 9:40 am - 10:55 am, Meliora 203

Instructor: Dan Alexander (he/him)  
Contact: dan.alexander@rochester.edu  
Office hours: by appointment only (see below for more details):  
for Wed., 10:30 am - noon, via <https://calendly.com/danalexander7/office-hours>



Kendi, Ibram X. 2023.

Academic honesty means acting with truthfulness and sincerity in carrying out all aspects of our individual and collaborative work, maintaining ownership over our work and acknowledging our debt to the work of others.

Students can best meet their obligation to academic honesty by adhering to the Academic Honesty Policy in all academic matters. This includes completing their work through their own honest efforts and expecting and encouraging honesty among their peers.

The text above is an excerpt taken from <https://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>, where students may and should! also find the full policy.

Issues of improper conduct (such as insufficient attribution) will be addressed with a formal warning. Subsequent instances of improper academic conduct or suspected academic misconduct will be passed along to the Board that oversees such matters. As indicated in the guidelines linked above, the punishments for violations are significant. We will include some assignment-specific clarifications in the prompt for each assignment, but if you have questions at any point about whether your conduct adheres to the guidelines, reach out to the instructor (or the TAs, or both).

**Office Hours** I strongly encourage you to avail yourself of office hours, especially my own. I will always have availability Wednesdays from 10:30 am-noon, though I still ask that you make an appointment for a time slot during that window using the calendly link at the top of the syllabus. If that time slot does not work for any reason, please email me (again, see the contact information at the beginning of the syllabus) *with some suggested times* to meet and whether you would like to meet in person or via Zoom. Office hours may be used to discuss upcoming assignments, graded work, or the course material more broadly, as well as any other issues that may arise.

**TAs** We have a couple of TAs for the course: Thi Theu Dinh and Maggie Zheng. Theu will hold standing office hours, for which you do not need to make an appointment, on Mondays, 9:30 am - 11:00 am, Harkness 308B.

## Course Schedule

Introduction. Motivating and explaining the course

*Jan. 18 No readings*

Topic 1. A state and a constitution

*Jan. 23 Readings:*

Declaration of Independence  
U.S. Constitution amendments 3-8  
Kendi, Preface and Prologue  
de Tocqueville, Tyranny

*Jan. 25 Readings:*

Articles of Confederation  
U.S. Constitution preamble; articles V-VII; and amendment 16  
Kendi, ch 1-2  
Douglass, Fourth of July  
Anthony, Equal Suffrage  
Riker, APM ch 8

Topic 2. Democracy, representative government, and elections

*Jan. 30 Readings:*

U.S. Constitution article I, section 4; amendments 14-15, 19, 23-24, 26  
Kendi, ch 3-4  
Adams, Letter

*Feb. 1 Readings:*

Kendi, ch 5-6  
Madison, Federalist 39  
Riker, LAP ch 9

Topic 3. Federalism

*Feb. 6 Readings:*

U.S. Constitution article I, section 1; article II, section 1; article III, section 1  
Kendi, ch 1-2

Readings:

Kendi, ch 10-12

Burke, Electors

*Feb. 15 Readings:*

Madison, Federalist 35

Riker, APM ch 2

#### Topic 5. The executive

*Feb. 20 Readings:*

U.S. Constitution article II; amendments 12-13, 20, 22, 25

Kendi, ch 13-14

Hamilton, Federalist 69

*Feb. 22 Readings:*

Kendi, ch 15-16

Howell, podcast

Riker, Heresthetics (rst few sections, skim the rest)

#### Topic 6. Bureaucracy

*Feb. 27 Readings:*

Kendi, ch 17-18

*Feb. 29 Readings:*

Kendi, ch 19-20

Essay 2 due by 5 pm on March 1, via Blackboard

#### \*\*\* Review and Exam

*Mar. 5 Readings:*

Gordon & Ruddock, What Your Professor Thinks You Already Know About U.S. Politics

Mid-term exam on March 7

No classes on March 12 and March 14 for Spring Break

#### Topic 7. Separation of powers & checks and balances

*Mar. 19 Readings:*

Kendi, ch 26-27

Hamilton, Federalist 78

*Mar. 28 Readings:*

Kendi, ch 28-29

Marshall, Bicentennial

#### Topic 9. Interest groups

*Apr. 2 Readings:*

U.S. Constitution amendment 2

Kendi, ch 30-32

Madison, Federalist 10

*Apr. 4 No class, no readings*

No class on April 4

*Apr. 9 Readings:*

Sunstein, Interest Groups

Essay 3 due by 5 pm on April 5, via Blackboard

#### Topic 10. Public opinion

*Apr. 11 Readings:*

U.S. Constitution amendments 18, 21

Kendi, ch 33-35

Lippmann, Public Opinion

*Apr. 16 Readings:*

Hofstadter, Paranoid

#### Topic 11. Mass media

*April. 18 Readings:*

U.S. Constitution amendment 1

Kendi, ch 36-37

*Apr. 23 Readings:*

White, TV Debates

Essay 4 due by 5 pm, April 26, via Blackboard

#### Conclusion. Closing thoughts and a short case study

*April 25 Readings:*

Kendi, Epilogue

Bring in questions to review for exam!

Final exam on April 30