

Stony Brook Course Syllabus

POL 102: Introduction to American Government (Fall 2018)

Class Hours: Friday 9:00-11:50am

Classroom: C103



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Office hours: 1:30-3:00pm on Wednesday and Friday (or by Appointment)

Course Description

This course is designed to introduce students to the basic concepts of American government and politics. In the first part, we will study the American foundations, system, and processes of American government and politics. You will be introduced to concepts such as Democratic Republic, Constitution and Federalism and as well as Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. Then, we will study American political institutions such as three branches: The Congress, the president and the courts. Finally this course also will cover the American political processes such as Political Parties, Campaign and Elections as well Public Opinion and Political Socialization. The class will consist of discussions and activities on current political events and issues relevant to the course materials.

As the course progresses, I encourage you to think critically about the role of government throughout American history, and to consider how government shapes and is shaped by our society. We will discuss many controversial topics, so I encourage you to engage with the material and other students, and to keep an open mind. In order to receive a good grade in this course, you are required to participate in all quizzes, discussions, term paper, midterm and final exams in addition to reading our textbook. Remember that this is a course in political science, meaning the systematic and scientific study of politics as it is, not only how one party or ideology believes the world should be. I hope that this course is an enjoyable experience for all of you whether you are a political science major or not.

Required Readings

1) Required Textbook:

- Steffen Schmidt, Mack Shelley, and Barbara Bardes. ***American Government and Politics Today: Essentials, 2017-2018 Edition*** (ISBN-13: 9781337091213)

2) Other resources:

- Students are also expected to read news daily with politics coverage which are related to our class(e.g. www.nytimes.com, www.washingtonpost.com, www.usatoday.com, etc.)

Course Learning Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and explain the basic constitutional structures and political processes of the American national government system.
2. Identify and explain American political institutions, interactions of the three branches, and American political processes.
3. Distinguish and explain American political parties such as Democrats and Republicans
4. Explain the process of American presidential and Congressional elections
5. Evaluate and criticize political phenomenon that you encounter in the news regarding American political system and institutions.
6. Analyze critically political information about the national government and evaluate and criticize the public issues facing the nation.

Student Learning Activities

A variety of learning activities are designed to support the course objectives, facilitate different learning styles, and build a community of learners. Learning activities include the following:

1. Reading each chapter of the textbook
2. Viewing and listening to interactive PowerPoint lectures
3. Participating in class activities such as group discussion, presentation, and quizzes
4. Taking Midterm and Final exam
5. Submitting written assignments

Grading policy

Grades will be based on Midterm (30%), Final exam (30%), Participation in Online Discussion (10%), Participation in Class Activity and Discussion (5%), Quizzes (5%), Midterm Portfolio (5%), Final Portfolio (5%), and Attendance (10%). Thus, total 100%!

► Two Exams (60%):

1. There will be two exams.
 - 1) **The Midterm exam (30%) is scheduled for Friday, October 26, in class.**
 - 2) **The final exam (30%) is scheduled for Friday, December 14, in class.**
2. Midterm and Final Exam will consist of multiple-choice and short essay questions.
3. No Make-up exam!
4. Make-up tests will only be arranged in extreme cases, so please be sure to let me know as soon as possible before the exam if you will not be able to attend at the scheduled time.
5. If you don't have a legitimate reason for missing the exam or if you do not provide documents proving extreme cases, you will receive a zero for that test.

► **Participation in Online Discussion on Blackboard (10%):**

1. Students are required to participate in online discussion on Blackboard every week.
2. Your participation in online discussion will also be graded both quantitatively and qualitatively.
3. There will be usually three discussion questions related to the lesson of every week.
4. Students should make at least three contributions to each online discussion forum.
 - A. First, you should respond directly to my question typically by Monday midnight.
 - B. Second, you should generate your own discussion question and/or should offer your comments on at least two of your classmates' questions or comments typically by Wednesday midnight.
5. You should put time and effort to make a thoughtful response to my question and your classmate's questions or comments. For example, simply saying that "I agree with Joe because his argument makes a lot of sense to me" is insufficient so not counted.
6. Late responses will not be counted or lead to a deduction from your participation grade.

► **Participation in Class Activities and Discussions (5%):**

1. Students are encouraged to attend and regularly participate in all class discussions and activities.
2. In order to get higher scores, you have to participate in group discussion and class debate actively.
3. Your participation in in-class discussion will also be graded both quantitatively and qualitatively.
4. The grade of participation in class will be determined by the instructor's assessment of the quantity and quality of a student's participation in class discussions and activities.
5. If students do not contribute to the class discussion at all, the score will be zero for the participation in class activities and discussions.
6. If you sign up and present your newspaper article and critique in class, you will get 1% bonus point.
7. Students who regularly contribute in class will be given up to additional 1% bonus point on their final course grade.

► **Quizzes (5%):**

1. There will be a total of six quizzes.
2. No make-up quizzes will be offered, but the lowest scoring quiz will be dropped from the grade calculation.
3. Thus, only five quizzes will be counted after dropping the lowest scoring quiz.

► **Class Attendance (10%):**

1. Students are expected to attend every class, and attendance will be recorded at each class meeting.
2. Bonus credits! If you show perfect attendance, you can get bonus point, 1% of your final grade.
3. Absences will affect class attendance grades as shown below:

Unexcused Absences	maximum participation grade possible
0	11% (10%+Bonus 1%)
1	10%
2	8%
3	5%
4	2%
5 or more	F

4. A student who has a total of five (5) or more unexcused absences will receive a course grade of F.
5. Three times of being late will be counted as one absence.
6. Absences that I approve in advance will not count toward a student's total number of missed classes.
7. I reserve the right to excuse absences retroactively on a case-by-case basis. Please provide documentation of the reason for your absence. If you do not have a written excuse (such as a doctor's note), the next best thing is to contact me as soon as possible to explain your situation.

► **Writing Assignment: Portfolio (10%):**

1. Each student will develop a portfolio for the class.
2. Each week, students are expected to actively look for newspaper article/editorial related to American Government and Politics.
3. The object is to read the article or editorial and critically analyze it and write your own critique.
4. Your portfolio should include the article with the link, your summary and your own critique.
5. A minimum of one article per week is required.
6. Your midterm portfolio (including your summaries and critiques of 6 articles) should be submitted onto Blackboard **by 11:55pm on October 20 (Saturday).**
7. Your final portfolio (including your summaries and critiques of 6 articles) should be submitted onto Blackboard **by 11:55pm on December 8 (Saturday).**
8. Your portfolio should have a cover sheet with your name, the title of the portfolio (with the subtitle "Mid-Term Portfolio" or "Final Portfolio" below the main title), the class name (POL 102), and the date (October 20, 2018 or December 8, 2018).
9. Your completed portfolio will be graded based on the quality and quantity of content, appearance, writing style, depth of analysis.

► **Optional Bonus Points (Maximum total up to 5%):**

1. If you sign up and present your newspaper article and critique in class, you will get 1% bonus point.
2. If you participate in class activities and discussions very actively, you can get 1% bonus point.
3. If your discussion group participates in class activities and discussions very actively, your entire group members will get 1% bonus point.
4. If you show perfect attendance, you will get 1% bonus point.
5. If you attend a special lecture or seminar that the instructor recommends, you can get 1% bonus point.
6. Your maximum bonus points will be up to 5% of your overall grade.

► **GRADING SCALE:**

93-100%	A	90-92%	A-	87-89%	B+	83-86%	B	80-82%	B-		
77-79%	C+	73-76%	C	70-72%	C-	67-69%	D+	60-66%	D	<60%	F

Special Needs and Accommodations

If you have a disability that affects your performance for the course, please tell me at the beginning of the semester and I will do my best to help. The university does not give instructors a list of students with disabilities in their classes, so it is the student's responsibility to self-disclose.

Academic Integrity

It is each student's responsibility to know and comply with the University's Student Code of Conduct. The Code describes behavior expected of all University students and defines behavior considered misconduct, including cheating, plagiarism, and classroom disruption. All of the work you submit in this course is expected to be your own. No cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will be tolerated. If you recognize a classmate's academic dishonesty, you should report to me or Academic Judiciary committee. More information about Academic Integrity can be found online here: http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/academic_integrity/

Other Requirements and Policies

I encourage you to view your time at SUNY Korea as an experience that will help you prepare for the professional world. In this light, please follow certain guidelines:

1. Please come to class prepared. Please read assigned readings before each class.
2. Please be on time.
3. You must practice proper classroom etiquette, which means NO iPods, iPhones, Facebook, internet or cell phone use during lecture. Make sure your cell phones are either off or on silent before class starts.
4. You may bring your laptop to class for the purpose of taking notes and referring to course readings. However, please refrain from checking your email, instant messaging your friends,

visiting social networking sites, etc. while in class as such activities are distracting for everyone.

5. Respectful questions and comments are welcome.
6. Some of the topics covered are controversial and can evoke strong opinions. In this class all points of view will be listened to and respectfully considered.
7. I will post lecture PowerPoints onto Blackboard before class. You may use them to preview and review chapters and prepare for the exams.
8. Syllabus and course schedule and requirements subject to change. If any changes are made, the students will be notified via email and blackboard.
9. All University rules of conduct apply.

Course Calendar and Readings

<i>Week</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>In-Class Topic and Contents</i>	<i>Assignment and notice</i>
1	Aug 31 (Friday)	Introduction Course Overview	Reading in textbook: <i>p.1-28 (Chap.1)</i>
2	Sep 7 (Friday)	Chapter 1. The Democratic Republic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is Politics and Government? - Why is Government Necessary? - Why Choose Democracy - Who really rules in American? - Discussion: What if Citizens were required to vote? - Fundamental Values - Political Ideologies - The Challenge of Demographic Change 	Reading in textbook: <i>p. 29-58 (Chap.2)</i>
3	Sep 14 (Friday)	Chapter 2. The Constitution <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Colonial Background - The Colonial Response: The Continental Congresses - Declaring Independence - The first form of Government: The Articles of Confederation - Drafting the Constitution - The Final Document - The Difficult Road to Ratification - The Bill of Rights - Altering the Constitution: The Formal Amendment Process - Informal Methods of Constitutional Change 	Quiz 1 (Ch. 1) Reading in textbook: <i>p.59-84 (Chap. 3)</i>
4	Sep 21 (Friday)	Chapter 3. Federalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three Systems of Government - Why Federalism? - The Constitutional Basis for American Federalism - States' Rights and Resort to Civil War - The Continuing Dispute over the Division of Power - The Politics of Federalism - Federalism and the Supreme Court Today 	Quiz 2 (Ch. 2) Reading in textbook: <i>p.85-114 (Chap. 4)</i>

5	Sep 28 (Friday)	No Class (Entrepreneurship Day)	
6	Oct 5 (Friday)	Chapter 4. Civil Liberties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Bill of Rights - Freedom of Religion/ Expression/ the Press - The Right to Assemble and to Petition the Government - More Liberties under Scrutiny: Matters of Privacy - Discussion: What if The Government Monitored all E-mail? - The Great Balancing Act: - The Rights of the Accused versus the Rights of Society - The Death Penalty 	Reading in textbook: <i>p.115-148 (Chap. 5)</i>
7	Oct 12 (Friday)	Chapter 5. Civil Rights <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - African Americans and the Consequences of Slavery in the U.S. - The Civil Rights Movement - The Climax of the Civil Rights Movement - Women's Struggle for Equal Rights - Gender-Based Discrimination in the Workplace - Immigration, Hispanics and Civil Rights - Discussion: What if Illegal Immigrants Were Granted Citizenship? - Affirmative Action - Special Protection for Older Americans - Securing Rights for Persons with Disabilities - The Rights and Status of Gay and lesbians - The Rights and Status of Juveniles 	Quiz 3 (Ch. 3-4) <i>Review for the Midterm with the Study Guide</i>
8	Oct 19 (Friday)	<Movie & Politics I> <i>The Butler</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion: Which was the most effective way to improve the Civil Rights? 	*Midterm Portfolio should be submitted onto Blackboard by 11:55pm on Oct 20 (Saturday).
9	Oct 26 (Friday)	Midterm Exam (9:30-11:30am, in class)	Reading in textbook: <i>p.287-318 (Chap.11)</i>
10	Nov 2 (Friday)	Chapter 11. Congress <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Why was Congress Created? - The Functions of Congress - The Powers of Congress - House-Senate Differences - Congresspersons and the Citizenry - Candidates for Congressional Elections - The Power of Incumbency - Congressional Apportionment: Gerrymandering - Discussion: What if Nonpartisan Panels Drew Congressional Districts? - Perks and Privileges - The Committee Structured - The Formal Leadership - How Members of Congress Decide - How a Bill Becomes Law - How much will the Government Spend? 	Reading in textbook: <i>p.319-346 (Chap.12)</i>

11	Nov 9 (Friday)	Chapter 12. The President <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who can Become President? - The Process of Becoming President - The Many Roles of the President - The President as Party Chief and Super-politician - Special Uses of Presidential Power - Abuses of Executive Power and Impeachment - The Executive Organization The Vice Presidency 	Quiz 4 (Ch.11) Reading in textbook: <i>p.205-234 (Chap.8)</i>
12	Nov 16 (Friday)	Chapter 8. Political Parties <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is Political Party? - A History of Political Parties in the U.S. - The Two Major U.S. Parties Today - The Three Faces of a Party - Why Has the Two-Party System Endured? - The Role of Minor Parties in U.S. Politics - Mechanism of Political Change - Discussion: What if Parties were supported solely by Public Funding? 	Quiz 5 (Ch. 12) Reading in textbook: <i>p.149-178 (Ch.6)</i>
13	Nov 23 (Friday)	Chapter 6. Public Opinion and Political Socialization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Defining Public Opinion - How Public Opinion is Formed: Political Socialization - Political Preferences and Voting Behavior - Measuring Public Opinion - Technology and Opinion Polls - Public Opinion and the Political Process 	Reading in textbook: <i>p.235-264 (Ch.9)</i>
14	Nov 30 (Friday)	Chapter 9. Campaigns and Elections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 21st century Campaign - Financing the Campaign - Running for President: The Longest Campaign - Turning Out to Vote - Why Do Other Nations Have Higher Turnout? - Discussion: What if Voting by Mail Became Universal? - Legal Restrictions on Voting - How Are Elections Conducted? - The Electoral College 	Quiz 6 (Ch. 8 and 6)
15	Dec 7 (Friday)	<Movie & Politics II> <i>Wag the Dog</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion: What do you think of Campaign Lies? Are they universal and acceptable in the U.S.? Lying during the political campaigns? - Discussion: What do you think of the Media effect on campaigns and elections? 	* <u>Final Portfolio should be submitted onto Blackboard by 11:55pm on Dec 8 (Saturday).</u> Review for the Final Exam with Study Guide
16	Dec 14 (Friday)	Final Exam (9:30-11:30am, in class)	