

## POLITICAL SCIENCE 102: INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

Department of Political Science • Stony Brook University

Fall 2008 • Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:20-3:40 • Javits 101

Professor Bartels

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This course is an introduction to American government and politics. The course focuses on a number of themes, and with the election coming up, we will work to place these themes within the electoral context. I have arranged the course schedule out of sequence from the book chapters to accommodate November's election. First, we will consider the foundations of the American system of government, that is, American political culture and the structure and components of the U.S. Constitution. We will also discuss the prominent issues of civil rights, race, and equality and how these issues provide a foundation for understanding American politics over time. Then, as a run-up to the election, we will examine the key components of "politics" in the American system: public opinion, media and politics, political parties, voting and participation, and campaigns and elections. After the election, as a foundation to our coverage of the American institutions of government, we will cover civil liberties and how the Supreme Court has interpreted key provisions of the Constitution, federalism, and interest groups in government. Finally, we will analyze the major governing institutions in the United States: Congress, the Presidency, the federal bureaucracy, and the Judiciary. Importantly, we will focus on placing all of these themes in historical and global context. How have politics and government changed over time? How does American politics differ from politics in other countries?

### TEXTBOOK

The following book is required for the course:

Dautrich, Kenneth, and David Yalof. 2008. *American Government: Historical, Popular & Global Perspectives* (Alternate Edition). Wadsworth/Cengage Learning.

The book can be purchased at the University Bookstore. You can also order the book online (Amazon, buy.com, etc). You can usually get a cheaper price online. **Note:** I am requiring the *Alternate Edition*, which excludes some public policy chapters that are included in the full edition. If you can find the full edition at a cheaper price, feel free to purchase it. The overlapping chapters between the alternate edition and the full edition are identical.

### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

1. **Examinations (400 points; 100 points per exam):** There will be four exams throughout the semester: three midterm exams and a final exam. The final exam will *not* be comprehensive. Each exam will contain a combination of multiple choice and/or matching items. I will let you know the precise structure of the exam in advance. Below is the schedule for the exams:

- Midterm Exam 1:** Thursday, September 25
- Midterm Exam 2:** Tuesday, October 28
- Midterm Exam 3:** Thursday, November 20
- Final Exam:** Thursday, December 18, **5:00pm**

**IMPORTANT:** If any conflicts arise regarding exams, you must discuss these with me prior to examinations whenever possible. If an emergency (such as a death in the family) does arise, please discuss it with me as soon as you can (i.e., within ONE day of the exam).

2. **Pop Quizzes (100 points; 25 points per quiz):** Five unannounced quizzes will be given throughout the semester. These will be very brief, and students who have done the reading will not find them to be difficult. These quizzes also serve as an occasional check on **attendance**. Each quiz is worth 25 points, and I will drop the quiz with the lowest score. Thus, your overall quiz grade will be based on your four best quizzes. ***THERE WILL BE NO MAKE-UP QUIZZES.*** If you miss a quiz, that is the one that will be dropped.
3. **Extra Credit Opportunities:** There will be some extra credit opportunities in exchange for your participation in experimental studies. I will announce details about these opportunities as they arise.

**Grading scheme:**

93-100%: A	90-92.9: A-	
87-89.9: B+	83-86.9: B	80-82.9: B-
77-79.9: C+	73-76.9: C	70-72.9: C-
67-69.9: D+	60-66.9: D	
<60: F		

**ACADEMIC HONESTY**

Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person’s work as your own is always wrong. Any suspected instance of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

**DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES**

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services at (631) 632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.sunysb.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities.shtml>.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

*Note:* The schedule is subject to change. At the end of each class, I will announce what reading you will be responsible for.

### **Week 1**

Tues, 9/2: Introduction

Thurs, 9/4: Chapter 1: Perspectives on American Government

### **Week 2**

Tues, 9/9: Chapter 2: The U.S. Constitution

Thurs, 9/11: Chapters 2 and 5: The U.S. Constitution (Contd.) and Civil Rights

### **Week 3**

Tues, 9/16: Chapter 5: Civil Rights (Contd.)

Thurs, 9/18: Chapters 5 and 10: Civil Rights (Contd.) and Public Opinion

### **Week 4**

Tues, 9/23: Chapter 10: Public Opinion (Contd.)

Thurs, 9/25: **Midterm Exam 1**

### **Week 5**

Tues, 9/30: **NO CLASS** (Rosh Hashanah)

Thurs, 10/2: Chapters 10 and 12: Public Opinion (Contd.) and Media and Politics

### **Week 6**

Tues, 10/7: Chapter 12: Media and Politics (Contd.)

Thurs, 10/9: **NO CLASS** (Yom Kippur)

### **Week 7**

Tues, 10/14: Chapter 13: Political Parties

Thurs, 10/16: Chapter 13: Political Parties (Contd.)

### **Week 8**

Tues, 10/21: Chapters 14: Voting and Participation

Thurs, 10/23: Chapter 14: Voting and Participation (Contd.)

**Week 9**

Tues, 10/28: **Midterm Exam 2**

Thurs, 10/30: Chapter 15: Campaigns and Elections

**Week 10**

Tues, 11/4: Chapter 15: Campaigns and Elections (Contd.) ***ELECTION DAY!***

Thurs, 11/6: Chapter 4: Civil Liberties

**Week 11**

Tues, 11/11: Chapter 4: Civil Liberties (Contd.)

Thurs, 11/13: Chapter 3: Federalism

**Week 12**

Tues, 11/18: Chapter 11: Interest Groups

Thurs, 11/20: **Midterm Exam 3**

**Week 13**

Tues, 11/25: Chapter 6: Congress

Thurs, 11/27: **NO CLASS** (Thanksgiving)

**Week 14**

Tues, 12/2: Chapters 6 and 7: Congress (Contd.) and the Presidency

Thurs, 12/4: Chapter 7: The Presidency

**Week 15**

Tues, 12/9: Chapter 8: The Federal Bureaucracy

Thurs, 12/11: Chapter 9: The Judiciary

**Week 16**

Mon, 12/15: Chapter 9: The Judiciary (Contd.)

*Note:* Monday, 12/15 is a “correction day” and follows a Thursday schedule

**\*\* FINAL EXAM: THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18, 5:00PM \*\***