



**Stony Brook**  
**University**

## **POL 102 – Introduction to American Government** Summer 2016 (Session 2)

Tue/Thu 9:30am - 12:55pm  
Chemistry Building, Room 128

Instructor: Patrick Kraft  
Office: Social Behavioral Sciences Building (SBS) S-737  
Contact: [patrick.kraft@stonybrook.edu](mailto:patrick.kraft@stonybrook.edu)  
Office Hours: Tue 2-4pm, or by appointment

### **I Course Description**

This course is an introduction to American politics focusing on the constitution, the institutions of the United States government and the processes and bodies that determine public policies. The objectives of the course include providing students with:

- understanding of the philosophical origins and political implications of the American constitution.
- ability to understand how the U.S. political system works in comparison to other nations.
- understanding of major theories and approaches to American politics.
- understanding of the American electoral system and electoral politics.
- ability to think critically about political issues.

This course is important — whether you are a political science major or not. We will examine the structure of the American political system and the democratic theories upon which it was founded. You will be introduced to the fundamentals of American government, such as political institutions and processes. In addition to examining its history, we will also explore the modern day dynamics of the American political system at both the elite level and the electoral level. The ultimate goal of this course is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the structure and function of American government such that you leave the classroom better equipped to critically evaluate and actively participate in the American political system.

### **II Required Text**

There is one required textbook for the course and it is available at the [bookstore](#):

John G. Geer, Wendy J. Schiller, Jeffrey A. Segal, Richard Herrera. 2015. “Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government”. Loose-leaf Version, 3rd Edition. Wadsworth Publishing.

ISBN: 978-1305700475

### III Class Policies and Evaluation

**Readings:** The required readings typically include one or two chapters of the textbook per class session. You are expected to prepare the readings prior to each session. If any additional readings are assigned they will be made available electronically on Blackboard. It is important that you stay current with these readings so that you can follow along with lectures and participate in class discussions. Furthermore, staying informed with current events is a good way for you to apply what you are learning in class to the real world.

**Attendance and Participation:** You are expected to come to class, to be attentive and engaged in the lecture, and to participate in class discussions. You should not be texting, talking, or surfing the internet while class is in session. Class discussions make the lectures much more interesting and are greatly enhanced by well informed questions and comments. I hope that you feel free to voice your comments and to question my lectures. However, you are expected to be respectful of your fellow students in the class especially when it comes to discussing issues with which people may have strong feelings.

**Quizzes:** Unannounced quizzes will be given at the beginning of the lecture from time to time. In total, there will be at least 3 quizzes but there might be more. The quizzes will consist of 3 to 5 questions, covering material from the previous lecture as well as the respective readings. Quizzes cannot be made up under any circumstances and a missed quiz results in a score of zero. However, the quiz with the worst score will be dropped before computing your final grade. Please bring paper and writing utensil to every class in case there is a quiz.

**Exams:** There will be a midterm as well as a final exam (please see the schedule below). Each exam will be composed of multiple choice and definition questions as well as critical thinking questions. I will make sure that you are well prepared for the exams. For tests and exams, students are responsible for material covered in lectures that may not be in the text and for material in the text that may not be covered in lectures. The final exam will be comprehensive but will focus primarily on the material covered since the mid-term exam. If you have questions or require additional help, please let me know.

**Makeup Exam Policy:** It is essential that you understand the following policy for the course since no exceptions will be made. No exams may be taken early for any reason. A student who misses an exam must provide a very good reason supported by evidence such as a hospital admittance form. If you are ill prior to an exam, let me know as soon as possible beforehand if you may miss the exam. Makeup exams will consist entirely of long essays. Failure to write one of the exams without providing a sufficient excuse will result in a grade of zero for that exam.

**Incompletes:** I cannot grant incompletes in the course, except in cases of emergency or where university policy applies.

**Extra Credit:** There will be two opportunities to receive extra credit. The first opportunity consists of writing a response paper (3 to 5 pages) for a question/topic provided at the end of each class. Response papers have to be completed within one week after the class (i.e. a printed copy has to be handed in at the beginning of the following week's lecture). Late submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances. Each student may write up to two response papers.

Additionally, you will have the opportunity to participate in an experiment in the Political Science department for extra credit. Participation in these experiments is completely voluntary. The exact amount of possible extra credit along with details of the experiments will be announced at a later date.

**Laptops and other electronic devices:** You may use your laptop or tablet in class for note taking or other class related activities. However, if electronic devices become a distraction in class, I reserve the right to reevaluate my policy for allowing the use of electronic devices in class. Please refrain from using your cell phone in class under any circumstances.

**Office Hours:** Students who are having difficulty with the course materials and/or assignments are encouraged to see me during office hours. However, please note that office hours are for clarification of material, not for recreating a lecture if you skipped class.

**Syllabus:** I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus if necessary. I will give you fair notice (at least a week) if something, such as a reading assignment, is to change.

### Grading Breakdown by Percentage

Attendance & Participation	10%	
Quizzes	20%	
Midterm	30%	Tuesday, 7/26 (in class)
Final	<u>40%</u>	Tuesday, 8/16 (in class)
	100%	

### Grading Scale for Final Grades

93.5-100%	A	76.5-79.49	C+	0-59.49	F
89.5-93.49	A-	73.5-76.49	C		
86.5-89.49	B+	69.5-73.49	C-		
83.5-86.49	B	66.5-69.49	D+		
79.5-83.49	B-	59.5-66.49	D		

## IV Course Schedule

Date	Topics	Readings
TU 7/12	Introduction & The Constitution	Chapter 1 & 2
TH 7/14	Federalism & Civil Liberties	Chapter 3 & 4
TU 7/19	Civil Rights & Public Opinion	Chapter 5 & 6
TH 7/21	The News and Social Media	Chapter 7
TU 7/26	<i>Midterm Exam</i>	
TH 7/28	Interest Groups & Political Parties	Chapter 8 & 9
TU 8/02	Elections and Campaigns & Voting and Participation	Chapter 10 & 11
TH 8/04	Congress & The Presidency	Chapter 12 & 13
TU 8/09	The Judiciary & Conclusion	Chapter 15
TH 8/11	Review Session	
TU 8/16	<i>Final Exam</i>	

\* Schedule may be subject to change depending on class progress.

## V University Policies

**Disability Support Services (DSS) Statement:** If you have a physical, psychological, medical or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services, ECC (Educational Communications Center) Building, room128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations, if any, 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.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities>

**Academic Integrity Statement:** 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. Faculty are required to report any suspected instances of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. Faculty in the Health Sciences Center (School of Health Technology & Management, Nursing, Social Welfare, Dental Medicine) and School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures. 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/>.

**Critical Incident Management:** Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, or inhibits students' ability to learn. Faculty in the HSC Schools and the School of Medicine are required to follow their school-specific procedures.

**Academic Success & Tutoring Center:** Free academic support services including one-on-one tutoring, small group tutoring, academic success coaching, public speaking programs, and academic success workshops are available to all undergraduate students. Learn more about these services and additional campus resources by visiting [www.stonybrook.edu/tutoring](http://www.stonybrook.edu/tutoring).