

POLSC 110 – Spring 2013
John McMahon
 Tu/Th 19:00-20:15, Room HW706

Office: HW1701/ HW1730A
 Hours TBA
 E-Mail: john.mcmahon@hunter.cuny.edu

POLSC 110: Historical Introduction to American Government Course Syllabus

Course Description

This course explores the development of the American political system over time. We begin with the foundations of American politics, placing special emphasis on the United States Constitution and the shifting meaning Americans have attached to fundamental rights and liberties. Next we examine the principal institutions of American Government, especially Congress, the Presidency, and the judicial branch. We then examine the various ways in which people have participated in politics, including parties, elections, interest groups, and social movements. Lectures explore each topic from an historical and theoretical perspective, tracing the development of institutions and practices from the founding era to the present and examining their diverse meanings for citizenship today. Class discussion will investigate in greater depth topics introduced in the lectures through the analysis of primary source documents and secondary readings by political scientists, historians, and sociologists. Through engagement with different forms of political media and news, class discussion, and written assignments, this course also seeks to bring our historical and analytical approach to bear on contemporary political events.

Learning Objectives

In addition to covering substantive material, we seek to develop certain analytical and critical thinking skills as well as communication abilities across different forms. These will prove valuable both in our course, the rest of your academic career, and beyond.

- The written assignment and exams are designed to improve different writing skills, including your ability to summarize the main points of an argument succinctly, use language precisely, demonstrate command of some political science terminology, conduct research on a current political issue, and make an argument in which you state a thesis (take a position) and support it through the use of evidence.
- The online discussion board asks students to critically engage with primary and secondary sources and with each other as they analyze course material, political media, and current events.
- In the classroom, students will be pressed to “interrogate” whether evidence is conclusive or indeterminate, to reconcile conflicting evidence that seems to support different theories (or no theory), and to consider why particular authors select certain evidence and omit other material.

Course Requirements

- Complete **all reading assignments** before class.
- Attend class **regularly and on-time**. In class, students are expected to be respectful of their colleagues, engaged with the material, instructor, and one another, and participate in class discussions. Attendance and participation will figure in your course grade. No more than **2 unexcused absences** are permitted. If you exceed this limit, your attendance and participation grade will drop by one letter grade for each subsequent absence.

- I reserve the right to choose to give the class a brief quiz from time to time upon the assigned readings. I will exercise this option if it seems that students are not preparing adequately for class. These quizzes will factor into the participation and attendance grade.
- Participate in the online discussion board on Blackboard. We will be utilizing Blackboard to a significant extent in this course. Each student is required to submit **one** short posting (1-2 paragraphs) **per week** (usually every Thursday unless otherwise noted) that discusses **at least two readings from that week**; this can be a response to the reading and discussion questions provided by the instructor, an application of the week's material to current events, a re-evaluation of previously discussed material and question in light of new information, analysis of news media, etc. In addition, students are required to submit **one discussion question** to the Blackboard discussion site for the class. This can take a variety of forms – something that is unclear in the readings, a question relating the week's material to current events, critical questions of the texts, questions the text raises to discuss with the entire class, etc. Your posts are due by **7:00 am on the days noted in the syllabus**
- Complete **two take-home essay exams**. You will have at least one week between receiving the exam and the due date.
- Complete **one 4-5 page research/policy paper**. You will write (but not necessarily mail) a detailed, research-based letter to a public official on a national public policy issue, which will be drawn from an assignment sheet that will be distributed at least a month before the due date. A grade penalty will be imposed upon late papers without a documented valid reason for lateness.

Grading

Your grade will consist of the following components:

Online Discussion Board participation: 15%

Attendance and in-class participation: 15%

Exam 1: 25%

Exam 2: 25%

Research Paper: 20%

Class Policies

- In addition to the readings listed below, you will be expected to follow contemporary debates and issues in American politics.
- Classroom Conduct: Some of the issues covered in this course may be closely intertwined with deep-seated political and/or ethical beliefs. I enjoy and encourage a lively classroom discussion, but it must always be conducted in a respectful manner, free of invective, and conscious of what may be profound differences of opinion. Our discussions will allow all views a hearing, but I will not allow any one student to monopolize class time.
- Speaking: This course is speaking intensive. While regular attendance in class is required, bodily presence in the classroom is not an end in itself. Students should be in class not only to benefit from lectures, but to interact with their fellow students in a community of learning. Though this is a writing intensive class, we will not be privileging writing at the expense of other skills. We will strive to engage all students in each class session.
- Office Hours: I strongly encourage everyone to meet with me during my office hours. Experience shows that students who meet with their professors do much better than those who don't take advantage of the opportunity. If you're having difficulty with the class; if you

don't understand the concepts and need help; if you want to clarify my expectations for an assignment or an exam; if you want to discuss the results of an assignment or an exam; if you want to express a concern of any kind; if you want to talk politics or just talk about life, meet with me!

- Email and Blackboard: I will be sending out updates and information via email and Blackboard. You are expected to regularly check the email address associated with your Blackboard. Furthermore, you are responsible for all information and material on the course Blackboard site.
- We will be using TurnItIn.com for both exams and the research paper. You will receive instructions on accessing our course TurnItIn page. *Note that for both exams and for the research paper, you must turn in BOTH a paper copy in class and an electronic copy to TurnItIn.*
- You may provide documentation to excuse an absence. In all other cases, absences will be unexcused and negatively affect your grade.
- Even if you are absent on the days that a written assignment is due, you are still responsible for turning in the assignment on-time.
- It is your right to expect that your work be thoughtfully and fairly graded. I am happy to answer questions regarding grading and discuss your work with you.
- Texting is distracting and will negatively impact your participation grade.
- Credit/No-Credit Grading: College rules specify that to be eligible for credit/no credit, students must complete all course requirements. In this course, students who wish to be graded on the credit/no credit system
- Transfer Equivalencies and Hunter College requirements: If you have received transfer credit or AP credit for an Introduction to American Government course you will not be able to receive credit for POLSC 110. To fulfill the GER 1C requirement, you will need to take HIST 151 or HIST 152. If you have any questions, please see one of the Political Science Department advisors. You can find their office hours on the Department website at <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/polsci/contact/advising>.

Office of AccessABILITY

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College's students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 or TTY (212) 650-3230

If needed, please be sure to make any necessary academic arrangements in advance of due dates so that I can best assist you.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

If an online submission, exam, or the paper is found to have been plagiarized, disciplinary action will result. A grade of F for the assignment and/or course will be given, and, if necessary, the case will be submitted for further action at the level of the Department Chair and/or the Dean of Students.

For the take-home essay exams, in-text citations (Author, Page number) can be used to reference class texts. For the research paper, you are required to use Chicago-style citations; I will circulate information and guidelines with the paper assignment.

For a guide to what constitutes plagiarism, please consult <http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/plag/plagiarismtutorial.php>; of course, discuss with me any questions you may have.

Required Readings

ALL class readings can be accessed through the **course E-Reserve page** (instructions on access to be provided) through the Library. This will include the links listed below and/or PDFs of the readings.

It is suggested but not required that you print out readings and bring them to class.

Course Schedule

Please note that I reserve the right to make adjustments to the course schedule during the semester. Any changes will be announced in-class and on Blackboard.

***indicates a response is due on this day

Introduction; Foundations of American Government

January 29: Welcome and introduction

January 31

- Declaration of Independence

2/5 – 2/14: The Constitution and American Political Culture

February 5

- Articles of Confederation:
- Constitution:

February 7***

- Howard Zinn, “A Kind of Revolution” in *A People’s History of the United States* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1990), pp. 76-101.
- Michael Rogin, “Political Repression in the United States” in Ronald Reagan, the Movie. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 44-55.

February 12: No class (Lincoln’s Birthday)

February 14***

- Louis Hartz, from *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* in Cannon et. al. *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*, 5th Ed. (New York: Norton, 2008)

- Rogers Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America” in in Cannon et. al. *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*, 5th Ed. (New York: Norton, 2008)

2/19 - 2/21: Federalists and Anti-Federalists, Liberty and Equality

February 19

- Federalist No. 10
- Federalist No. 39
- Federalist No. 51

February 21***

- Brutus No. 2:
- Brutus No. 5
- Melancton Smith, “Speech in the New York Ratifying Convention, June 21, 1788:”
- Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Linda Medcalf, “The Dark Side of the Constitution,” in *The Case Against the Constitution: From the Anti-Federalists to the Present* (M.E. Sharpe: New York, 1987), excerpt

2/26 – 2/28: Federalism

February 26

- Martha Derthick, “How many Communities?” in *Keeping the Compound Republic: Essays on American Federalism* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001), pp. 9-32

February 28***

- Thomas Jefferson, “The Kentucky Resolutions:”
- George Wallace, “Statement and Proclamation of Governor George C. Wallace, University of Alabama, June 11, 1963:” http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs_list/schooldoor.html
- *United States v. Lopez*, 514 U.S. 549 (1995), excerpts.

3/5 – 3/7: Civil Rights

March 5

- Frederick Douglass, “What To The Slave Is The Fourth of July?” July 5, 1852: <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?documentprint=162>
- Abraham Lincoln, “First Joint Debate,” in Robert W. Johannsen, ed., *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 51-55.
- Eric Foner, “Preface” in *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. xix-xxvii.

March 7***

- Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter From A Birmingham Jail*, April 16, 1963:
- Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” April 3, 1964 http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/speeches/malcolm_x_ballot.html

3/12 – 3/14: Civil Liberties

March 12

- Bill of Rights: <http://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/billofrights>
- Cass R. Sunstein, Chapter 5 “Free Speech,” in *Why Societies Need Dissent* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 96-110
- Senator Russell Feingold, “On Opposing the U.S.A PATRIOT Act”, October 12, 2001, <http://www.archipelago.org/vol6-2/feingold.htm>

March 14***

- Justice Harry A. Blackmun, U.S. Supreme Court, Decision: *Roe et.al. v. Wade*, District Attorney of Dallas County 410 U.S. 113. Online:

http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/historics/USSC_CR_0410_0113_ZO.html (Read Part I and skim Part II, then read IX thru XII)

- *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, 112 S.Ct. 2791, excerpt in Theodore J. Lowi et al., *Readings for American Government*, 4th ed. (New York: Norton, 1996), pp. 518-23.

3/19 – 3/21: Capitalism and American Democracy

March 19***

- Lisa Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), Introduction and Chap. 1
- ***Jeffrey A. Winters and Benjamin I. Page, “Oligarchy in the United States?” *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 4 (December 2009): 731-751

March 21

- **EXAM 1 DUE**

SPRING BREAK

4/4: Congress***

- Eric Schickler, “Institutional Development of Congress,” in Paul J. Quirk and Sarah A. Binder, eds., *The Legislative Branch* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 35-62.
- John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse “Too Much of a Good Thing: More Representative is not Necessarily Better” in Cannon et. Al. *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*, 6th Ed. (New York: Norton, 2006), pp. 151-157
- Case study on Congress from “Chapter 8: Intersectionality” in Mary Hawkesworth, *Feminist Inquiry* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006)

4/9 – 4/11: Presidency

April 9

- George Washington’s Farewell Address (1796): http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp
- Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address (1865): <http://www.bartleby.com/124/pres32.html>
- Franklin D. Roosevelt, “First Inaugural Address” (1933)
- **IN CLASS:** Barack Obama’s Second Inaugural Address (2013)

April 11***

- Andrew J. Polsky, “The Presidency at War: Unchecked Power, Uncertain Leadership,” in Michael Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*, 9th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2010), pp. 489-508.

4/16 – 4/18: Judiciary

April 16

- Federalist No. 78: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed78.asp
- John Marshall, from “Marbury v. Madison (1803)” (excerpts)

April 18***

- Cass R. Sunstein, “Judges and Democracy: The Changing Role of the United States Supreme Court,” in Kermit L. Hall and Kevin T. McGuire, eds., *The Judicial Branch* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 32-59.
- Additional reading on current Supreme Court TBA

4/23 – 4/25: Elections and Parties

April 23

- Alexis de Tocqueville: Parties in the United States:”
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/1_ch10.htm

- Richard Franklin Bense, *The American Ballot Box in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 9-14.

April 25***

- Andrew J. Polsky, "Partisan Regimes in American Politics," working draft, June 2011, excerpts
- John Perry, "Needed: More Political Dimensions," *New York Times*, January 21, 2012: <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/21/needed-more-political-dimensions/>

4/30 – 5/14: Interest Groups, Participation, and Social Movements

April 30

- **POLICY PAPER DUE**

May 2***

- James M. Berry, "The Advocacy Explosion" in *The Interest Group Society*, 3rd ed. (New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 17-42.
- Frances Fox Piven, "Does Voting Matter?" in *Why Americans Still Don't Vote, And Why Politicians Want it that Way* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), pp. 1-22

May 7

- Alexis de Tocqueville, "On The Use which the Americans Make of Associations in Civil Life:"

May 9***

- Robert D. Putnam, Chapter 2 "Civic Participation" in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 2000), pp. 31-47.
- Russell J. Dalton, Chapter 4 "Bowling Alone or Protesting with a Group" in *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2008)
- Manissa McCleave Maharawal, "So Real It Hurts: Notes from Occupy Wall Street," *Racialicious*, October 3, 2011: <http://www.racialicious.com/2011/10/03/so-real-it-hurts-notes-on-occupy-wall-street>

May 14***

- Anonymous Queers, "Queers Read This," New York, NY, 1990:
- Julie Ajinkya, "Intersecting Oppressions: Rethinking Women's Movements in the United States." In *Women's Movements in the Global Era*, ed. Amrita Basu (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2010), pp. 415-444.
- "The Seneca Falls Declaration and Resolutions:" <http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html>
- Sojourner Truth, "Ain't I A Woman:" <http://www.sojournertruth.org/Library/Speeches/AintIAWoman.htm>
- Combahee River Collective, "Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties:" <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>

5/16: Conclusion and Major Themes

FINAL EXAM DUE DATE TBA