

Introduction to US Politics (POL1570)
Prof. Samuel R. Galloway
Tue. & Fri. 4.30 – 6.10
Office Hours: Tue. & Fri. 12.30. – 2.00.

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1. Course Summary:

This course offers an introduction to the government and politics of the United States of America. We will explore the development of American political culture, ideologies, and institutions, from Congress to the Federal bureaucracy. We will explore how a system of representative democracy is sustained through civic engagement like voting and activism, but also corrupted through wealth inequality, media monopolization, gerrymandering, and corporate capture. In the process, we will establish a foundational understanding of the constitutional system of checks and balances as well as the relationship between constituent and constituted power. As this is an election year, special focus will be given to public opinion formation, electoral campaigns, party politics, the presidency and Congress.

2. Course Objectives:

Completion of this course will secure an introduction to the institutional, cultural, historical, and contemporary structures of American political life and government. It will provide an introductory approach to political science studies of culture, institutions, law, activism, and electoral campaigns, public opinion, the media, lobbying, and domestic and foreign policy. Finally, skills such as critical reading, analytical writing, and collaborative discussion will be modeled and reinforced.

3. Required Texts:

All texts are available on Moodle, broken down by weekly module.

Please be sure to come to class with the assigned texts and materials.

In addition to the assigned readings and resources on Moodle, it is expected that you will watch at least the headlines segment (the first 10 – 15 minutes) of the daily weekday broadcast of Democracy Now!, which begins live at 8am and is archived by 9am: www.DemocracyNow.org.

4. Grading

Prepared Attendance & Participation: 30%

Quizzes: 15% (see below for details).

Response Essays (2): 10 + 15 = 25% (See below for details).

Final Essay: 30% (see below for details)

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5. Quizzes:

Quizzes are embedded in the reading. You will be expected to complete each quiz before advancing to the next section. Quizzes test for completion of the assigned reading and comprehension of the material. Quizzes are worth 10% of your grade.

6(a). Response Essays:

Response essays should be no more than 450 words in length (approximately 1.5 double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font, **margins justified** pages). Papers either over 450 words, or under 300 words (approximately 1 full page), will not receive full consideration. The purpose of response papers is to identify the key concepts in the readings and their significance. The first essay is graded 10% of your grade; the following is 15%, for a total of 25% of your grade.

6(b). Final Essay— Critical Reconstruction of an Argument:

The objective of the final paper assignment is to provide students with the opportunity to reconstruct an argument from the class and critically evaluate its merits.

The final written assignment will be 1000 – 1200 words in length (approximately 3.5 – 4 double-spaced, 12 point, Times New Roman font, and **margins justified** pages). Papers either over or under this range will not receive full consideration. The goal of this essay is to reconstruct an argument encountered in the readings on ideology and to conclude with a critical evaluation of the argument thus reconstructed. The format of this essay is 75% reconstruction, 25% critical evaluation. ***A specific grading rubric for the final paper will be circulated in advance of the assignment.*** A paper proposal of 150 words must be submitted and approved in advance. A sample proposal will be provided.

7. Intellectual Honesty/Plagiarism:

Simply: *do not* plagiarize. If there are any questions whatsoever about the proper way to cite a source, please consult me in the final instance. Proven plagiarism will lead to automatic failure of the course and will be referred to the College administration for additional sanction.

8. Attendance:

Because of the importance of attendance, absences will be excused only in documented cases of illness, personal emergency, or religious observance. I expect *prior notification* of your absence (via email) and reserve the right to request additional documentation. After the second unexcused absence, each additional unexcused absence will result in a deduction of *one full letter grade* from your participation grade.

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9. Unwavering Expectations for Respectful Discourse and Conduct:

Under no circumstances will disrespectful discourse or conduct be welcome in our classroom. We will treat one another with respect, patience, and understanding. Learning inherently involves the risk of allowing knowledge to change your life, and this requires courage. We will all exercise an unwavering commitment to encouraging one another in this process.

10. Accessibility Statement:

The Office of Disability Resources collaborates directly with students who identify with disabilities to create accommodation plans, including testing accommodations, in order for students to access course content and validly demonstrate learning. For students who may require accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Resources as soon as possible: 914-251-6035, ODR@purchase.edu (Student Services Building, #316A), www.purchase.edu/odr

11. Proviso

Revision of Syllabus: This syllabus is subject to revision. Any changes will be announced in advanced in class and via email.

Emails Responses: I will do my best to reply to your email within 24 hours. If you have not heard back from me within 24 hours, please feel free to follow-up. Be sure to allow yourself enough time to receive a timely reply.

12. Class Schedule:

Week One: American Government and Civic Engagement

Monday, 8/31: This is America, Don't Catch You Slipping Now.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYOjWnS4cMY>

1.1 "Introduction to American Government".

1.2 "What is Government?"

Thursday, 9/3: Ideology

1.3 Who Governs? Elitism, Pluralism, and Tradeoffs Engagement in a Democracy

1.4 Historical and Contemporary Political Ideologies

1.4.1 Crash Course: Government and Politics #35, "Ideology":

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_k_k-bHigM (8.45 minutes).

1.4.2 Vox. Authoritarianism: The political science that explains Trump (6.45)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YU9djt_CQM

1.4.3 Richard Wolff Defines Socialism and Capitalism (5.41 minutes).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XnY_ZqJ64cI&t=14s

1.4.3.1 Full Video of Richard Wolff's Economic Update: Capitalism v.

Socialism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBRhTnswnv0>

(29.50 minutes) (optional).

Week Two: The Constitution and Its Origins

Monday, 9/7: **Labor Day. No classes, but readings assigned.**

- 2.1 Introduction to the Constitution and Its Origins
- 2.2 The Pre-Revolutionary Period and the Roots of the American Political Tradition
- 2.3 The Articles of Confederation

Thursday, 9/10:

- 2.4 The Development of the Constitution
- 2.5 The Ratification of the Constitution
 - 2.5.1 Federalist Paper #10
 - 2.5.2 Federalist Paper #51
- 2.6. Constitutional Change

Week Three: American Federalism

Monday, 9/14:

- 3.1 Introduction to American Federalism
- 3.2. The Division of Powers
- 3.3. The Evolution of American Federalism

Thursday, 9/17:

- 3.4 Intergovernmental Relationships
- 3.5 Competitive Federalism Today
- 3.6 Advantages and Disadvantages of Federalism

Week Four: Civil Liberties

Monday, 9/21

- 4.1. Introduction to Civil Liberties
- 4.2. What Are Civil Liberties?
- 4.3. Securing Basic Freedoms

Thursday, 9/24

- 4.4. The Rights of Suspects
- 4.5 Interpreting the Bill of Rights

Week Five: Civil Rights

Response Paper 1 Prompts Out: Foundations for Civil Rights

Monday, 9/28

- 5.1 Introduction to Civil Rights
- 5.2 What Are Civil Rights and How Do We Identify Them?

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5.3. The African American Struggle for Equality

5.4. The Fight for Women's Rights

Thursday, 10/1

5.5. Civil Rights for Indigenous Groups: Native Americans, Alaskans, and Hawaiians

5.6 Equal Protection for Other Groups

Week Six: The Politics of Public Opinion

Response Paper 2 Due

Monday, 10/6

6.1 Introduction to Public Opinion

6.2 The Nature of Public Opinion

6.3 How Is Public Opinion Measured?

Thursday, 10/9

6.4 What Does the Public Think?

6.5 The Effects of Public Opinion

Week Seven: The Media

Monday, 10/13

7.1 Introduction to the Media

7.2 What Is the Media?

7.3 The Evolution of the Media

Thursday, 10/16

7.4 Regulating the Media

7.5 The Impact of the Media

Week Eight: Political Parties

Monday, 10/20

8.1 Introduction to Political Parties

8.2 What Are Parties and How Did They Form?

8.3 The Two-Party System

Thursday, 10/23

8.4 The Shape of Modern Political Parties

8.5 Divided Government and Partisan Polarization

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Week Nine: Interest Groups and Lobbying

Monday, 10/27

- 9.1 Introduction to Interest Groups and Lobbying
- 9.2 Interest Groups Defined
- 9.3 Collective Action and Interest Group Formation
- 9.4 Interest Groups as Political Participation

Thursday, 10/30

- 9.5 Pathways of Interest Group Influence
- 9.6 Free Speech and the Regulation of Interest Group

Week Ten: Voting and Elections

Response Paper 2 Out: Electoral Politics

Monday 11/3:

- 10.1 Introduction to Voting and Elections
- 10.2 Voter Registration
- 10.3 Voter Turnout
- 10.4 Elections
- 10.5 Campaigns and Voting

Thursday, 11/6

- 10.6 Direct Democracy

Week Eleven: Congress

Response Paper 2 Due

Monday, 11/10

- 11.1 Introduction to Congress
- 11.2 The Institutional Design of Congress
- 11.3 Congressional Elections
- 11.4 Congressional Representation

Thursday, 11/13

- 11.5 House and Senate Organizations
- 11.6 The Legislative Process

Week Twelve: The Presidency

Monday, 11/17

- 12.1 Introduction to the Presidency
- 12.2 The Design and Evolution of the Presidency
- 12.3 The Presidential Election Process
- 12.4 Organizing to Govern

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Thursday, 11/20

12.5 The Public Presidency

12.6 Presidential Governance: Direct Presidential Action

Week Thirteen: The Courts

Monday, 11/24

13.1 Introduction to the Courts

13.2 Guardians of the Constitution and Individual Rights

13.3 The Dual Court System

13.4 The Federal Court System

Thursday, 11/27: Thanksgiving Break:

Remember and pay tribute to the Wappinger people who were dispossessed of their land, called Quarropas, upon which eventually Purchase College was built. What tribes are indigenous to where you live? How has settler colonialism shaped your community?

Learn more about the Wappinger here: <https://www.purchase.edu/live/news/4160-the-native-voice>

Week Fourteen: Courts (Continued) & State and Local Government

- **Office Hours Writing Workshop**
- **Final Essay Prompt Out: The State of the Union**

Monday, 12/1

13.5 The Supreme Court

13.6 Judicial Decision-Making and Implementation by the Supreme Court

Thursday, 12/4: **State and Local Government**

14.1 Introduction to State and Local Government

14.2 State Power and Delegation

14.3 State Political Culture

14.4 Governors and State Legislatures

14.5 County and City Government

Week Fifteen: The Bureaucracy

Monday, 12/8

15.1 Introduction to the Bureaucracy

15.2 Bureaucracy and the Evolution of Public Administration

15.3 Toward a Merit-Based Civil Service

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Thursday, 12/11

15.4 Understanding Bureaucracies and their Types

15.5 Controlling the Bureaucracy

Week Sixteen: Domestic and Foreign Policy

Monday, 12/15 Domestic Policy

16.1 Introduction to Domestic Policy

16.2 What Is Public Policy?

16.3 Categorizing Public Policy

16.4 Policy Arenas

16.5 Policymakers Budgeting and Tax Policy

Thursday, 12/18: Foreign Policy

17.1 Introduction to Foreign Policy

17.2 Defining Foreign Policy

17.3 Foreign Policy Instruments

17.4 Institutional Relations in Foreign Policy

17.5 Approaches to Foreign Policy

Week Seventeen:

Monday, 12/21: **Final Written Assignment Due.**