

Syllabus

POL 102: Introduction to American Government (Spring 2025)

Class Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 2:00-3:20 pm

Class Room: Academic Building **C103**



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Office hours: 3:30-5:00 pm on Tue, Wed, and Thursday (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, systems, and processes of American government and politics. You will be introduced to concepts such as the 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. Lastly, this course will cover the American political processes, such as Political Parties, Campaigns and Elections, as well as Public Opinion and Political Socialization. The class will consist of lectures, 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 class discussion, all quizzes, writing assignments, and 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.

Required Readings

1) Required Textbook:

- Steffen Schmidt, Mack Shelley, and Barbara Bardes. ***American Government and Politics Today: Essentials, 20th Edition*** (ISBN-13: 9780357458495) or a newer edition.

2) Other resources:

- Students are also required to read the news daily with American politics coverage that is related to our course (e.g. www.nytimes.com, www.washingtonpost.com, www.cnn.com, www.foxnews.com, news.google.com (section "U.S."), etc.)
- Additional reading materials will be provided by the instructor

Course Learning Objectives:

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

1. Identify and explain the basic constitutional structures and political processes of the American national government system.
2. Distinguish and explain the differences between liberal and conservative.
3. Distinguish and explain American political parties such as Democrats and Republicans.
4. Distinguish and explain the differences between House and Senate in the US congress.
5. Identify and explain American political institutions, interactions of the three branches, and American political processes.
6. Explain the process of American presidential and Congressional elections.
7. Evaluate and criticize political phenomenon that you encounter in the news regarding American political system and institutions.
8. 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. Bring some questions for the class
3. Reviewing interactive PowerPoint lectures
4. Participating in class activities such as discussion, presentation, and quizzes
5. Submitting written assignments including portfolio and reaction paper
6. Taking Midterm and Final exam

Grading policy

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

► Two Exams (60%):

1. There will be two exams.
2. **The Midterm exam (30%) is scheduled for April 15 (Tue) and 17 (Thu).**
3. **The Final exam (30%) is scheduled for Thursday, June 12, from 1:00 to 2:50 am.**
4. Midterm and Final Exams will consist of multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blank, and short essay questions.
5. No Make-up exam!
6. Make-up tests will only be arranged in extreme cases (e.g. death of a parent), 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.
7. If you don't have a legitimate reason for missing the exam or if you do not provide documents or evidences proving extreme cases, you will receive a zero for that test.

► **Quizzes (10%):**

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

► **Writing 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 a news article or editorial every day and critically analyze a selected article and write your own critique every week.
4. At least one article per week is required.
5. Your portfolio must include each article's link, title, published date, your summary and your own critique and additionally one or two discussion questions.
6. Each article should include a half to one page of summary and a half to one page of your own critique, so the length of each article should be 1 - 2 pages.
7. MS Word or a PDF form, font size 12pt, 1 - 1.5 line space, proper citation needed!
8. **Your midterm portfolio (5%)** (including your summaries and critiques of **6 articles**) should be submitted **by 11:55pm on April 12th (Saturday)**.
9. **Your final portfolio (5%)** (including your summaries and critiques of **6 articles**) should be submitted **by 11:55pm on May 31st (Saturday)**.
10. Your portfolio should have a cover sheet with your name, the title of the portfolio (with the subtitle "Mid-Term Portfolio" or "Final Portfolio"), the class name (**POL 102**), and the date.
11. Your completed portfolio will be graded based on the quality and quantity of content, appearance, writing style, and depth of analysis.

► **Reaction Paper (5%):**

1. The topic of the Reaction Paper assignment will be announced probably in April.
2. 5-6 pages, 12pt, Times New Roman, 1 – 1.5 line space, proper citation needed, MS-Word or PDF form.
3. **The deadline is by 11:55pm on May 17th (Saturday)**.

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

1. Students are encouraged to regularly participate in all class discussions and activities.
2. Students are encouraged to prepare and bring one or two questions for the class.
3. In order to get higher scores, you have to participate actively in class discussions every week.
4. Your participation in class discussion will also be graded both quantitatively and qualitatively.
5. If students do not participate in class discussion at all, the participation score will be zero.
6. If students present a summary and critique of a newspaper article of the week in class, they will get 1% extra bonus point.

► **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 without being late and excused absence, 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	10% (+Bonus 1%)
1	10%
2	9%
3	8%
4	7%
5	5%
6	3%
7	1%
8	0%
9 or more	F

4. A student who has a total of 9 or more unexcused absences will receive a course grade of F.
5. Three times of being late will be counted as one absence.
6. Unexcused early leave of the class will be counted as an absence.
7. Absences that I approve in advance will not count toward a student's total number of missed classes.
8. I reserve the right to excuse absences retroactively on a case-by-case basis. Please provide documentation of the reason for your absence with your explanation.
9. If you submit a medical document or a doctor's note, your medical doctor **should** specify on the document that he or she recommend you do not attend the class due to your illness or disease.
10. Make sure that submitting a doctor's note **does not** mean your absence will be automatically excused.

► **Extra Bonus Credits :**

1. If you show perfect attendance without being late and any excused absence, you will get 1% bonus point.
2. If you sign up and present your summary and critique of a newspaper article successfully, you will get 1% bonus point. You should get my confirmation of the article topic two days before your presentation date, and must send me your presentation file via email by noon, one day before your presentation date.
3. If you participate in a workshop or seminar that I recommend and if you send me one page of reaction paper by midnight on that day, you can get 1% bonus point.

► **GRADING SCALE:**

94% – 100% : A	90% – 93.99% : A-	87% – 89.99% : B+	84% – 86.99% : B
80% – 83.99% : B-	77% – 79.99% : C+	74% – 76.99% : C	70% – 73.99% : C-
67% – 69.99% : D+	60% – 66.99% : D	0% – 59.99% : F	

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/

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. If you find yourself struggling with your mental or physical health this semester, please feel free to approach me. I will try to be flexible and accommodating. You can also find free, confidential mental health services at University Counselling Services by calling +82-032-626-1700 or email at counseling@sunykorea.ac.kr.

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 be on time.
2. Please come to class prepared. Please read assigned readings before each class.
3. You must practice proper classroom etiquette, which means No Instagram, Facebook, Kakao Talk, and any cell phone use during the class except in urgent cases. Make sure your cell phones are either off or on silent before class starts.
4. Respectful questions and comments are welcome.
5. 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.
6. I will post lecture PowerPoints onto Brightspace after class. You may use them to review chapters and prepare for the quizzes and exams.
7. If the class mode is online, you are required to show your face using webcam via zoom during the class. If you do not turn on video or fail to show your face via zoom, it is regarded as absence. Without showing your face, you cannot take an online quiz and exam.
8. Syllabus and course schedule and requirements subject to change. If any changes are made, the students will be notified via email or Brightspace.
9. All University rules of conduct apply.

Spring 2025 Course Schedule & Calendar

Week	Date	In-Class Topic and Contents	Assignment and Notice
1	2/25 (Tue)	Course Overview	
	2/27 (Thu)	Introduction	Read Chap. 1 of the textbook
2	3/4 (Tue)	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? 	Read Chap. 1 of the textbook
	3/6 (Thu)	Chapter 1. The Democratic Republic (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion: What if Citizens were required to vote? - Fundamental Values - Political Ideologies - The Challenge of Demographic Change 	<u># Mar. 7 (Friday): Last day to drop without "W" record on your transcript.</u> Read Chap. 2 of the textbook
3	3/11 (Tue)	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 	Quiz 1 (Chap. 1) Read Chap. 2 of the textbook
	3/13 (Thu)	Chapter 2. The Constitution (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	Read Chap. 3 of the textbook
4	3/18 (Tue)	Chapter 3. Federalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Three Systems of Government - Why Federalism? - The Constitutional Basis for American Federalism 	Read Chap. 3 of the textbook
	3/20 (Thu)	Chapter 3. Federalism (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	Read Chap. 4 of the textbook
5	3/25 (Tue)	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 	Quiz 2 (Chap. 2 and 3) Read Chap. 4 of the textbook
	3/27 (Thu)	Chapter 4. Civil Liberties (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	Read Chap. 5 of the textbook

6	4/1 (Tue)	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 	Read Chap. 5 of the textbook
	4/3 (Thu)	Chapter 5. Civil Rights (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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 	
7	4/8 (Tue)	<Movie & Politics I> <i>The Butler</i>	Quiz 3 (Chap 4 and 5)
	4/10 (Thu)	<Movie & Politics I> <i>The Butler</i> (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion: Which was the most effective way to improve the Civil Rights? Review for the Midterm Exam	<u>*Midterm Portfolio should be submitted by 11:55pm on April 12 (Saturday).</u>
8	4/15 (Tue)	Midterm Exam_ Part I (Multiple choice and Fill in the blank questions)	
	4/17 (Thu)	Midterm Exam_ Part II (Short Essay Questions)	<u># April 18 (Friday): Last day students can select GPNC. Last day students can drop but "W" will be recorded on transcript.</u>
9	4/22 (Tue)	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 	Read Chap. 11 of the textbook
	4/24 (Thu)	Chapter 11. Congress (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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? 	Read Chap. 12 of the textbook
10	4/29 (Tue)	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 	Quiz 4 (Chap. 11) Read Chap. 12 of the textbook
	5/1 (Thu)	Chapter 12. The President (cont'd) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special Uses of Presidential Power - Abuses of Executive Power and Impeachment - The Executive Organization - The Vice Presidency 	Read Chap. 8 of the textbook

11	5/6 (Tue)	No Class – Substitute Holiday of Children’s Day	
	5/8 (Thu)	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 	Quiz 5 (Chap. 12) Read Chap. 8 of the textbook
12	5/13 (Tue)	Chapter 8. Political Parties (cont’d) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 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? 	Read Chap. 6 of the textbook
	5/15 (Thu)	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 	Read Chap.6 of the textbook <u>*Reaction Paper should be submitted by 11:55pm on May 17 (Saturday)</u>
13	5/20 (Tue)	Chapter 6. Public Opinion and Political Socialization (cont’d) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measuring Public Opinion - Technology and Opinion Polls - Public Opinion and the Political Process 	
	5/22 (Thu)	<Movie & Politics II> Wag the Dog	Quiz 6 (Chap. 8 and 6)
14	5/27 (Tue)	<Movie & Politics II> Wag the Dog (cont’d) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussion: What do you think of Campaign Lies? Are they universal and acceptable in the U.S.? Why? - Discussion: What do you think of the Media effect on campaigns and elections? 	
	5/29 (Thu)	Open Discussion Session I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the Electoral College good or bad? Do we need to keep the Electoral College? Why? or why not? - Which is better between Divided Government and Unified Government? Do American Voters prefer Divided Government? Why? Or why not? - What do you think of “Going Public” as a strategy of Presidential Leadership? Is it good or bad? Why? 	<u>*Final Portfolio should be submitted by 11:55pm on May 31 (Saturday).</u>
15	6/3 (Tue)	Open Discussion Session II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can the Party Polarization affect the Independent Voters? - What if voting by mail became universal? What do you think of the mail vote? Do you believe that the chances of voting fraud are greater or smaller with a mail-in voting system than with the traditional polling-place system? Why or why not? - In your opinion, why and how did Trump win In the 2024 presidential election? Review for the Final Exam with the Study Guide	Online Course Evaluation
16	6/12 (Thu)	Final Exam (1:00 – 2:50 pm)	