INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT
POL 102:01 / SPRING 2014
102 FREY HALL
TTh 8:30-9:50 am

Professor: Albert Cover
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Office hours: MWF 8:15-9:45 am & by appointment

Objectives: This course aims to increase your understanding of how the American political system operates.
 Initially, we will focus on the American public. We will learn about the political activities and beliefs of the public. Is the public well-informed about the government and the policies it considers? Does the public care much about policy matters? Is the public active in trying to shape policies to reflect its preferences?
 Next we will turn to the government itself. How do the different branches work, and how do they interact in trying to get policies implemented that members of each branch prefer?
 By the end of the term students should be able to describe the parts of the policy-making process they have covered in the class. They should know how citizens made decisions on whether to participate in the political process and how citizens decide whom to support among candidates for public office. Finally, students should understand how the government operates and how government officials decide what policies to pursue.

TA's: There will be a couple TA's helping out in this course. Check our online Blackboard site, described below, for names, email addresses, and office hours.

The TA advising rooms, S718 & S722, are close to the Political Science office on the 7th floor of the SBS Building. They are interior rooms and a bit hard to find initially.

Course Recording: The video and audio of this class will be recorded and will be available to students for review during the term. The links to these recordings will be on Blackboard (discussed below) in a section entitled “EchoCenter.”
BOOKS: The reading is taken from–


The textbook has been ordered through the University bookstore in the Library. It may be bought or rented there. The text may also be purchased as an “ebook” that can be read online, printed out, or downloaded as a file. Check http://www.ichapters.com for this option.

There is some excellent review material for the text available online as part of our Blackboard site (described below). The site has a Course Documents section and within that a folder entitled “Chapter Outlines and Vocabulary.” Each chapter has a detailed outline of the text material plus a list of key vocabulary terms from the chapter.

The most effective way to use this material is to scan the chapter outlines before reading the corresponding text chapter, to read the text carefully, and then to return to the outlines and vocabulary as part of reviewing material before a test.

Please keep in mind that this material is only useful for studying material in the text; it will not help students learn the lecture material. That comes from attending class and from reviewing the “Lecture Notes” folder available in Course Documents.

BLACKBOARD SYSTEM: Blackboard will be used to maintain a web site for our course. In addition to the TA information and Course Documents described previously, Blackboard will allow students to check on exam dates, schedule changes, grades, various announcements concerning the course, and review class sessions. The Blackboard address is

http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu

Logging into Blackboard requires a Net ID and a password:

You can check your Net ID & password by logging into the SOLAR system and opening the “Security and Personal Data” folder.

From time to time I will send email to the class, and you won’t get it unless you check your stonybrook.edu email address,

For additional assistance in using Blackboard, see the student consultants in the Main Library SINC site (S1460 Library).
COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) Research Participation -- Students in this course are required to participate in research conducted by the Department of Political Science. (Note that this is required; it is not an extra credit exercise in this course. Extra credit opportunities are described later.) As research participants students get first-hand experience with some of the political research conducted by members of the department that is relevant to understanding the field. In addition, student participation enables members of the department to advance political science knowledge.

Students fulfill the research requirement by choosing **one** of the two following options:

- 1. Participation in **one** research study during the term. The study should require no more than an hour or so to complete. Generally I would expect at least two experiments to be offered during the term. There is no additional credit for participating in more than the one required experiment. OR

- 2. Writing an alternative library research paper on a topic chosen by the student and approved by the instructor dealing with American politics. This must be an original research project. The paper should be 8-10 pages.

Note: for those students enrolled in WRT102 in the current term with Robert Kaplan, the final paper for WRT 102 may be used to fulfill the research requirement in POL 102:01.

The research requirement counts as ten percent of the term grade. It must be completed no later than our last class of the term. Students should make every effort to fulfill this requirement as the experiments come along; those who wait until the end may find that there are no suitable studies for which they can volunteer. That will naturally lower the student's final grade.

Typically the research opportunities cluster in the last half of the course. If they are necessary, sign-up sheets for the research studies will be circulated in class as soon as the experiments are ready to go. Announcements will also be posted on the Blackboard system. You will get credit for the experiment when you sign the attendance sheet at the experiment itself. (Note: Make sure you indicate you are in POL 102 or you may not get appropriate credit.)

Students should check their grades in Blackboard to make sure they have gotten appropriate credit for fulfilling the research requirement. **Any errors must be reported by our last class; no corrections will be made after the exam period begins.**

2) Midterm Examinations -- There will be two examinations during the term. Each midterm exam will consist of 50 questions and will count as thirty percent of the term grade. The precise dates and coverage of the midterm exams will be announced at least one week prior to the exam and will be posted on the Blackboard system.
Each exam will be multiple choice with answers recorded on an OpScan sheet. (These answer sheets will be provided for you.) Bring a #2 pencil to each exam. Also bring picture identification (driver’s license or SB ID).

Questions for each exam will be drawn both from the course readings and class lectures. A student who wishes to do well will have to do all the course readings and attend class.

There will generally be NO make-up exams except under the most extraordinary circumstances as determined by the instructor. “Extraordinary circumstances” consist exclusively of student illness or death in the family. In either case adequate documentation will be required. For illness excuses, a note that the student visited the infirmary will not be sufficient; a doctor or nurse must indicate that the student was unable to take the exam at the regular time. Authorized make-up exams will be conducted by the TA’s during their regular office hours within one week of the scheduled exam.

3) Final Examination -- The final examination schedule is set by the University, and it may not be changed. For POL 102 our exam will be held on TUESDAY, MAY 13TH, FROM 12:15 PM TO 1:45 PM IN OUR REGULAR CLASSROOM. (Note that this will be a ninety minute exam within the longer 2 ½ hour exam period.)

This will be a regular unit exam covering the course material after the second midterm. The exam will have 50 questions. Just like the midterm exams, the final counts as thirty percent of the term grade.

4) Extra Credit: There is an extra credit opportunity offered in the course. The extra credit opportunity consists of two parts, both of which must be completed to get any extra credit.

i. Quizzes -- There is an Announcement on Blackboard {"Extra Credit Details"} that describes the quizzes. These quizzes are based exclusively on material in the textbook, so this is an opportunity to review that material. Ten quizzes with scores of 80 or higher must be submitted to complete this part of the extra credit exercise.

ii. Policy Essay -- This should be handed in after the quizzes are completed.

For the essay - submit a one-page, typed, double-spaced paper on a national policy that seems important to you. It may be something in the news (health care, joblessness, climate change, Afghanistan, Iran, etc.) or something that you feel ought to be getting attention. Answer three specific questions - 1) What has the national government done about this policy area? 2) What would you like the government to do? 3) How likely is it that your preferred policy will be adopted?

The essay, which should include your name and ID, may be handed in at any time prior to our last regular class. My hope is that the quizzes and essay will be done
earlier than that, however.

The payoff for completing both the quizzes and the paper is **SIX** points added to your final term grade - e.g., 82 [B-] becomes 88 [B+].

It’s hard to understand why everyone would not take advantage of the extra credit opportunity. Mysteriously, a significant number of students will not. Even more mysteriously, these will generally be the very students who most need the extra points.

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**The grade scale** for the course follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93 or better</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>88</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>78</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>60</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>below 60</td>
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The class average for each test will not fall below 73 percent. If the average is below 73, then there will be a curve for the test. For example, if the class average on the first midterm is 67, there will be a 6 point curve. Reported grades will **include** the curve if there is one. There will be no curve if the average is 73 or higher on a test.

What happens with any fractional points at the end of the term? Scores will be rounded up to the next whole number. Thus, 72.1, 72.2, ..., 72.9 will all be recorded as 73 in calculating the final grade.

POL majors need to earn at least a grade of C to have this course (or any 100-level POL course) count toward fulfilling major requirements.

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**COURSE FORMAT:**

A course of this size will necessarily consist to a large degree of lectures by the instructor. Of course, some lecture material will substantially overlap what is in the text, but sometimes the lectures will not overlap the text much at all. For example, if the text clearly discusses a topic like the structure of the bureaucracy, I may decide that there is
no reason to use limited class time to repeat this information. We may wind up covering some other aspects of the general topic in lectures.

For students coming directly from high school this may represent a considerable shift from their accustomed way of doing business by working through the text in class. The idea of using class time to supplement text material rather than to repeat it is normal practice in many university courses, however, and students should learn to deal with this approach as well as the more familiar one of using classes to discuss the text directly.

As noted previously, exam material will come from these lectures as well as from the text. If a student misses class, he or she should check with a friend or with a teaching assistant to see what was discussed in class. (The TA can summarize what we did but will not make notes available for copying.)

Student questions or comments are welcomed during lectures. Students should feel free to ask for clarification if they do not understand something said in class. Similarly, they should feel free to comment if they disagree with something said. Finally, it should be pointed out that there are no small discussion sections run as part of this course. Hence, students may also want to ask questions about text material even if it is not directly touched on in class. In general, questions are very useful, so students should not hesitate to raise them.

Students will get the maximum benefit from the lectures if they are familiar with the material to be covered by the lectures. Students are strongly advised, therefore, to read the relevant sections of the texts before each topic is discussed in class. The instructor will update students at each class on exactly where we are in the syllabus and on how long we will be discussing the current topic. It is unfortunately common for students to fall behind in their reading and to rush at the end to catch up before exams. I doubt that anything written here will change study habits much, but for the record let me say that classes will be more interesting for everyone - students and instructor - and exam performance will be better if the whole term is used for reading and study rather than the few frantic days before exams.

On the general subject of the class format, let me add a few sentences on the subject of class conduct. There is no attendance check in the course, so you are free to skip lectures if you wish. (Of course, there may well be consequences of this at the end of the term - e.g., missed research experiments and lecture material, but that is another question). In any event, attendance is not mandatory.

For those who do attend class, however, there are a few rules of behavior that
should be kept in mind. First, no talking to neighbors; it is discourteous to the instructor and to those who are trying to listen to what the instructor is saying. Second, no newspaper reading in class. I feel that newspaper reading in class shows inexcusably poor manners, and I have in the past ripped papers to shreds for this grossly disrespectful behavior. Finally, if you are coming to class, you should plan to get there on time - I will be - and you should plan to stay until the end. I recognize that there are situations where coming late or leaving early may be unavoidable, but popping in and out of class is disruptive. All this may sound draconian in the abstract, but there is simply no reason a college classroom should be less orderly than a high school classroom even though the former is much larger. The golden classroom rule - act respectfully.

COURSE READINGS AND TOPICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Organization and Overview</th>
<th>[1 class]¹</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading: none</td>
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I. MASS POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

1) Participation [3-4 classes]
   Reading: Wilson & DiIulio - 8
   {Note: an outline of lecture notes for each topic will be posted on Blackboard in a folder <Lecture Notes> in Course Documents.}

2) Political Culture, Public Opinion, & Media [4 classes]
   Reading: Wilson & DiIulio - 4,7,12

3) Voting and Elections [3 classes]
   Reading: Wilson & DiIulio - 10

First Exam [1 class]

{Target =THURSDAY, MARCH 6TH but check for announced changes}

¹All classes given here are approximate. The actual number of classes for each topic will be announced as we go along.
II. LINKAGE GROUPS

4) Political Parties [2 classes]
   Reading: Wilson & Dilulio - 9

5) Interest Groups [1 class]
   Reading: Wilson & Dilulio - 11

III. GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

6) Constitutional Structure [3 classes]
   Reading: Wilson & Dilulio - 2

Second Exam [1 class]

{Target = THURSDAY, APRIL 10TH, but check for announced changes.}

7) Congress [3 classes]
   Reading: Wilson & Dilulio - 13

8) Presidency [3 classes]
   Reading: Wilson & Dilulio - 14

9) Judiciary [2 classes]
   Reading: Wilson & Dilulio - 16
FINAL EXAM: TUESDAY, MAY 13TH 12:15 PM TO 1:45 PM IN OUR REGULAR CLASSROOM. (Note that this will be a ninety minute exam within the 2 ½ hour exam period.) This will be a normal unit test covering the material since the second exam; it will not be a cumulative test over the entire term.

The University Senate Undergraduate and Graduate Councils have authorized that the following required statements appear in all teaching syllabi (graduate and undergraduate courses) on the Stony Brook Campus.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:**

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, room 128, (631) 632-6748. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential.

**Academic Integrity:**

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 and suspected instances of academic dishonesty 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/

**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.