

Instructor: Erin Adam, JD/PhD
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:00PM to 4:00PM
Office: HW 1723
Email: erin.mayo-adam@hunter.cuny.edu

Hunter College, CUNY
Department of Political Science
POLSC 110: American Government—A Historical Introduction
Lectures: Tuesdays and Fridays, 12:45PM to 2:00PM
Hunter West Building 511

Course Description: This course has both a substantive focus and developmental goals. It will introduce you to the workings of American Government and Politics historically. The course will begin with a discussion of important ideas about politics and democracy. This will be followed by a detailed introduction to the Constitution to help you understand the foundations of our government. Next, the course will explore the opinions and beliefs of the American people, and the ways we express these beliefs by participating in politics through voting, parties, and interest groups. In the third segment of the course, the structures of our national government—Congress, the presidency, and the courts—will be introduced. Lectures and readings explore each topic from a historical perspective, tracing the development of institutions and practices from the founding era to the present. This course will also investigate class topics in greater depth through the analysis of primary source documents and secondary readings.

At the same time, this course aims to:

- (1) Improve your critical thinking skills, meaning your capacity to grasp abstract concepts and theories
- (2) Help you understand how concepts and theories are translated into concrete empirical claims
- (3) Help you learn how to use evidence to evaluate the validity of empirical claims

You will be pressed to interrogate evidence – to ask questions about whether it 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. Finally, the assignments and exams are designed to improve different writing skills and oral presentation skills, including your ability to summarize the main points of an argument succinctly, to explain theories clearly, to use language precisely and demonstrate command of political science terminology, and to make an argument in which you state a thesis and support it through the use of evidence. The course syllabus, materials, course readings, and course structure are modeled after a number of professors who teach POLSC 110 in at Hunter College, including Professors Charles Tien, Lina Newton, and Adam McMahon.

Course Text and Requirements:

(1) Course Text: *American Government* by Glen Krutz, University of Oklahoma, PDF version ISBN-10 1-947172-19-0. OpenStax. Download for free at <https://openstax.org/details/books/American-government>. This is an open source textbook, which means there is no cost to you for reading it online or downloading it.

(2) Top Hat: \$26 for one term (see different pricing options). Top Hat is a tool that allows you to interact with course material using your phone or laptop or tablet in the classroom. I will use it to take attendance beginning with the 2nd class meeting, and to encourage your participation and engagement with the class. Please enter your complete first and last name when registering in Top Hat. You must visit the Student Quick Start Guide, which shows you how to register for a Top Hat account, provides a brief overview, and gets you up and running on the system. Once you have registered and entered in your subscription code, your course can be directly accessed via the following:

Top Hat Course Name: **Spring 2018 American Government**

Direct URL: <https://app.tophat.com/e/837667>

6-digit course code: 837667

Student support: If you have questions about anything (and Top Hat means anything!), please email support@tophat.com or hit the 'Support' button in your account. This saves a lot of time and trouble and lets Top Hat help you directly.

(3) You are required to read the *New York Times* every day, and come to class in command of current events, especially those relating to American politics. As a Hunter student, you have access to the paper online for free through this link: [Free Digital New York Times for Hunter students](#). If you want a real paper delivered to your home, discounted home delivery for students is available, which includes access to NYTimes.com and the apps for tablets and smartphones. Go to <http://nytimes.com/collegerate> to subscribe. M-F home delivery typically costs \$3.50 per week.

(4) Blackboard: (<http://bb.hunter.cuny.edu>) The syllabus, announcements, and any handouts will all be posted on Blackboard. Check your Blackboard page frequently.

(5) Online Readings: Online readings will supplement the textbook. Links and instructions on how to access the readings are provided in the course reading schedule below.

(6) Email: You are required to check your Hunter College email regularly. Communications to you about the course will be through your Hunter email account. The best way to reach me is also by email at my Hunter email address. Make sure you read this before sending emails to your professors: <https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay>.

Grading: Grading for this course will be based on two exams, two written assignments, and in-class participation. Your final grade will be calculated based on the below percentages.

Attendance and Participation (Using Top Hat in Lecture):	5% & 5%
Weekly writing assignments critiquing <i>Online Readings</i> (5 will be graded):	10%
Midterm (March 13th, In Class Exam):	25%
Short Historical Paper (Due April 24th):	25%
Final Exam (Cumulative, May 18th, 11:30 to 1:30PM, HW 511):	30%

There will be no extra-credit assignments. Incompletes will only be given when you have a valid reason for not completing the course requirements, and still have a chance to pass the course. Refer to the Hunter College Catalog for the college's policy on incompletes, CR/NC, and academic dishonesty.

Midterm & Final Exam: The exams will be taken in-class. They will be multiple-choice and essay exams, and cover lecture/discussion and reading materials. No notes, books or electronic devices will be allowed during exams. If you need to reschedule an examination, you must contact me as soon as possible and produce a substantial reason for rescheduling the exam, such as a physician's excuse or a letter from an employer.

Suspected cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled according to the procedures described in the Hunter College Catalog.

Weekly Writing Assignments (No Late Assignments Accepted): You are required to turn in critiques of the readings from the *online* sources listed below through the course Blackboard website. Due dates are given below and are usually on Fridays. You must turn in an electronic copy of your weekly writing assignments on the course Blackboard webpage. Each assignment can be turned in under the "Weekly Writing Assignments" tab on Blackboard. **Emailed and hard copies are not accepted.**

Critiques should be one page in length. The critiques should include two paragraphs of a summary of the readings, one paragraph pointing out a shortcoming (for example, explain why the evidence used was not convincing), and one paragraph that asks two or three questions the readings raised for you. All assignments must be typed in 12- point font with one-inch margins and include your name, date and title of reading. **Though these assignments are due almost every week on Blackboard, only five will be selected randomly to be graded.**

Short Historical Paper (No Late Papers Accepted): Paper assignment details are included on the course Blackboard webpage in the "Short Historical Paper Assignment" tab. This is a four to five-page paper based on a visit to a historical site in the area. You choose the site, but you must get the site approved by the course instructor. Final papers must be submitted to TurnItIn through the course Blackboard website. Late papers are not accepted.

Attendance and Participation: I will use Top Hat technology to take attendance at each lecture. Sometimes at the beginning of class, sometimes at the middle, and sometimes at the end of class. You must be present in the classroom when attendance is taken—no exceptions. During each

lecture, I will also ask you questions about the readings, key concepts, and main points of the material. Getting at least 80% of these questions correct will result in full credit for lecture participation. Your answers must be submitted using Top Hat while in class. There is no other way to receive credit for attendance and participation.

Students must keep up with class readings and show intellectual engagement with the material. I expect each student to participate in thoughtful discussion and respect others' opinions. Participation is based on active engagement not mere attendance. *I will give pop quizzes if I feel that the class is not completing/grasping the assigned material.*

A Word of Warning on Assignments, Grading, and Expectations: I try hard to make expectations for the class clear and to set standards that are applied fairly to all students in the class. It is your responsibility to meet these expectations during the entire quarter. The assignments are weighted to reflect both their importance and the expected learning curve over the term. I do not allow do-overs for poor grades on assignments. ***I do not give extra credit under any circumstances.***

Class Organization: Class time will consist of lectures and discussion activities. These activities are meant to facilitate student understanding of the material and prepare students for the exams and written assignments. Group activities might include debates, small group discussions of difficult course concepts, and large group discussions of the course materials. In class, I encourage students to ask questions. Your questions can prove vital to your own and your classmates' understanding of the course material and will contribute to provocative discussions.

Other Considerations: Students are expected to arrive on time and remain for the entire period. If you cannot, do not attend that class or make prior arrangements with me. All students should behave in a manner that is neither distracting nor disruptive to the class. If you are going to use a laptop for note taking you must sit in the front of the classroom.

Laptop and Cell Phone use: When you are in lecture, please refrain from using a laptop or cell phone unless you are using one only to take notes for this class or participate through Top Hat. If you are caught doing otherwise, you will no longer be allowed to use a laptop or smart phone in class.

Office Hours and Email: My office hours and email are listed at the top of the syllabus. I am also sometimes available by appointment at other times. If you would like to make an appointment, please contact me by email. I encourage all students to take advantage of my office hours.

Academic Conduct: I will enforce Hunter College, CUNY's student conduct code, including the policy on plagiarism. The CUNY policy on academic integrity can be found at: <http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/studentaffairs/student-conduct/academic-integrity/cuny-policy-on-academic-integrity>.

Students with Disabilities: All students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and an appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214, or call 212-772-4857 /or VP 646-755- 3129 or email accessability@hunter.cuny.edu. If you have a letter from this office indicating that you require accommodations, please present the letter to me as soon as possible so that I can make the necessary arrangements.

Readings Schedule/Course Outline:

The online readings are identified below or are available in the course text. You should complete each set of readings **before** the class meeting for the date listed there and on this schedule. I will try and stay on this schedule, but will make adjustments as necessary. Adjustments in the reading schedule will be announced in class.

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT: A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION
READING SCHEDULE

American Government = Course Text (*American Government* by Glen Krutz, University of Oklahoma, PDF version ISBN-10 1-947172-19-0)

Jan 30

Introduction: Why do People Establish Governments?

(1) "How to Live Wisely," Wright, *New York Times*, August 2, 2015

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/education/edlife/how-to-live-wisely.html>

(2) "Four Steps to Choosing a Major," Gebhard, *New York Times*, July 31, 2015

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/education/edlife/four-steps-to-choosing-a-career-path.html?&moduleDetail=section-news-5&action=click&contentCollection=Education%20Life®ion=Footer&module=MoreInSection&version=WhatsNext&contentID=WhatsNext&pgtype=article>

(3) "Re: Your Recent Email to Your Professor," Corrigan and Hunt McNabb," *Inside Higher Ed*, April 16, 2015

<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay>

Feb 2-6

Politics: Key Theoretical Concepts

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 1.1-1.2

(2) *Articles of Confederation*

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch1s7.html>

(3) *Declaration of Independence*

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch1s5.html>

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due Feb 2nd**
Politics

- (1) Excerpt: Hartz, Louis, 1955 “The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution,”
(2) Excerpt: Smith, Rogers, 1993 “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” *American Political Science Review*

Note: A PDF with BOTH Hartz and Smith is available on Blackboard and Top Hat under the “Syllabus” tab/folder

Feb 9-13

The Constitution

- (1) *American Government*, Chapter 2
(2) The Constitution of the United States and the First 12 Amendments: 1787-1804

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch1s9.html>

- (3) Madison, James, *Federalist No. 51*

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch10s16.html>

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due Feb 9th**

The Anti-Federalist Position

- (1) *Essays of Brutus 2*

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus02.htm>

- (2) *Essays of Brutus 5*

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus05.htm>

- (3) George Mason’s Objections to the Constitution

<http://www.gunstonhall.org/library/archives/manuscripts/objections.html>

Feb 16-23

Federalism

- (1) *American Government*, Chapter 3

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due Feb 16th**

Federalism

- (1) *Democracy in America*, Alexis De Tocqueville, Chapter 5

http://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/tocqueville-democracy-in-america-historical-critical-edition-vol-1#lf1532-01_footnote_nt1196_ref

- (2) “Statement and Proclamation of Governor George C. Wallace, University of Alabama,” June 11, 1963

http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs_list/schooldoor.html

*****No Class February 20th (Classes Follow a Monday Schedule); No Weekly Writing Assignment Due Feb 23rd*****

Feb 27-Mar 2

Civil Liberties

- (1) *American Government*, Chapter 4

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due Mar 2**

Civil Liberties

(1) Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1941 State of the Union Address, “The Four Freedoms”

<http://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/fdr-the-four-freedoms-speech-text/>

(2) *Roe v. Wade*, 1973 (Read Part I and skim Part II, then read IX thru XII)

<http://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/410/113.html>

Mar 6-9

Civil Rights

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 5

(2) *Slave Petition to the Governor, Council, and House of Representatives of the Province of Massachusetts*, May 25, 1754

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch14s9.html>

(3) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*

<https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/letter-birmingham-jail>

*Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due Mar 9th

Civil Rights

(1) “Are You a Racist? The Science of Why Cops Shoot Young Black Men,” Mooney, *Mother Jones*, December 1, 2014

<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2014/12/science-of-racism-prejudice/>

(2) Take the Race Implicit Association Test

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

Celebration of Knowledge (Midterm) March 13th

Mar 16-20

Public Opinion, Voting, Elections

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 6

(2) Letter of Thomas Jefferson (1787) to Colonel Edward Carrington

http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/amendI_speechs8.html

(3) Jardina, Ashley (2017), “White Identity Politics Isn’t Just About White Supremacy. It’s Much Bigger,” Monkey Cage, *Washington Post*

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/16/white-identity-politics-isnt-just-about-white-supremacy-its-much-bigger/?utm_term=.38f5f8af6a7d

*Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due Mar 16th

Public Opinion, Voting, Elections

(1) “Why the Literary Digest Poll Failed,” Peverill Squire.

Find it in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Spring 1988, pp. 125-133. Use Your Student Access through the Hunter College Library Website:

<https://library.hunter.cuny.edu>. Click on “Journals” and Search for *Public Opinion Quarterly*

(2) Junn, Jane (2016) "Hiding in Plain Sight: White Women Vote Republican," *Politics of Color*, Nov. 13
<http://politicsofcolor.com/white-women-vote-republican/>

Mar 23- 27 Political Participation

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 1.3, Chapter 7

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due Mar 23rd
Political Participation**

(1) "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," Putnam, *The American Prospect*, Winter 2016

<http://prospect.org/article/strange-disappearance-civic-america>

(2) "The Big Tilt," Schlozman, Verba, and Brady, *The American Prospect*, 2001

<http://prospect.org/article/big-tilt>

***** No Class March 30th to April 8th, Spring Recess*****

April 10-11

Political Parties (Please Note, We Meet on April 11th this Week as Well, a Wednesday that Follows a Friday Schedule)

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 9

(2) The Pew Research Center on People and the Press (June 2014), "Political Polarization in the American Public: How Increasing Ideological Uniformity and Partisan Antipathy Affect Politics, Compromise, and Everyday Life"

<http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>

(3) Desilver, Drew (June 2014), "The Polarized Congress Has of Today Has Roots its in the 1970s," Pew Research Center

<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/06/12/polarized-politics-in-congress-began-in-the-1970s-and-has-been-getting-worse-ever-since/>

April 13

Media

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 8

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due April 13th
Political Parties and Media**

(1) "Did Hamilton, Jefferson, and Madison "Cause" the U.S. Government Shutdown? The Institutional Path from an Eighteenth Century Republic to a Twenty-First Century Democracy, by John H. Aldrich. Find It in *Perspectives on Politics*, March 2015, pp. 7-23. Use Your Student Access through the Hunter College Library Website:

<https://library.hunter.cuny.edu>. Click on "Journals" and Search for *Perspectives on Politics*

(2) “People Blame Facebook for Fake News and Partisan Bile. They’re Wrong,” Forestal and Philips, Monkey Cage, *Washington Post*, December 16, 2016

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/16/people-blame-facebook-for-fake-news-and-partisan-bile-theyre-wrong/?utm_term=.5741b54d5ed8

April 17-20

Interest Groups

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 10

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due April 20th**

Interest Groups

(1) Madison, James, *Federalist No. 10*

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch4s19.html>

(2) “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” by Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page. Just Read Pages 564-568 and 575-577. Find it in *Perspectives on Politics*, September 2014, pp. 564-581. Use Your Student Access through the Hunter College Library Website: <https://library.hunter.cuny.edu>. Click on “Journals” and Search for *Perspectives on Politics*.

(3) “Where do you Fit in the Political Typology?” Pew Research Center
<http://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/>

*****Historical Paper Due April 24th*****

April 24-27

Congress

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 11

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due April 27th**

Congress

(1) “Congress in the Rearview Mirror,” Sarah Binder, Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*, December 31, 2013

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2013/12/31/congress-in-the-rearview-mirror/?utm_term=.9d97916d8bf4

(2) “Speech to the Electors at Bristol,” Edmund Burke

<http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch13s7.html>

(3) “The U.S. Could be Free of Gerrymandering. Here’s How Other Countries Do Redistricting,” Grofman and Feierherd, Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*, August 7, 2017. Watch 2 Videos Embedded in the Article.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/08/07/the-supreme-court-will-soon-consider-gerrymandering-heres-how-changes-in-redistricting-could-reduce-it/?utm_term=.7fe4a084f8ee

May 1-4

Presidency

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 12

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due May 4th
Presidency**

(1) George Washington's Farewell Address (1796)

<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=15&page=transcript>

(2) "The Rise of Presidential Power Before World War II," by James T. Patterson. Find it in *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Spring 1976, pp. 39-57. Use Your Student Access through the Hunter College Library Website: <https://library.hunter.cuny.edu>. Click on "Journals" and Search for *Law and Contemporary Problems*.

Also available at: <https://scholarship.law.duke.edu/lcp/vol40/iss2/4/>

(3) "The Unpersuaded: Who Listens to a President?" Ezra Klein, *The New Yorker*, March 12, 2012

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/03/19/the-unpersuaded-2>

May 8-11

The Courts

(1) *American Government*, Chapter 13

***Weekly Writing Assignment Readings, Due May 11th**

The Courts

(1) *Marbury v. Madison*, 1803, Begin at Chief Justice Marshall's Opinion

https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/5/137#writing-USSC_CR_0005_0137_ZO

(2) "The Conservative Pipeline to the Supreme Court," Jeffrey Toobin, *The New Yorker*, April 17, 2018

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/04/17/the-conservative-pipeline-to-the-supreme-court>

(3) "Why Not Limit Neil Gorsuch—And all Supreme Court Justices—to 18-Year Terms?" Lori A. Ringhand and Paul M. Collins, Jr., Monkey Cage, *The Washington Post*, March 23, 2017

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/03/23/why-not-limit-neil-gorsuch-and-all-supreme-court-justices-to-18-year-terms/?utm_term=.bfe8ed023b57

May 15

Course Conclusion and Final Review

*****Celebration of Knowledge (Final Exam) May 18th, 11:30 to 1:30PM, HW 511*****