

POLS 1005

Guns, Money, and Politics in the US

Professor Minnie Go

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Class Hours: MW 2:15-3:55

Location: Roosevelt Extension 102

Office: James 3401

Office Hours: Mon 10:00-11:00, 1:30-2:10, Wed 10:00-11:00, 1:00-2:10 or by appointment

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Introduce students to the history and fundamental principles of American politics
- Enhance student understanding on the structure, activities and problems of American political institutions and the interaction among the institutions
- Enhance student understanding on the role of political agents (voters, interest groups, etc.) in influencing political outcomes

REQUIRED READINGS

The following textbook is available for purchase at the bookstore or at various online stores including Amazon.com (Note: the most recent version is 13th edition, and be sure to check this before purchase). Other reading materials will either be handed out in class or posted via Blackboard.

Lowi, Theodore, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere. 2012. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. 13th Edition. New York: W.W. Norton. (hereafter LGSA)

In addition to the textbook, we will read excerpts from the seminal readings in American Politics. Also, in order to participate in class discussions, students are required to familiarize themselves with current affairs by following at least one newspaper (NYT, Washington Post, etc.). In particular, we will follow stories on the presidential primaries.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is designed to introduce students to the fundamentals of American politics. Throughout the course, we will examine various aspects of American government – ideas, institutions, people and policies. How was the American Government formed, and in which ways has it evolved? What is the role of Congress, Presidency and Judiciary, and how do they interact with each other? How do American people affect policy-making

processes and outcomes, or do they? This course will address these questions by studying theories of American government as well as analyzing current political events.

This course largely consists of three parts. Beginning with the history of American government, we first cover basic principles that characterize the American political system. Second, we examine each of the three national institutions – Congress, Presidency and Judiciary – and how these institutions interact with each other. In the final part, we discuss the ways in which American citizens and their collective entities are represented in political settings.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING CRITERIA

Attendance & Participation (20%): Students are required to attend class and actively participate in class discussions and activities. Regular attendance is critical to this class, and the instructor will keep record on attendance at the beginning of every class. To ensure active participation, Instructor will give a cold call when necessary. More than 10 absences, without proper documentation and prior notification, will automatically lead to zero point on the participation score. Absence due to religious reasons and medical emergency is permitted.

Not only physical absence but the following behaviors count as an absence:

- Cell phone use during class: Cell phone use is considered a disruptive behavior for learning environment and thus allowed under no circumstances. I reserve the right to ask a student to leave the classroom in case of detecting the use of mobile devices including text messaging, facebooking, playing games or taking pictures. If you have important reasons to use your phone during class, inform me prior to class so I can accommodate your needs.
- Laptop/Tablet PC use is not permitted during class.
- Late arrival/early departure: 3 late arrivals and/or early departures equal 1 absence.

These activities will be carefully monitored during class sessions and no prior warning will be given upon penalizing these activities.

2 Paper Assignments (15% each): In 3-4 pages, each paper should address a topic given by the instructor, incorporating and analyzing course materials, class discussions and/or current events. Your paper must contain a clear argument followed by strong empirical evidence and/or theoretical logic. Assignments will be available on Blackboard.

Midterm and Final Exams (25 % each): Midterm and final exams will cover reading assignments, class discussions, and any materials presented in class. There will be no make-up exam or extra-credit assignments for the exams. Midterm exam will be held during class time in Week 10, and final paper is a take-home paper whose deadline is to be announced.

Grading: Each assignment and test is graded on points system, but the final grade will be based on a curve applying the following criteria:

A+	1-10%
A	11-20%
A-	21-30%
B+	31-50%
B	51-65%
B-	66-80%
C+	81-90%
C and below	90% and below or below 50 points total

CLASS POLICIES

Email: Instructor will respond to emails as soon as possible during 9 am to 5 pm on weekdays. Expect a slower response on weekends.

Plagiarism: Any attempt to use other’s work (both ideas and writings) without proper acknowledgement is considered plagiarism (including cheating in exam) and will not be tolerated. Instructor will carefully censor each student’s assignments, and any academic misconduct will result in consultation with the higher authority.

Below is the official mandate for faculty:

“The faculty and administration of Brooklyn College support an environment free from cheating and plagiarism. Each student is responsible for being aware of what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and for avoiding both. The complete text of the CUNY Academic Integrity Policy and the Brooklyn College procedure for implementing that policy can be found at this site: <http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/bc/policies>. If a faculty member suspects a violation of academic integrity and, upon investigation, confirms that violation, or if the student admits the violation, the faculty member MUST report the violation.”

Student Disability Services: In order to receive disability-related academic accommodations students must first be registered with the Center for Student Disability Services (CSDS). Students who have a documented disability or suspect they may have a disability are invited to set up an appointment with the Director of the Center for Student Disability Services, Ms. Valerie Stewart-Lovell at 718-951-5538. If you have already registered with the CSDS please provide your professor with the course accommodation form and discuss your specific accommodation with him/her as soon as possible and at an appropriate time.

Finally, for additional information download the latest edition of the CUNY publication: Reasonable Accommodations: A Faculty Guide to Teaching College Students with Disabilities from CUNY's Assistive Technology Services website at www.catweb.cuny.edu. The purpose of this guide is to provide faculty with information

and suggestions to help meet the classroom needs of students with disabilities. It is a superb resource. I encourage you to make use of the information being provided.

Please contact Valerie Stewart-Lovell, Director of the Center for Student Disability Services located at 138 Roosevelt Hall, extension 5538 if you have any questions regarding accommodations, resources and services provided through the Center. Contact Natalie Mason-Kinsey, Director of the Office of Diversity and Equity, located at 2147 Boylan Hall, extension 4128, or this office if you have any questions or comments regarding our college policies for students with disabilities.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

[B]: Available on Blackboard

[W]: Available on line

PART I: FOUNDATIONS

Week 1. Principles of Politics

Feb 1. Introduction to class

Feb 3. LGSA, Chapter 1

Week 2. The Founding and the Constitution

Feb 8. LGSA, Chapter 2

Feb 10. LGSA, Chapter 2

Michael Kammen. *The Nature of American Constitutionalism*. [B]

Week 3-4. Federalism and the Separation of Powers

Feb 15. No Class

Feb 17. LGSA, Chapter 3

Federalist Paper #15 & #51, available at the Library of Congress [W]

<http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html>

Feb 22. LGSA, Chapter 3

Paul Peterson, *The Price of Federalism*. [B]

Week 4-5. Civil Liberties

Feb 24. Chapter 4

Feb 29. Chapter 4 continued;

John Rauch, "In Defense of Prejudice" [B]

Mar 1. The second amendment and gun rights

John Paul Stevens, dissenting opinion for *District of Columbia v. Heller*: [W]

<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/07-290.ZD.html>

The New Yorker. "So You Think You Know the Second Amendment?" [W]

<http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/so-you-think-you-know-the-second-amendment>

PBS, "Gunned Down: The Power of the NRA"

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/gunned-down/>

Week 5-6. Civil Rights

Mar 7. Film: Freedom Riders (2010)

Mar 9. LGSA, Chapter 5, **1st Response Paper due by 11:59 pm**

Week 7. Civil Rights

Mar 14. Chapter 5 continued;

Mar 16. Affirmative action in education

The Atlantic. "The Painful Truth about Affirmative Action". [W]

<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/10/the-painful-truth-about-affirmative-action/263122/>

The Economist. "Unequal Protection". [W]

<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21576658-first-three-pieces-race-based-preferences-around-world-we-look-americas>

The Economist. "The Model Minority Is Losing Patience". [W]

<http://www.economist.com/news/briefing/21669595-asian-americans-are-united-states-most-successful-minority-they-are-complaining-ever>

PART II: INSTITUTIONS

Week 8-9. Congress

Mar 21. LGSA, Chapter 6

Mar 23. No Class

Mar 28. LGSA, Chapter 6 continued;

Mar 30. Jane Mansbridge. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent Yes", *The Journal of Politics*. 61(3): 628-657.

[B]

Nick Carnes. 2012. "Does the Numerical Underrepresentation of the Working Class in Congress Matter?" *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 37(1): 5-34. [B]

Week 10. Midterm Week

Apr 4. Midterm Review: Instructor will distribute study guides and answer questions.

Apr 6. **Midterm Exam**

Week 11. Presidency

Apr 11. LGSA, Chapter 7

Apr 13. LGSA, Chapter 7

Richard Neustadt, "The Power to Persuade" [B]

William Howell, 2003. *Power without Persuasion*. Chapter 1. [B]

Obama's executive action on gun violence: [W]

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/05/politics/obama-executive-action-gun-control/>

Week 12. Federal Courts

Apr 18. LGSA, Chapter 9

Apr 20. LGSA, Chapter 9;
David O'Brien, "The Court and American Life" [B]

Week 13. Spring Break

PART III: PEOPLE

Week 14. Public Opinion

May 2. LGSA, Chapter 10

May 4. Chapter 10 continued;

Second Response Paper due by 11:59 pm

Week 15. Elections

May 9. LGSA, Chapter 11

May 11. LGSA, Chapter 11;

Voter ID Laws [B]

Chandler Davidson, "The Historical Context of Voter Photo-ID Laws"

Hans von Spakovsky, "Requiring Identification by Voters"

Edward Foley, "Is there a Middle Ground in the Voter ID Debate?"

Week 16. Political Parties & Polarized America

May 16. LGSA, Chapter 12

May 18. LGSA, Chapter 12; Last Day of Class – Wrapping up and final exam topic
TBD.