

POLSC 110  
American Government: A Historical Introduction  
Fall 2022  
Lecture: Monday & Thursday, 11:30 am-12:45 pm  
Room: North Building C002  
Instructor: Sanford F. Schram  
Office: Hunter West 1721  
Hours: Thursday 1:00-2:00 pm  
Phone: 610-772-5108  
Email: [ss1745@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:ss1745@hunter.cuny.edu)

### Course Objectives

This course examines the development of the American system of government in order to better understand the crisis of contemporary politics. We seek to understand how the government was set up, what it is designed to do, how it is supposed to operate, what problems have arisen over time, and how does understanding all that help us assess the crisis created by Donald Trump's ongoing efforts contest the 2020 election and how the presidency of Joe Biden will or will not be able to respond effectively. We will examine the question of the continued viability of constitutional democracy in the U.S. We will begin with a discussion of important ideas about politics and democracy and whether democracy in the U.S. is today in peril. Next is a detailed introduction to the Constitution to help you understand the foundations of our government, its relationship to the ideal of democracy and whether the Constitution can safeguard democracy today. We then explore the opinions and beliefs of the American people, the ways we express these beliefs by participating democratically in politics through voting, parties, and interest groups and whether politics have become so polarized that we verge on civil war. In the final segment of the course, the structures of our national government—Congress, the presidency, and the courts—will be introduced and evaluated in relationship to realizing democratic ideals in spite of the current crisis.

Lectures and readings explore each topic from a historical perspective, tracing the development of institutions and practices from the founding era to the present. In-class multiple-choice midterms and an in-class multiple-choice final exam test for understanding of basic facts about the political system historically and today.

### Text

James A. Morone and Rogan Kersh, *By the People, Debating American Government*, 5th edition, Professor Schram, Hunter College Custom Ebook Edition, Oxford University Press). To access the ebook via the Hunter College Virtual Bookstore, click: <https://hunter.textbookx.com/adm/#!/courses/3414759/materials/book/9780197651483>

### Additional Resources

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

Other online readings will supplement the textbook. Click on the links on this syllabus to access the readings for each session where they are listed. Be sure to come to each class, including the first session prepared by having completed the assigned reading and viewing of videos.

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.

### Grading Policy

1) First Midterm Exam	25%
2) Second Midterm Exam	30%
3) Final Exam	<u>45%</u>
	100%

N.B.: Participation affects your final grade. See **Attendance and Participation** below.

### **Academic Misconduct**

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

### **Incompletes**

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.

### **Exams**

The exams will be taken in class on the assigned dates. They will be multiple-choice and cover lecture/discussion and reading materials. They will be time-limited ending at the end of the class session. 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.

### **Attendance and Participation**

Students are expected to attend this class regularly though I will not take attendance. Instead, during each class session, I will randomly ask 10 students each a question regarding the readings, key concepts, and main points of the material. If called on, no answer you give will lead to a reduction in your class grade. Yet if you are not present to answer the question your final grade will be reduced by 3 points out of 100. For instance, if you are called on twice during the semester and fail to answer both times, your final grade will be reduced 6 points, say like from 83 (B) to 77 (C+). If you cannot attend class due to an illness or other legitimate excuse, you must notify me before class.

### **PowerPoint Presentations**

Each class will feature a PowerPoint presentation by the instructor. These will be posted on Blackboard for students to review.

### **Arrangements for Students with Disabilities**

I would like to hear from anyone in this class who has a disability that may require some modification of participation, testing, or other class requirements. I am reasonably sure that we can work out whatever arrangements are needed.

### **Access**

Should you require use of accommodation or assistance from access services, please see:

<http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/student-services/access>.

In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical, and/or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY, located in Room E1214B, to secure necessary academic accommodations. For further information and assistance, please call: (212) 772- 4857 or (212) 650-3230.

### **COVID-19 Policies**

As updated here: <https://www.cuny.edu/coronavirus/>. Anyone entering a Hunter building for any reason or length of time will be required to demonstrate proof of vaccination or results of weekly, valid, negative COVID-19 tests.

### **Academic Integrity, Cheating and Plagiarism**

It is assumed that students in this course will work independently and that all work submitted for a grade is the work of that student. I consider the violation of this policy to be a very serious offense and will pursue any offense to the full extent permitted by the university.

### **Respect**

Please try not talk during lectures except to speak when recognized by the instructor. I realize you might occasionally miss a point in the lecture and might ask your someone what was said, and that is fine.

### **Hunter College Policy on Sexual Misconduct**

"In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any



[Jamelle Bouie, "It Started with Birtherism," \*New York Times\*, November 24, 2020.](#)

[Jeffrey Herf, "Trump's Refusal to Acknowledge Defeat Mirrors the Lie that Fueled the Nazi Rise," \*Washington Post\*, November 23, 2020.](#)

September 15                    **Federalism in the Constitution**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 4.

September 19                    **Federalism Today**  
[Dean Falvy, "50 States of Anxiety: Will Federalism Save Democracy in America? \*Verdict\*, November 3, 2020.](#)

September 22                    **Review Session**

September 26                    **NO CLASS**

September 29                    **FIRST MIDTERM EXAM**

October 3                        **Civil Liberties**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 5.

October 6                        **Civil Rights: The Struggle of Equality Under the Law**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 6.

October 10                       **NO CLASS**

October 13                       **Public Opinion**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 7.

October 17                       **Political Participation**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 8.

October 20                       **Mass Media/Social Media**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 9.

October 24                       **Fake News-Fox News-Trump Nexus**  
[Sanford F. Schram and Richard C. Fording, "The Fox News-Fake News-Trump Nexus," \*Public Seminar\*, March 25, 2018.](#)

October 27                       **Review Session**

October 31                       **SECOND MIDTERM EXAM**

November 3                       **Campaigns and Elections**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 10.

November 6                       **Political Parties: Elite vs. Rank-in-File**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 11.

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

[The Pew Center for Research on People and the Press, "Republicans and Democrats Move Further Apart in Views of Voting Access, April 22, 2021.](#)

November 10                    **Interest Groups**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 12.

November 14                    **Congress**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 13.

November 17                    **Congress Trumpified, Polarization Then and Now**  
[Norman Ornstein, "Five Myths about the Filibuster," \*The Washington Post\*, January 7, 2022.](#)

[Doug Sosnik, "Why Congress Rolls Over for Trump," \*Politico\*, August 2, 2018.](#)

November 21                    **Presidency: The Unitary Theory of the Executive in Retreat**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 14.

November 28                    **Trump vs Biden: The President of All the People or Just Your Base**  
[George Washington's Farewell Address \(1796\).](#)

[Karen Tumulty, "Trump is the President of the Republican Base — Not the Country," \*Washington Post\*, January 11, 2019.](#)

["Joe Biden Speaks to the New York Times on Presidential Powers," \*New York Times\*, September 9, 2020.](#)

December 2                    **The Bureaucracy: Drain the Swamp or Villify the Deep State**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 15.

December 5                    **The Courts**  
Morone and Kersh, *By the People*, Chapter 16.

December 8                    **The Courts as a Political Branch, Now Politicized Beyond Recognition**  
[Jason Zengerle, "How the Trump Administration Is Remaking the Courts," \*New York Times Magazine\*, August 22, 2018.](#)

December 12                    **Review Session**

December 19                    **FINAL EXAM 11:30 am-1:30 pm**