American Government: A Historical Introduction, Spring 2019
POLSC 110(W)
Lecture: Monday & Thursday, 11:10-12:00, 714 Hunter West

Instructor
Sanford F. Schram 1721HW  M-T-Th 1:30-2:30 pm  610-772-508  ss1745@hunter.cuny.edu

Teaching Assistants
Francisco Fortuño Bernier 1730A  M 1:00-2:00 pm  939-452-2169  ffortunobernier@gradcenter.cuny.edu
Mette Christiansen 1742  Th 1:10-2:00pm  646-763-5799  mchristiansen@gradcenter.cuny.edu
Max Fuerderer 1742  Th 2:30-3:30pm  212-772-5504  mfuerderer@gradcenter.cuny.edu
Julie Goldberg 1730A  W1-2, Th 12-1pm  850-292-7022  jgoldberg@gradcenter.cuny.edu
Tyson Scott Himes 1742  M12:15-1:15pm  814-706-2853  thimes@gradcenter.cuny.edu

Discussion Sections
Section 1D01 M 12:10-1 pm HW1729 Fuerderer
Section 1D02 W 12:10-1 pm HW1729 Fortuño Bernier
Section 1D03 Th 12:10-1 pm HW1729 Fuerderer
Section 1D04 M 12:10-1 pm HW706 Christiansen
Section 1D05 W 12:10-1 pm HW706 Himes
Section 1D06 Th 12:10-1 pm HW706 Christiansen
Section 1D07 M 12:10-1 pm HW208 Goldberg
Section 1D08 W 12:10-1 pm HW208 Goldberg
Section 1D09 Th 12:10-1 pm HW208 Fortuño Bernier

Course Objectives
This course examines the development of the American system of government in order to better understand contemporary politics and the current crisis in the age of Donald Trump. We seek to understand how the government was set up, what it is designed to do, what problems have arisen over time, and how does understanding all that help us assess the current crisis Trump’s presidency has posed for the viability of constitutional democracy in the U.S. We will begin with a discussion of important ideas about politics and democracy. Next is a detailed introduction to the Constitution to help you understand the foundations of our government and its relationship to the ideal of democracy. We then explore the opinions and beliefs of the American people, and the ways we express these beliefs by participating democratically in politics through voting, parties, and interest groups. 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 democratic ideals.

Lectures and readings explore each topic from a historical perspective, tracing the development of institutions and practices from the founding era to the present. Weekly writing assignments are designed to apply our understanding of the historical development of the political system to contemporary issues. The short weekly papers require expressing in clear writing what is explained in the reading and your own personal assessment. In-class multiple choice midterm and final exams test for understanding of basic facts about the political system.

Resources & Requirements
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.

New York Times. Try to read it every day so you can come to class in command of current events, especially those relating to American politics and our current constitutional crisis brought on by the Trump Presidency. 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 nytimes.com/collegerate to subscribe. M-F home delivery typically costs $3.50 per week.

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 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:** American National Government-Spring 2019.

**Direct URL:** [https://app.tophat.com/e/223187](https://app.tophat.com/e/223187)

**6-digit course code:** 468622

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.

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

Online readings will supplement the textbook. Click on the links to the readings to access them.

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:


**Grading Policy**

1) Midterm Exam 20%
2) Final Exam 30%
3) Weekly writing assignments (8 will be graded) 40%
4) Attendance & Participation (using Top Hat in lecture) 10%

**Academic Misconduct**

Suspected cases of cheating or plagiarism 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. They will be multiple-choice 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.

**Weekly writing assignments. (No late assignments accepted)**

You are required to turn in your written reactions to the readings for each week in your section. You must hand in a printed copy of your reaction paper in response to any point or part of the assigned reading for that week at the beginning of each discussion section in person starting the week of February 4th. Emailed copies are not accepted. The reaction paper should be one-and-a-half to two (1.5-2) pages in length and not any longer. Each paper should not exceed 500 words. It should include three parts: (1) summary description any one part or point of the assigned reading (text or linked article), (2) an explanation of how that raises an important issue concerning the topic for that week; and (3) your assessment of how a historical understanding of that issue relates to the political crisis we face as a Nation today. **Though these assignments are due every week in discussion section, only 8 will be selected randomly to be graded.**

**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. If you cannot attend class due to an illness or other legitimate excuse, you must notify me before class. You are allowed three unexcused absences before your final grade is reduced 3 points out of 100 for each additional unexcused absence. During each lecture, I will also be asking 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.

**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 the seating, testing, or other class requirements. I am reasonably sure that we can work out whatever arrangements are needed.

**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. Laptops are only permitted for note taking and interacting with Top Hat. If you are caught doing otherwise, you will no longer be allowed to use a laptop in class.

**Course Outline and Textbook Reading Schedule**
This is a tentative outline of lecture topics. We will do our best to keep to this outline. You will be notified of any changes in class. You will get the most out of lectures if you do the readings before class.

January 28  **Introduction. Review Syllabus.**

January 31  **Democracy: Ideal vs. Real**

  [Corruption is Legal in America (video).]


February 4  **U.S. Government: Revolutionary Roots**
*Declaration of Independence.*

  *Articles of Confederation.*


February 7  **The Constitution**


February 11  **The Constitution: Checks and Balances**
James Madison, *Federalist*, no. 10.

  James Madison, *Federalist* no. 51.

February 14  **The Constitutional Crisis Today: Illiberal Democracy**


February 18  **No classes at Hunter. President’s Day.**

February 21  **Federalism in the Constitution**

February 25  **Federalism Historically**

February 28 Federalism Today

March 4 Snow Day

March 7 Civil Liberties
Krustz, American Government, Chapter 4.

“Donald Trump: Year One,” ACLU.

March 11 Civil Rights: The Struggle of Equality Under the Law
Kurtz, American Government, Chapter 5.


March 14 Review Session

March 18 MIDTERM EXAM

March 21 Public Opinion, Voting, Elections
Krustz, American Government, Chapter 6.


March 25 Political Participation
Krustz, American Government, Chapter 7.


March 28 Political Parties: Elite and Mass
Krustz, American Government, Chapter 9.

April 1 Partisan Polarization

April 4 Media
Krustz, American Government, Chapter 8.

April 8 Fake News-Fox News-Donald Trump Nexus

April 11 Interest Groups
Krustz, American Government, Chapter 10.

April 15 Drain the Swamp: Trump Fills it Back Up Again

April 18 Congress
Krustz, American Government, Chapter 11.

April 19-28 SPRING BREAK
April 29  Congress Trumpified

May 2  Presidency
Krutz, American Government, Chapter 12.

May 6  Trump: The President of Not All the People
George Washington’s Farewell Address (1796).

May 9  The Courts
Krutz, American Government, Chapter 13.

May 13  The Courts as a Political Branch, Now Politicized Beyond Recognition

May 15  Review Session

May 20  FINAL EXAM Monday, 11:30-1:30 pm