

Fall 2018

# POL 166 The American Political System

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*CUNY Lehman College*

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Virtual Office Hours: By Appointment

## **I. COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

There does not seem to be a day that goes by without a few sensational news stories on TV or the internet about personal and political wrongdoings of the President, Congress members, government agencies, mayors, governors, local and state officials, and political parties. It can be difficult for anyone to make sense of American politics these days and to figure out what is fact from fiction. If you find yourself wondering what is going on with American politics these days, you are not alone. The structure of the American government is complicated with many different government agencies and overlapping federal, state, and local levels. The language and rhetoric of politicians can be confusing and contradictory. The media often seems more interested in reporting on celebrities and scandals than investigating and reporting on hard questions of: how government policies are being made and implemented, how government policies affect individual Americans, who is responsible for government policies and who is benefiting from these policies?

To answer these important questions, we will study the American political system using several different approaches. First, we will look at the founding of the United States and the principles and the documents that continue to be central to debates in American politics today. Then, we will analyze how these founding principles and documents were used by opposing parties and individuals to define and distribute power in the US. These struggles include the continuing conflicts to expand and guarantee individual freedoms and to address discrimination. Looking back through American history will help us frame contemporary discussions of American political life, from voting to elections. Finally, we will look at the institutions of American government, learning how the structures and rules of the American political system shape the ongoing competition for political power and influence.

### **COURSE GOALS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

The fundamental purpose of this course is to help you understand the basic mechanics of the American political system. Your understanding will start with factual learning of the history, structure, and processes of American government. Along the way, you will develop argumentation, research, and written communication skills that will help you beyond this classroom. These practical tools will help you reach your future academic and career goals. Your understanding is also the foundation for much larger life skills. The first of which is to push you beyond your opinions, so you can develop your own critical thinking on current events and independent conclusions about political issues. Second, with the foundational knowledge of how and why the government works the way it does, you can effectively identify problems with it and then to address those problems as an active member of your community.

## **II. COURSE MECHANICS:**

This is a fully online course, which means that I will provide all the instruction materials and feedback online, that our classroom environment and interactions are electronic, and that your assignments will be submitted or completed online. The primary location of our online classroom is our Blackboard course site.

If you are not comfortable with Blackboard, you should check out CUNY's online Blackboard guides, which can be accessed via <http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/cis/core-functions/cuny-blackboard/user-guides/student/>

Please familiarize with these essential links that will always be displayed on the left side navigation panel of our Blackboard course site:

- **Announcements:** The homepage of our class will always display my most recent announcement, but you can also find a link to all announcements here. Any announcements posted in Blackboard will also be emailed to your Lehman email.
- **Course Information:** A digital version of this syllabus is posted here. This folder also contains links, videos, and how-to's that relate directly to the course material and completing assignments.
- **Week by Week:** The course is broken up into weekly course modules. Within each module you will find:
  - Module Guide: Introduces the module and outlines readings and the tasks you need to complete throughout the week
  - Non-Textbook Materials: All supplemental reading assignments, videos, or podcasts are found here
  - Discussion Board: Here you will find the weekly discussion forums for responding to non-textbook materials
  - Quizzes: Chapter quizzes based on the textbook readings for the week
  - Assignments: Any additional assignments will be posted and submitted here
- **My Grades:** Your grades and feedback are posted on this page. Also, you will never have to ask me if you have submitted an assignment successfully. If you have successfully submitted an assignment, you should see a green icon for that assignment and you should also see a green success message after you click submit.
- **Academic Resources:** This is where you can find information on academic support services and student accessibility services.
- **Library Resources:** You can find a link that will take you to Lehman library's student information page.
- **Lehman Technology Help:** This is where you come to find help on how to use Blackboard itself.
- **FAQs:** This is your first stop for questions. I have posted answers to frequently asked questions in this tab. Click on the question that most closely matches your question and you will be pointed to an answer.
- **Q & A Forum:** This is a public forum for questions you have that you think pertain to the entire class. Have a question about the syllabus? About the material? About something in the news this week? Post it. I will respond to all posts within 48 hours.
- **Instructor Info:** You can find information on how best to contact me and my Lehman email address.

Serious Blackboard outages are rare. Most problems you will encounter will be slow loading pages or timed out pages. Sporadic difficulties in accessing Blackboard due to temporary network problems will not excuse you from deadlines.

- If you see a red error message, search online for that type of error and find what the solution is. I recommend Google as a search engine.
- Most common problems: your browser settings (cookies or pop-up blocking software) or an outdated browser that is no longer compatible with Blackboard.
- If you need more IT help than what I've suggested, you will need to contact the IT Help Desk in Carman at 718-960-1111.

### III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

The overall sum of possible points is **100** points. There are no incomplete INC grades for this course.

Brief descriptions of the core components of your grade:

<i>Weekly Online Discussion Boards</i>	Since we cannot see or hear one another in real-time, an integral part of this course is your active engagement in class discussion. Each week, non-textbook course materials are available on Blackboard. Students are placed in groups and each student will be given a specific role: outlining the author's argument and responding to it (positively or negatively), highlighting a central idea that is interesting and why it is so, offering an additional perspective, or bringing in other information into the discussion.
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	<p>A student's first original post will be about 1.5-2 paragraphs. Students must respond to <i>at least 2</i> posts of other students for a total of 3 posts each Discussion Board. These response posts must be at least 1 paragraph. You will need to consult the Discussion Board Guide posted under the Course Information tab or more information on grading rubrics and deadlines.</p> <p><b>Students are responsible for completing 10 out of 13 Discussion Boards. I will drop your lowest 3 scores.</b></p>
<i>Weekly Textbook Chapter Quizzes</i>	<p>Each chapter quiz is worth 2 points. These quizzes will test your comprehension of the textbook readings. The quizzes are open book but you cannot use any other online or outside resources to help you. You cannot collaborate with other students to help you.</p> <p><b>Students are responsible for completing 10 out of 13 quizzes</b> (including the citizenship quiz). <b>I will drop your lowest 3 scores.</b></p>
<i>Exams</i>	<p>There will be 1 midterm exam and 1 final exam. Each exam is worth 15 points. The exam is open book but you cannot use any other online or outside resources to help you. You cannot collaborate with other students to help you.</p>
<i>Policy Proposal</i>	<p>Students will identify an issue they feel is a pressing political problem in America that they feel strongly about. Each student will conduct research and write a persuasive 1,750-word proposal explaining their position on the problem and a proposed solution. You will be working incrementally over the course of the semester on this policy proposal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem and Policy Selection worksheet: 1 point</li> <li>• Bibliography: 3 points</li> <li>• Annotated Bibliography: 3 points</li> <li>• Outline: 3 points</li> <li>• Policy Proposal: 10 points</li> </ul>

There is very limited extra credit, 3 points total at the end of the semester via two 1.5 points self-reflection exercises. It is important that you complete all assignments, so you can earn the most points possible.

<i>Assessment Type</i>	<i>Total Number</i>	<i>Points Each</i>	<i>Point Total for Category</i>
Online Discussion Board	10	3	30
Online Quizzes	10	2	20
Exams	2	15	30
Policy Proposal (including all preparatory assignments)	1	20	20
<b>FINAL GRADE TOTAL</b>			<b>100</b>

From your total out of 100, you will be given a letter grade in line with the standard College scale:

A	93-100	C	73-77
A-	90-92.9	C-	70-72.9
B+	87.1-89.9	D+	67.1-69.9
B	83-87	D	63-67
B-	80-82.9	D-	60-62.9
C+	77.1-79.9	F	60-0

#### IV. Course Materials

- Textbook: "American Government 2e" edited by Glen Krutz and Sylvie Waskiewicz, PhD. Openstax. Published February 21, 2019. ISBN: 1-947172-66-2.
  - This book is available in 2 **FREE** formats: downloadable pdf and online webpage.

- The link to download the PDF and to access the online webpage can be found at: <https://openstax.org/details/books/american-government-2e>
- The downloadable PDF can be viewed by using any of these popular free apps: Adobe Reader, Preview, iBooks, Kindle, and Google Docs. I recommend Adobe Reader.
- All other course readings, podcasts, videos are **zero cost**, meaning free to you. They can be found in Blackboard under the Week by Week tab for each module in the Non-Textbook Materials folder.

## V. Course Policies

This is a 3-credit course and you should expect the same overall amount of work and “time spent” as you would in a regular 3-credit face-to-face class. College guidelines state that for a 3-credit course, you are expected to spend about 135 hours on the course during the semester (<https://www.lehman.edu/online/online-courses.php>).

Some weeks are more demanding than others, so please take care to note when each assignment is due, and plan accordingly.

<b>TOPIC:</b>	<b>POLICIES:</b>
<b>Online Attendance</b>	You should be logging to Blackboard at least 3 times a week. You will have to post on Discussion Board by Wednesday and Friday and you will have to submit quizzes and exams on Sunday. While it is up to you how you structure your week, there are deadlines to meet throughout the week.
<b>Engagement</b>	Discussion Board will take the place of an in-person participation so keep up with Discussion Board throughout the week. It is worth 30% of your final grade so you must engage the class and course material via the discussion board to succeed in the course.
<b>Assignment Submission</b>	All assignments must be submitted through Blackboard. Submissions via email will be not be accepted. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) You are responsible for making sure your assignment was properly submitted.</li> <li>2) Check Blackboard whether your assignment has been submitted by looking at “My Grades” tab.</li> <li>3) All assignments close at 11:59pm EST on their due date.</li> <li>4) Final Paper assignments must be uploaded as Microsoft Word documents or PDFs only. There is no other accepted document format.</li> <li>5) Use standard formatting rules: 1” margins, 12-point font, page numbers, double spaced.</li> </ol>
<b>Grading</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) I will typically grade weekly assignments within 1.5 weeks after a module has closed. When I have completed grading an assignment, I will post an announcement in Blackboard that your grade is ready to view.</li> <li>2) If there is a significant delay in grading, I will let the class know via an announcement in Blackboard. You can always check your grades via the My Grades tab in Blackboard.</li> </ol>
<b>Online Classroom Behavior</b>	I encourage debate and different viewpoints in Discussion Board and in online interactions. Be respectful of each other and treat each other how you would want to be treated in person.
<b>Late Work, Extensions, and Make-Ups</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Late submissions will NOT be accepted for: Discussion Boards and Chapter Quizzes</li> <li>2) Late submissions are accepted for: Exams and Policy Proposal assignments, <b>for up to 2 weeks after</b> the on-time submission deadline. However, each day late carries a 1/3 grade penalty.</li> <li>3) I do not grant extensions or make-ups. Manage your time wisely.</li> </ol>

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|  | <p>4) Waiting until the last few hours before a posting or an assignment is due and then running into a personal/work problem or a last-minute computer issue will not be considered an acceptable excuse.</p> <p>5) You also should back up your work on a hard drive and create your own study/work plan to meet course deadlines.</p> |
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### CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is prohibited at The City University of New York and is punishable by penalties, which may include failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The main categories of academic dishonesty are: cheating, plagiarism, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents. For definitions and details, please refer to <http://web.cuny.edu/academics/info-central/policies/academic-integrity.pdf>. A few of the most common issues are outlined below.

**Cheating** includes: the unauthorized collaboration on a take home assignment or examination and submitting substantial portions of the same paper to more than one course without consulting with each instructor.

**Plagiarism** is the presentation of someone else's ideas, words, or artistic, scientific, or technical work as one's own creation. Paraphrasing and summarizing, as well as direct quotations require citations to the original source. Typically, students who plagiarize material in their assignments will receive an F for that particular assignment. A second offense will result in an F final grade for the course and the student will be referred to Lehman's disciplinary process.

### Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policies

Lehman College is committed to providing access to all programs and curricula to all students. Students with disabilities who may need classroom accommodations are encouraged to register with the Office of Student Disability Services. For more information, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services, Shuster Hall, Room 238, phone number, 718-960-8441.

## **VI. How to Contact Me and Virtual Office Hours**

- Email is the best way to reach me. If you have questions or problems related to the course, contact me as soon as possible to avoid falling behind in the course.
  - I typically reply to emails within 24 hours during the week and 48 at most.
  - During the weekend, it may take me longer to reply.
  - If you do not hear back from me, assume that I have not received your email.
- I will email you via your Lehman email. You must email me via your Lehman email not your personal email.
- Emails need to have a subject in the subject line and be written in a professional manner.
- I tend to keep my response brief and to the point so I can reply more quickly. You can always ask for more clarification.
- Emails that request feedback on student work may take more time depending on the volume of email that I must respond to.
- I am available for virtual office hours by appointment. These appointments can be made via email. The office hour will take place using Blackboard's Collaborate tool.
- If you need to speak with me over the phone, you will need to email me (with the reason you need to contact me, your phone number, and available hours) and we can set up a time to talk.

## **VII. Course Schedule**

Subject to change. Any changes will be emailed and announced on Blackboard via Blackboard Announcements. It is your responsibility to keep up with announced changes.

Each week typically begins on a Monday and ends on Sunday. **All due dates close at 11:59PM Eastern Standard Time**

<b>Module</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Readings and Non-Textbook Materials</b>	<b>Assignments &amp; Due Dates</b>
1: Citizen and Government		(1) Textbook Chapter 1 (2) Washington Post's Constitutional Podcast, "Nationality"	(1) Citizenship Quiz (2) Discussion Board #1 (3) Chapter 1 Quiz
2: The Media and Information Literacy		(1) Textbook Chapter 8 (2) Lehman Library videos (3) PDF Library guides	(1) DB#2 (2) Chapter 8 Quiz (3) PPA#1: Political Problem Selection
3: Founding and The Constitution		(1) Textbook Chapter 2 (2) New Yorker online: Hertzberg, "Framed Up" (3) New Yorker online: Toobin, "Our Broken Constitution"	(1) DB#3 (2) Chapter 2 Quiz
4: Federalism		(1) Textbook Chapter 3 (2) Radiolab podcast, "Sex, Ducks, and The Founding Feud" (3) Atlantic Magazine Online: Epps, "Woman Not Guilty of Chemical Warfare"	(1) DB#4 (2) Chapter 3 Quiz
5: Civil Liberties		(1) Textbook Chapter 4 (2) PBS Frontline Video, "Second Chance Kids" (3) YouTube clip from HBO Channel: HBO Last Week Tonight, "Bail"	(1) DB#5 (2) Chapter 4 Quiz (3) PPA#3: Bibliography worksheet
6: Civil Rights		(1) Textbook Chapter 5 (2) PBS Frontline, Separate and Unequal (3) Vox Today Podcast, "Affirmative Reaction"	(1) DB#6 (2) Chapter 5 Quiz
7: Congress		(1) Textbook Chapter 11 (2) New Yorker online: Lizza, "Getting to Maybe" (3) YouTube clip from HBO Channel: HBO Last Week Tonight, "Congressional Fundraising"	(1) DB#7 (2) Midterm Exam
8: The Presidency		(1) Textbook Chapter 12 (2) PBS Frontline video, "Obama's Deal" (3) Washington Post's Can He Do That? Podcast, "Does Trump have the power to declare a national emergency to get border wall funding?"	(1) DB#8 (2) Chapter 12 Quiz (3) PPA#3: Annotated Bibliography
9: The Courts		(1) Textbook Chapter 13 (2) C-SPAN video: "Conversation on Constitutional Interpretation with Justices Scalia and Breyer" (3) Radiolab's More Perfect Podcast, "Sex Appeal"	(1) DB#9 (2) Chapter 13 Quiz

10: Public Opinion		(1) Textbook Chapter 6 (2) NYT and Washington Post articles on contemporary issues	(1) DB#10 (2) Chapter 6 Quiz
11: Voting and Elections		(1) Textbook Chapter 7 (2) Achen and Bartels, "Democracy for Realists" (Academic Search Complete link, need Lehman library login)	(1) DB#11 (2) Chapter 7 Quiz (3) PPA#4: Outline
12: Political Parties		(1) Textbook Chapter 11 (2) Voter Study Group Report (online), "Spoiler Alert"	1) DB#12 (2) Chapter 11 Quiz
13: Interest Groups		(1) Textbook Chapter 10 (2) PBS Frontline video, "Gunned Down: The Power of the NRA" (2) NPR Planet Money Podcast, "A Lobbyist Tells All"	(1) DB#13 (2) Chapter 10 Quiz:
14: Final Exam and Final Paper			(1) Final Exam (2) Policy Proposal Paper



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