

**HARVARD UNIVERSITY**  
**Division of Continuing Education**

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**GOVT E-30**  
**INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN GOVERNMENT**  
**Fall 2015**

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Instructor:	Carlos E. Díaz Rosillo, Ph.D. <a href="mailto:cdiaz@fas.harvard.edu">cdiaz@fas.harvard.edu</a>
Meeting Time:	Mondays 7:30-9:30 p.m. plus one weekly section
Location:	Maxwell-Dworkin G125 or online

## **Course Description**

This course offers an overview of the American political system. It examines the constitutional foundation of the system and its development over time. It analyzes the increasingly important role of campaigns and elections in contemporary American politics (with a special emphasis on the current race for the presidency) and how civic society and non-governmental entities, such as political parties, interest groups, and the media, influence the policy-making process. It studies how the institutions of the federal government—the Congress, the presidency, and the courts—operate, both in theory and in practice, and how they interact with one another. Through the use of various pedagogical tools, you will learn to think analytically about American politics and the study of American government.

This is an introductory course designed for those students who have not taken any previous courses in American government, but who are interested in learning about how the American political system works. In addition to the regular online lectures, with the option to attend class on campus, the course includes an intensive and mandatory active learning weekend residency at Harvard. Students must be present for the entire on-campus weekend session to earn credit for the course.

In this exciting active learning exercise, students will participate in a simulation of the federal government of the United States. Each student will be assigned a role to play during the simulation, which requires some background work (both individually and in teams) leading up to the actual simulation (a special session of Congress). The roles include governmental actors, such as members of Congress and the executive branch, as well as non-governmental actors, such as interest groups and the media. Students will learn about the policymaking process by drafting and negotiating bills, engaging in policy advocacy and communication, and making leadership decisions under pressure. Thus, the session will involve extensive group work and active participation. The goal of the exercise is to give students an appreciation for the complexities of the policymaking process in the United States and to help them think analytically about American politics.

## **Course Requirements**

Course requirements include: participation in section discussions (you will have a choice of participating either in a weekly section on the Harvard campus or in an online discussion bulletin board) (20%), two short paper assignments (20%), an active learning institutional simulation exercise (30%), and a proctored final examination (30%). Students taking the course for graduate credit will have the option to write a research paper in lieu of taking the final examination. Students who would like to explore this option must contact the professor early in the term to get approval for their research topic and to develop a plan for carrying out the research. Research papers that have not received prior approval will not be accepted. Details about these requirements will be provided in class.

You will be expected to keep up to date with the assigned weekly readings and to participate in online course discussions actively and thoughtfully. You also will be expected to keep up to date with current presidential politics by reading a national newspaper of record on a regular basis.

Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of 1/3 of a letter grade per day late. Failure to complete any one of the course requirements will result in a failing grade in the course.

Students should be aware that in this course collaboration of any sort in the completion of the course requirement, with the exception of the institutional simulation group exercise, is not permitted. That means that you may not discuss the paper assignments or exam with anyone else outside the teaching staff for the course. All work should be entirely your own and must use appropriate citation practices to acknowledge the use of books, articles, websites, videos, lectures, discussions, etc., that you have consulted to complete your assignments.

All students are expected to hand-in work on time and in a professional manner. Any student that presents work that is not of his/her own authorship will automatically fail the course and will be subject to the Harvard Extension School's rules and regulations regarding academic integrity.

### **Course Materials**

Thomas Patterson. We the People: An Introduction to American Politics, 11th ed. New York: McGraw Hill, 2015.

Samuel Kernell and Steven Smith, eds. Principles and Practices of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings, 6th ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2015.

+ additional readings available online or on reserve.

## **The Lineup**

### **Introduction**

**Monday, August 31**

#### **The Study of Politics and the Constitutional Origins of the American Political System**

The Declaration of Independence  
The Constitution of the United States of America  
Patterson, pp. 1-99  
Kernell and Smith, pp. 18-97

#### **Political Behavior: Participating in the Political Process**

**Monday, September 14**

#### **Social Capital, Civic Engagement, and Political Participation in the United States**

Patterson, pp. 207-231  
Kernell and Smith, pp. 1-16  
Schlozman, Verba, and Brady, pp. 427-459

**Monday, September 21**

#### **The Measure, Meaning, and Impact of Public Opinion**

Patterson, pp. 176-206  
Kernell and Smith, pp. 273-324

**Monday, September 28**

#### **Campaigns and Elections: Running for Congress**

Patterson, pp. 244-267, 329-338  
Kernell and Smith, pp. 325-361, 371-379

**Monday, October 5**

**Campaigns and Elections: The Road to the White House**

Patterson, pp. 377-387

Irwin, "Why a Presidential Campaign Is the Ultimate Start-Up," *The New York Times*, June 4, 2015.

**The Institutions of the Federal Government**

**Monday, October 19**

**The Congress**

Patterson, pp. 327-329, 338-368

Kernell and Smith, pp. 138-174

**Monday, October 26**

**The Presidency**

Patterson, pp. 369-377, 387-440

Kernell and Smith, pp. 205-232

Díaz Rosillo, pp. 1-40

**Monday, November 9**

**The Courts**

Patterson, pp. 441-474

Kernell and Smith, pp. 233-270

**Monday, November 16**

**The American Political System and Non-Governmental Actors**

- A. Political Parties**
- B. Interest Groups**
- C. The Media**

Patterson, pp. 232-326

Kernell and Smith, pp. 362-369, 380-450

**American Politics Today: Theory Meets Practice**

**Monday, November 23**

**The Making of Domestic, Economic, and Foreign Policy**

Patterson, pp. 465-572

**Friday, December 4, 5-8 pm**

**Saturday, December 5, 9 am-5 pm**

**Sunday, December 6, 9 am-1 pm**

**Institutional Simulation Exercise**

Details TBA

**Monday, December 7**

**Summary and Conclusions**

**Monday, December 14**

**FINAL EXAM**