Introduction to American Politics is an overview of American politics. The course is divided into three parts and introduces students to the structure of government (how it *ought* to work) as well as how political actors manipulate it to accomplish their objectives (how it *actually* works).

**OBJECTIVES**
The goals of the course are to enable students to understand how the American political system works, to evaluate the workings of the system, and to explore the practical expressions of the concepts of citizenship and power. As a social science and U.S. history course in the General Education program, it has the following learning objectives: to enable the understanding that human conduct and behavior are subject to scientific inquiry; to enable the understanding of the difference between rigorous and systematic thinking and uncritical thinking about social phenomena; to enable an understanding of the kinds of questions social scientists ask and the ways they go about answering these questions; to enable knowledge of the major concepts, models, and issues in political science; to enable students in the acquisition of knowledge of substance and methods for comprehending the historical narratives or themes presented throughout the semester; and to enable students in the acquisition of knowledge of common institutions in American society and how they have affected different groups.

**TEXTS**
Please be advised there is a great deal of reading in this course and you should obtain copies of all of the texts and articles. The books listed below are available for purchase at the University bookstore, at Mary Jane books or at online retailers such as Amazon.com.


In addition to the texts, there are also required articles posted online at the course website (eres). You will also be expected to keep up with current events in American politics by reading a newspaper (in print or online). I recommend the *New York Times* (fee), the *Wall Street Journal* (fee), or the *Washington Post* (free content online). You have free access to all papers at the University library.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS
You are expected to come to class ready to engage the reading and your fellow classmates. The date next to the readings indicates when they should be completed. You should read the assigned readings for class on that day.

Your grade will be based on the following four items.

(a) Participation in Section (15%): Participation in section is required. Your TA will have more instructions on what is expected of you.

(b) Paper (25%): You are also required to write a paper of approximately 2,000-2,200 words (6 pages). A handout with specific instructions will be distributed in class. Final papers are due at the beginning of lecture.

   Paper due date: Wednesday, April 25 at the beginning of lecture (NOT section)

   - Research question due February 10 (in section)
   - List of sources due February 24 (in section)
   - Thesis statement due March 9 (in section)
   - Paper outline due March 30 (in section)
   - Rough draft due April 13 (in section)
   - Final Paper due Wednesday, April 25 (lecture)

(c) Quizzes (30%): Though we will not have a midterm, we will have weekly quizzes. These quizzes may be given on any day of the week at any point during our class. Please be advised, NO makeup quizzes will be given. Quizzes are graded on a pass/fail basis (check or check minus). Excellent quizzes that demonstrate mastery of the material may earn a check plus, which counts towards extra credit. At the end of the semester, I will drop your lowest quiz score.

(d) Final Exam (30%): The final exam is cumulative, covering lectures, readings, and media presentations over the course of the entire semester. The final exam will be given only on the date and time specified by the university: Thursday, May 17 (1:00pm-3:00pm)

Please note if you require special consideration for any assignment (i.e. late papers, missed exams or classes) you must contact the undergraduate dean. I do not give special consideration for late papers or exams without written instructions to do so from the dean.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY
As a reminder, “It is every student’s responsibility to become familiar with the standards of academic integrity at the University. Claims of ignorance, of unintentional error, or of academic or personal pressures are not sufficient reasons for violations of academic integrity.”

If you have question about what constitutes academic integrity, what violates the university’s standards, and what the penalties are for plagiarism, cheating, or multiple submissions please see the undergraduate bulletin at: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html

Violations of academic integrity will be referred to the University for disciplinary action.

I. INTRODUCTION
Week of January 18: Understanding and Analyzing American Politics
Derthick, Chapter 1: A New Way of Regulating Tobacco
Coleman, Chapter 1: Thinking About American Politics
Section: The Nuts and Bolts of Section

II. THE POLITICAL PROCESS: BIG TOBACCO AND GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS
Week of January 23: The Structure of American Government
Coleman, Chapter 3; Appendices 1-4—The Constitution
Section: Simulation The Political Process (What Problems are Political Problems?)

Week of January 30: Congress
Derthick Chapter 2: The Ordinary Politics of Legislation
Coleman, Chapter 13: Congress
Section: Simulation The Political Process (Get a Bill Passed)

Week of February 6: The American Presidency
Coleman, Chapter 14, Appendix 5—The Presidency
Section: Writing Workshop 1—Questions and Sources
**Paper Questions due in Section

Week of February 13: Judiciary
Derthick, Chapter 3: Ordinary Torts Litigation before It Was Substantiated
Coleman, Chapter 15: The Federal Court System
Section: Simulation The Political Process (Challenge by the Courts)

Week of February 20: Bureaucracy
Derthick, Chapter 4: The Drive for FDA Regulation
Coleman, Chapter 16: the Bureaucracy
Section: Simulation The Political Process (Implementation)
**Paper Sources due in Section

Week of February 27: Interest Groups
Derthick, Chapter 5: The New Wave of Litigation
Coleman, Chapter 12: Interest Groups
Section: Simulation The Political Process (Lobbying)

Week of March 5: Public Opinion
Derthick, Chapter 7: The Settlement Dies in Congress
Coleman, Chapter 7: Public Opinion
Section: Writing Workshop 2—Constructing Arguments and Using Evidence
**Paper thesis statements due in Section

Week of March 12: Classes suspended

Week of March 19: Federalism
Derthick, Chapters 9 and 10: The Master Settlement Agreement of 1998 and The Aftermath of the MSA
Coleman, Chapter 4: Federalism
Section: Simulation The Political Process (Venue Shopping)
III. POLITICAL CULTURE AND RED/BLUE POLARIZATION

Week of March 26: Political Culture
Coleman, Chapter 2: Political Culture
Cahn and Carbone, Part One (Chapters 1-4): Family Maps
Section: Simulation The 2012 Election
**Paper outlines due in Section

Week of April 2: Campaigns and Elections
**No Class or Section Friday, April 6**
Coleman, Chapter 9: Voting, Elections, and Campaigns
Cahn and Carbone, Chapters 5-7, Contraception; Abortion, Law and the Cognitive Map, and the Irrationality of Adolescence

Week of April 9: Political Participation
***No Class Monday, April 9***
Coleman, Chapter 8: Political Participation
Cahn and Carbone, Chapters 8-9, The Marrying Laws, Custody and Compromise
Section: Simulation The 2012 Election
**Paper drafts due in Section

IV. PUBLIC, PRIVATE, AND THE LIMITS OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT?

Week of April 16: Civil Liberties, Civil Rights
Coleman, Chapter 5 and 6: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights
Section: Writing Workshop 3—Elements of Style and How Not to Plagiarize

Week of April 23: Public Policy and Political Participation
Section: Simulation Public Policy
**Final Paper Due April 25

Week of April 30: The Limits of Public Policy
Strach Chapter 3-6: Changing Social Practices, Changing Family; Family Criteria in Immigration Policy, Taxing the Family, Rhetoric and Reality
Section: Q and A

IV. CONCLUSION

Week of May 7: Conclusion
No Reading