

Professor Anne Hildreth

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Humanities 16, 442-3112

Please feel free to contact me by email or visit me if you are in the Albany area if you have a question about the class, Political Science, or politics.

## Course Description

In this course, we will introduce you to the workings of American politics and the actors, institutions and policies central to its operation. We begin at the beginning: the first section of the course reviews the views, debates and conflicts dating from the founding period in American politics. In examining the actions of the framers of the constitution we explore how they resolved their differences and the role the conflicts of their time play in our 21<sup>st</sup> century lives. Thereafter, the course examines the role of the public and elections, the workings of the major institutions of government and the ways actors inside and outside of government impact the policy making process. I believe that participation in politics, inside or outside “the system”, is an important responsibility that comes with citizenship. Given this significant role for political participation, how come some people become active while others choose not to get involved? And what difference does it make: in what ways do our actions actually have an impact?

## Course and General Education Learning Objectives

By the end of the course I expect students will be able to:

1. Elaborate on the complex role of key elements of American politics: the public, the workings of institutions, and the policymaking process;
2. Understand the debates and conflicts articulated during America's Founding period and their connections to politics today;
3. Make connections among the institutions, actors and policies that are a part of the political process;
4. Evaluate current political issues in terms of the founding debates, citizen participation, institutions and policy process;
5. Understand the controversies surrounding our broader themes of political participation and citizenship, the advantages/disadvantages of different ways to participate and the difference that participation by individuals and groups can make;
6. Locate themselves on ideological and political continua and clearly explain where they stand on the debates and controversies we discuss and why.

In addition, this course fulfills both the U.S. History and Social Science requirements in the General Education program. It also can be used for the Flexible Gen Ed course requirement.

U.S. History courses enable students to demonstrate:

1. knowledge of a basic narrative of American history (political, economic, social, and/or cultural), including an awareness of unity and diversity in American society;
2. knowledge of representative institutions in American society and how they have shaped and been shaped by different groups;
3. an understanding of the relationship (s) between America and other parts of the world;
4. an understanding of various tools and approaches used in interpreting U.S. history.

Social Sciences courses enable students to demonstrate:

1. an understanding that human conduct and behavior more generally are subject to scientific inquiry;
2. an understanding of the difference between rigorous and systematic thinking and uncritical thinking about social phenomena;

3. an understanding of the kinds of questions social scientists ask and the ways they go about answering these questions;
4. knowledge of the major concepts, models and issues of at least one discipline in the social sciences;
5. an understanding of the methods social scientists use to explore social phenomena, such as observation, hypothesis development, measurement and data collection, experimentation, evaluation of evidence, employment of mathematical analysis, employment of interpretive analysis.

**If you took AP Government in high school and transferred the credit into UAlbany (or any higher education institution) you should not take this course. This course is the direct equivalent for that AP course, you cannot receive credit for both courses.**

## Course Materials

We will use a textbook and an integrated learning platform called Mindtap in this class. The textbook is **Gateways to Democracy: An Introduction to American Government, 4th Edition**, by John G. Geer, Wendy J Schiller, Richard Herrera, and Jeffrey A Segal. The Publisher is Cengage Learning. Please see the Welcome document at the top of our Blackboard page that details how to purchase the course material.

## Course Policies

**Academic Integrity and Plagiarism:** The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. You need to be the author of any work you do in this course; you should not work with a classmate or any other individual on any course submission. By submitting work in your name in this course you are representing that work as entirely your own.

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's work, words, or ideas as if they were your own without giving the original author credit by citing him or her. If you have any questions about plagiarism, you should review this tutorial

<http://library.albany.edu/infolit/plagiarism1>

Every student is responsible for understanding what constitutes plagiarism and the University's policy on academic integrity. It is available at

[http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate\\_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)

Plagiarism violations in this course will result in disciplinary action. Please ask me if you need assistance understanding how to present your work in a way consistent with the policy.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you need any accommodations due to a disability, please utilize University resources as needed, and let me know prior to the start of the course.

## Types of Assignments

**Focus Activities** - Within each presentation of the Geer chapter in Mindtap there is an activity – a news story or a short video – and a series of questions that connect the activity to concepts and information presented in the chapter. I have set these up so that you can repeat these exercises if do not get all the points on the first attempt – they don't repeat verbatim, the questions will change slightly. Together with the quizzes described below, these Focus Activities are set up to equal about 35% of your grade. You need to do these by the deadlines established in the Course Schedule.

**Wrap it Up Quizzes** - After each presentation of the Geer chapter in Mindtap there is a quiz. It will be 10 multiple choice questions. You will have 20 minutes to complete the quiz. Obviously, this is an open book activity but the timing may make it difficult to complete without having a good sense to the material in the chapter.

**Module Essays** - At the end of each of the modules I will ask you to complete a short essay assignment. These will typically require a 4 or 5 paragraph response to a question (or questions – sometimes you will have a choice of essays to answer) that will connect things we have read and discussed across the module. It will be timed -- once you open it you will need to complete it within 2 hours. Because you have time to compose your answer I expect your essays to be well written and carefully considered.

**Reaction Posts** - There are four reaction posts – one on Sanctuary cities, one on the presidential election, one on Congress, and one TBD as we get closer to that date! – that are connected to your groups. In these posts I will ask very specific questions about a current topic as it relates to concepts and ideas in the text and your opinion and expect you to answer it in 2 paragraphs. Again, because you have time to compose your answer I will be expecting your posts to be well written and carefully considered. Part of what you are doing here is showing me you have done the readings and can apply them to the topic at hand; posts that make specific references to readings will clearly reflect that (e.g. “In the article by Collins it states” or “In Geer Ch 2 in discussing the Founders”). The reaction posts are set up so that you must develop your own post before you see the reactions of others in your group. Once the post closes you will have one additional day to post reactions to other group members reactions and opinions (see below).

**Response Posts** - Once we reach the due date for each of the group posts the conversation will remain open for you to respond and react to other group members’ posts. I will suggest some guidelines for these posts in our first post and give you feedback on your first attempt. You will need to complete 8 post responses in total – so, you will need to respond to more than one group member in each discussion or to several members in one.

**Individual Reactions** - In Module two there is an individual reaction to the political ideology tests that I ask you to submit only to me. Again, like most posts, it will require you to write 2 paragraphs in response to a prompt that I will supply.

### Course Schedule

The Start dates assigned to the Readings are suggested; all of the posted readings and the debate posts are available from the first day associated with the Module. This date overlaps with the end date of the previous Module, so you can get started reading if you would like or preview the material any time during that period. Note that I have inserted some documents – mini lectures from me identifying things I want you to think about as you read – into folders before the online chapters.

The Start dates associated with the assessments reflect the date on which the quizzes, discussions, and papers are available to be opened. The end dates, when highlighted in gray and bold, are the dates on which assignments MUST be completed. The assignments will close at 11:59PM on those dates.

In every module each student will: Complete the reading, Focus Activities, and Wrap it up Quiz in every Chapter. Complete a reaction essay or discussion post in their group discussion area (outside of Mindtap), and complete a short essay covering all the chapters in that week’s module. By the end of the course students will need to respond to posts made by classmates at least 6 times total.

Topics	Start	End	Readings and Assignments
Module name	Date	Date	

Ice Breaker	Wed 12/21	<b>Sat 12/24</b>	Read course outline, complete initial post labeled Ice Breaker in your group
Course Design Quiz	Wed 12/21	<b>Sat 12/24</b>	
<b>Week/Module 1: CH 1-5</b>	Fri 12/23	Fri 12/30	
Part 1: The Founding and Our Constitutional Design	Fri 12/23	<b>Tu 12/27</b>	Read Gateways Ch 1-3, lecture notes in folders Complete Focus Activities and Chapter quizzes
	Tu 12/27		Read contents of Mindtap Post #1 folder and read post instructions
	Tu 12/27	W 12/28	Posts must be submitted in group area
Part 2: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	W 12/28	<b>Th 12/29</b>	Read Gateways Ch 4 & 5, lecture notes Complete Focus Activities and Chapter quizzes
		<b>Th 12/29</b>	Responses must be posted
	F 12/30	<b>Sun 1/1</b>	Complete Module 1 essay post
<b>Week/Module 2: CH 6, 8 &amp; 9</b>	Sat 12/31	Fri 1/6	
Part 1: Identity	Mon 1/2	<b>Tu 1/3</b>	Read Gateways Ch 6, lecture notes Complete Ch 6 Focus Activities and Chapter quiz
	Mon 1/2	<b>Tu 1/3</b>	Complete tests in Mindtap Folder and Political identity reaction essay
Part 2: Intermediaries	Tu 1/2	<b>Th 1/5</b>	Read Gateways Ch 8-9 Complete Focus Activities and Chapter quizzes
	W 1/4	<b>Th 1/5</b>	Complete Intermediaries post
	Th 1/5	<b>Fri 1/6</b>	Responses must be posted
	Th 1/5	<b>Fri 1/6</b>	Complete Module 2 Essay post
<b>Week/Module 3: CH 7, 10, &amp; 11</b>	Sat 1/7	Fr 1/13	
The Role of the Media and Participation in Elections	Sat 1/7	<b>Tu 1/10</b>	Read Gateways Ch 7, 10 & 11 Complete Forum Activities and Chapter quiz
	Tu 1/10	Wed 1/11	Read contents of Mindtap Election folder
	Wed 1/11	<b>Th 1/12</b>	Complete Election 2016 post
		<b>Fri 1/13</b>	Election 2016 response posts must be posted
	Th 1/12	<b>Fri 1/13</b>	Complete Module 3 Essay Post
<b>Week/Module 4: CH 12-14</b>	Sat 1/14	Wed 1/18	
Institutions and Policy Making	Sat 1/14	<b>Tu 1/17</b>	Read Gateways Ch 12-14 Complete Forum Activities and Chapter quizzes
	Tu 1/17	Wed 1/18	Read Mindtap Institutions folder

	Tu 1/17	<b>W 1/17</b>	Complete Institutions Post
		<b>Th 1/18</b>	Institutions response post must be posted
	W 1/18	<b>Th 1/19</b>	Complete Final Course Essay

<b>Instructor:</b>	Professor Anne Hildreth
<b>Course Number:</b>	RPOS 101 Introduction to American Politics
<b>Semester:</b>	Winter 2017
<b>Mailing Address:</b>	

Here are the weights for the different assessments and how the final course grade will be calculated:

1. Ice breaker in your group 1 X 10
2. Course details quiz 1 X 5
3. Focus Activities 10 points each 14 X 10 = 140
4. Chapter Quizzes 10 points each 14 X 10 = 140
5. Discussion Post or Individual Learning Exercise 5 X 50 points = 250
6. Response Post 7 X 15 = 105
7. Essay each Module 1-3 3 X 75 points = 225
8. Final course Essay 1 X 150

TOTAL = 1035

Grading Scale: Here are the cutoffs for the final course grades: Out of a total of 1000 (1025 possible)

### Final Grade Rubric

<b>Start of grade range</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>670</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>730</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>830</b>	<b>870</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>930</b>
<b>Letter</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>D-</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>A</b>

I will provide clear guidelines for all of the written work required, discussion posts, responses, and essays. You can earn a "0" for a poorly reasoned or presented writing assignment. Missing grades, such as essays not

submitted on time or discussions with no participation are also treated as a 0. **Each student is allowed 1 late submission. You must request it from me so I note it (and, in some cases, I must reopen a discussion or provide access to a quiz).**