

## **POL 344: AMERICAN POLITICAL IDEOLOGY AND PUBLIC OPINION**

***Summer Session 2 – 2021***

**Instructor: Robert Vidigal**

**Office Hours:** Online through Zoom by appointment

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**Course Description:** An examination of the nature of contemporary political ideology and public opinion in the United States. The goal is to understand political conflict and debate in the U.S. and the ways in which the public influences that debate. Major topics in public opinion include political tolerance and trust, attitudes towards women and African Americans, the role of mass media, and the impact of political values and ideology on political campaigns and elections.

**Course Learning Outcomes:** This course will be conducted by weekly recorded lectures. When this course is over, you should have a better understanding of three things:

- a) The differences between the major ideologies in American politics;
- b) The psychology behind ideologies and mass public opinion;
- c) How ideology does (or doesn't) make its way into aggregate public opinion.

The syllabus, as well as the course, is structured around these three goals.

### **Course Policies:**

**Civility:** In this course we will be discussing and debating a variety of political issues, and as such it is understandable we may cover issues of personal importance. As an institution of higher learning, the classroom should be a place where diverse ideas can be explored with respect in order to promote learning and growth. Regardless of whether or not we share similar opinions and beliefs, I expect all of us to remain respectful of each other. Student conduct that disrupts the learning process will not be tolerated and may lead to disciplinary action and/or removal from class. In line with the expectations set in the Code of Student Responsibility (<https://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/studentaffairs/ucs/conduct.php>), the following will not be permitted in this course:

1. Ad hominim attacks or attacks on an individual's or group of individuals' character on the basis of gender, race, class, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or other personal characteristics.
2. Epithets or other language intended to intimidate, demean, or incite violence.
3. Editorial content that is harmful, threatening, abusive, demeaning, or libelous.

### **Course Requirements**

**Weekly Article Outlines:** 25 points. Every week students must outline one of the articles of their choosing. The outlines should be uploaded to Blackboard under Articles Outlines section.

**Check Blackboard for the template and examples of an Article outline (Course Materials).**

**Participation (introduce yourself):** 5 points. Record a video introducing yourself and upload to blackboard until July 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Homework:** 20 points. There will be a total of four homework assignments (5 points each). The homework assignments involve answering public opinion and survey questions online to learn more about your own ideology.

After completing the survey you need to write a **1 page** response paper (**12pt font, Arial, double spaced**). You should give your impression of the survey and questions. Think about the survey/questions and what it is supposed to measure. The following are examples of things you might write about but you are not limited to these ideas:

Did your results surprise you?

Did you learn anything new about yourself?

Do you agree with the results?

Do the survey questions appear to measure what it is supposed to measure?

Do you still have questions about how the survey measures the construct it claims to measure? If you have any problems or criticisms of the survey then consider how they might influence the results of research?

Homework should be uploaded to Blackboard. Homework turned in after when it is due but before the next assignment will receive half credit. Homework will be due on the following dates:

**Homework 1: Monday, July 12<sup>th</sup>**

*Take the political ideology survey and write a response paper. Turn in the response paper through Blackboard by Monday, July 12<sup>th</sup>. Please look at the sections of your results labeled "Your Ideology" and "Your political themes". Please include your results screenshot.*

<https://www.isidewith.com/political-quiz>

**Homework 2: Monday, July 19<sup>th</sup>**

*Take the Pew Research Center "What do you know about the US Government" survey and write a response paper. Turn in through Blackboard by Monday, July 19<sup>th</sup>. What do you think these results indicate about your political knowledge? Do you think the questions asked are relevant to knowledge about politics?*

*Please include your results screenshot.*

<https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/quiz/what-do-you-know-about-the-u-s-government/>

**Homework 3: Monday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>**

*To find out your scores on the five foundations, please register at [www.YourMorals.org/register.php](http://www.YourMorals.org/register.php), and take the "Moral Foundations Questionnaire" to explore your own morals and write a response paper. Turn in through Blackboard by Monday, August 2<sup>nd</sup>. What do you think these results indicate about your morals and ideology? Do they match what we have discussed in class? Please include the bar-graph scores screenshot on your paper.*

<https://www.yourmorals.org/register.php>

**Homework 4: Monday, August 9<sup>th</sup>**

Read the short article and take the partisan IAT. Write a response paper either the article or the IAT or both. Turn in your response through Blackboard by Monday, August 9<sup>th</sup>. After the article click "Start the test" then press "T" for instructions. Finally, press "T" to begin the test. Do you feel like you prefer the party that the results indicate? Please include your results screenshot.

<http://www.vox.com/2015/12/7/9828120/partisan-test>

**Exams:** There will be **2 (two)** exams total in this course. All exams will be open-ended with some definitions/short answer questions. If you miss an exam, the make-up exam will be different than the exam the rest of the class takes. The exams will be on the following dates:

**Midterm:** Friday July 30<sup>th</sup> (25 points)

**Final Exam:** Friday August 14<sup>th</sup> (25 points)

***All exams will be based on both lectures and assigned readings.***

You should do fine on the exams by studying your lecture notes, the lecture slides and the readings.

**Total Course Points: 100**

This will correspond to grades as described below. Grading (by percentage of points earned):

100 > A >=93	87> B >=83	77> C >=73	67> D >=63
93 > A- >= 90	83>B- >=80	73> C- >=70	63> D- >=60
90 > B+ >=87	80>C+ >=77	70> D+ >=67	Less than 60: F

**Make-up Policy:** Students should notify the instructor in advance if they will be missing an exam and arrange to take the test early. If you are unable to take a test due to an emergency you will need to provide evidence of the emergency (Doctor note for illness, police accident report for car accident, etc). Unexcused make-up exams are allowed within one week of the original exam date but will be penalized one letter grade. Make-up exams may not be in the same format as the regular test.

**Course Website:** Blackboard will allow students to access course materials. The Blackboard system is available from any computer with access to the Internet at the following website, <http://blackboard.stonybrook.edu>. Logging into Blackboard requires a NET ID and a Password. Use this page to obtain additional readings, electronic copies of assignments, and other course handouts and resources.

**Readings:** All readings will be posted on Blackboard. They will be labeled by week which corresponds to the syllabus. Information from the readings will appear on the exams.

**Email Policy:** You are responsible for all the information that is sent to the class via email. If for some reason you cannot receive email through your Stony Brook email address it is your responsibility to let the instructor know as soon as possible.

**Disability Support Services (DSS) Statement:** If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may impact your course work, please contact Disability Support Services (631) 632-6748 or <http://studentaffairs.stonybrook.edu/dss/>. They will determine with you what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation is confidential. Students who require assistance during emergency evacuation are encouraged to discuss their needs with their professors and Disability Support Services. For procedures and information go to the following website: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/ehs/fire/disabilities/asp>.

**Academic Integrity Statement:** Each student must pursue his or her academic goals honestly and be personally accountable for all submitted work. Representing another person's work as your own is always wrong. Faculty are required to report any suspected instance of academic dishonesty to the Academic Judiciary. For more comprehensive information on academic integrity, including categories of academic dishonesty, please refer to the academic judiciary website at <http://www.stonybrook.edu/uaa/academicjudiciary/>

**Critical Incident Statement:** Stony Brook University expects students to respect the rights, privileges, and property of other people. Faculty are required to report to the Office of Judicial Affairs any disruptive behavior that interrupts their ability to teach, compromises the safety of the learning environment, and/or inhibits students' ability to learn.

## Course Schedule:

*The course and readings are weekly organized by topic:*

### Week 1: July 5 – July 11

Public Opinion in Democratic Societies

**HOMEWORK 1 due Monday July 12<sup>th</sup>**

**OUTLINE 1 due Tuesday July 13<sup>th</sup>**

### Week 2: July 12 – July 18

The Structure of Ideology

**HOMEWORK2 due Monday July 19<sup>th</sup>**

**OUTLINE 2 due Tuesday July 20<sup>th</sup>**

### Week 3: July 19 – July 25

Political Knowledge

**MIDTERM Friday July 30<sup>th</sup>**

**OUTLINE 3 due Tuesday July 27<sup>th</sup>**

### Week 4: July 26 – Aug 1

Roots of Ideology? Moral Foundations Theory

**HOMEWORK3 due Monday August 2<sup>nd</sup>**

**OUTLINE 4 due Tuesday August 3<sup>rd</sup>**

### Week 5: Aug 2 – Aug 8

Race and Ideology

**HOMEWORK4 due Monday August 9<sup>th</sup>**

**OUTLINE 5 due Tuesday August 10<sup>th</sup>**

### Week 6: Aug 9 – Aug 14

Partisan Identities & Polarization

**FINAL EXAM Friday August 14<sup>th</sup>**