

Politics in America: Liberty and Equality
Professor Richard Keiser
Fall 2011

Political Science 122 offers an introduction to how political scientists study American politics, particularly domestic politics. This is not a course in current events; rather, it is a course in which historical and contemporary political issues and problems of governance (empirical data) are discussed to illustrate hypotheses about how politics works (theory) and to further refine these hypotheses.

At the founding of this nation there existed tensions between liberty and equality that we will trace to modern debates about **small government vs. big government and conflicts between haves and have-nots**. We will examine the role of individual citizens in democracy as the components of public opinion, as voters and non-voters, and as members of the interest groups and social movements that influence public policy. We will then examine the role of political parties in creating electoral accountability through the nomination and election of presidents and members of Congress. We will examine in depth the impact that popular social movements have on parties and the politics of compromise and coalition. We will also look at the constitutionally designed sharing of powers between the Congress and the Presidency and discuss **the deadlock of divided government** and its numerous implications for American politics. Finally, we will examine the **partisan political polarization that seems to have divided the United States into what has been labeled "Red States vs. Blue States."**

All readings are drawn from textbooks for sale in the bookstore (or far less expensively on the internet) or are on e-reserve (Password is POSC). Recommended readings are not required but they will provide useful insight and depth.

Goals:

- One goal of this course is to give students a solid grasp of 20th century American political history and provide a foundation for informed citizenship in the 21st century. A theme of this course is CONTINUITY, how similar the political landscape is for long periods of time. Grasping the patterns of politics over the past thirty or more years will provide you with a template for understanding most of what transpires for the next decade or, perhaps, longer.
- A second goal is to introduce students to social science inquiry, specifically to the logic of hypothesis formation and testing about causation. Two puzzles will occupy a large share of our time in this course: (A) **What is the role of institutional rules in explaining electoral outcomes such as divided government?** (B) **What explains the polarization of American politics and the disconnectedness that so many citizens have to our political system?**

Grading:

There will be an exam near midterm (25% of grade), an in class final (25%), and a final during the final exam period (40%). Remainder of the grade will be comprised by class participation and grades on unannounced quizzes (10%). One quiz grade will

be dropped; missed quizzes cannot be made-up. Missing class is not a good idea; it is your responsibility to discover what was discussed in a missed class. My grading standards are as follows:

A= excellent quality work that goes beyond the material as presented.

B= good quality work, complete comprehension of all materials, not merely in their constituent parts but in a holistic manner. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation are flawless.

C= fair quality work, an ability to regurgitate some important aspects of some materials covered in the course but unfamiliarity with other equally important parts.

D= poor quality work, little demonstration of understanding of the material as evidenced by inaccurate and confused discussions of the subject and an incomplete approach.

Any evidence of cheating or plagiarism will be grounds for failure. Plagiarism is not only the copying of material directly from another source. It is also the use of paraphrased material from a source without proper citation. This is an area of concern for all students producing research papers in this class.

If you have questions about the readings or the lectures, please come to my office. My office is 417 Willis, office hours will be announced and are posted on the POSC department website; no appointments are necessary during office hours. This is your time, just drop in. For meetings at other times, I am glad to make an appointment. My office phone is 222-4122, and my e-mail is rkeiser@carleton.edu.

September 11 - September 17

Class 1:

THE RHETORIC OF AMERICAN POPULISMS

- **First Inaugural speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt ,
<http://www.hpol.org/fdr/inaug>,
There are a few speeches by FDR in addition to this on E-reserve.**
- **Also, go to Wikipedia page for Franklin D. Roosevelt and familiarize yourself with the New Deal period, his domestic opposition and his foreign policy perspective on intervention in global conflict.**

Be ready to discuss passages from the speech that illustrate FDR's economic populism. Where does he portray himself as the leader of the many against an evil few (populism)? Who are the evil few? How does he portray the many?

Class 2:

- **Crenson and Ginsberg, DOWNSIZING DEMOCRACY (textbook), chs. 1-3.**

Class 3:

- J. Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government" (link below)

Q: Why is the period from 1968 forward seen as unique and irregular in American history?

Q: How does divided government create an unclear picture for interest groups regarding whether the party they have supported adequately represented their interests and how does this obstruct accountability?

- Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser, *THE LOGIC OF AMERICAN POLITICS* (textbook), ch. 7, pp. 305-33 only.

September 18 - September 24

Class 4:

AMERICA'S RIGHT TURN: THE REPUDIATION OF LIBERALISM

- Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser, *THE LOGIC OF AMERICAN POLITICS* (textbook), ch. 4-5, Civil Rights-Civil Liberties.

Q: How did the actions of the Supreme Court on Criminal Rights and School Prayer make the government defend a position that privileged the few vs. the many? Beyond the cases mentioned, investigate *Abington Township vs. Schempp*.

Class 5:

- T. Edsall, "Race" AND N. Rae, "The South and American Party Factionalism" [E-Res]

Q: How did the civil rights movement, first in the South and then the North, divide former allies within the FDR Democratic Party coalition?

Q: What are the 4 factions of the Democratic party and their defining features? What does the author mean when he distinguishes between economic issues and social/cultural issues?

Class 6:

DEEPER DISCUSSION

September 25 - October 1

Class 7:

- Crenson and Ginsberg, *DOWNSIZING DEMOCRACY*, ch. 4.

- Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser, *THE LOGIC OF AMERICAN POLITICS* (textbook), ch. 12 Political Parties.

Class 8:

REAGAN ARTICULATES MODERN CONSERVATISM

- N. Rae, "The Democrats' Presidential Weakness"
- Ginsberg and Shefter, *POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS*, "The Republican Offensive"

Q: Be ready to define the transformations discussed by Ginsberg and Shefter.

Q: What explanation for divided government is presented in the discussions of the McGovern-Fraser reforms of the nomination process? How do they explain why the majority party in Congress in the 1970s and 1980s consistently lost the Presidency?

Q: Why was Watergate a pyrrhic victory for the Democrats? When Democrats won in places they had always lost, due to the anti-GOP Watergate sentiment, what new constituency was introduced into the Democratic party's Congressional membership with those who were elected in 1974 and 1976?

Class 9:

- K. Baer, *REINVENTING DEMOCRATS*, "Counting on Clinton"
- Kernell, Jacobson and Kousser, *THE LOGIC ...*, ch. 11, Voting, Campaigns and Elections.

Q: Why does the 1992 experience suggest that Super Tuesday worked to solve the Democrats' left wing tilt?

Q: Extra Credit, 1 page: Since Cuomo and Bradley did not run, and Harkin's victory was discounted, did Super Tuesday really have to do the job it was designed for, specifically ...? So then, did Super Tuesday work?

October 2 - October 8

Class 10:

- Kernell, Jacobson and Kousser, *THE LOGIC ...*, ch. 2, ch. 9.

What was Shays' Rebellion and how did it have a long-lasting impact on our governance system? Was liberty or equality more important to the founders? What is the gist of Federalist 51 and Federalist 10?

Class 11:

- Kernell, Jacobson and Kousser, *THE LOGIC OF AMERICAN POLITICS* (textbook), ch. 10, Public Opinion.
- Recommended: M. Oreskes, "Study Finds 'Astonishing' Indifference to Elections," *NYT*, 5/6/90; A. Jones, "Survey Finds that Americans Want News," *NYT*, 7/15/90; R. Toner, "Turned Off by Politics," *NYT* 11/7/90. EXTRA CREDIT: Summarize the common themes of these three articles.

Class 12:

October 9 - October 15

CLASS 13:

FROM MADISON TO PLURALISM

- Crenson and Ginsberg, *DOWNSIZING DEMOCRACY*, ch. 5.
- A. Downs, *AN ECONOMIC THEORY OF DEMOCRACY*, "The Statics and Dynamics of the American Party System."

Be ready: Downs explains how the distribution of opinion helps to shape our two party system and you should be able to do this as well. But he also offers the view that the electoral institutions of our American system shape American public opinion. Be ready to explain this idea, that the electoral institutions of our two-party system shape the bell curve of public opinion. Include a few sentences on how this differentiates the US from Europe.

Class 14:

- Kernell, Jacobson and Kousser, *THE LOGIC ...*, ch. 13, Interest Groups.
- Crenson and Ginsberg, *DOWNSIZING DEMOCRACY*, ch. 6.

Be Ready: Do the world of interest groups provide access and representation for all citizens? Do the world of interest groups give a clear advantage to better organized interests that can overcome collective action problems OR do they provide advantages for the well off "haves," particularly corporate interests? These "minorities" are not the same as those protected by the 1960s Supreme Court, right?

Class 15:

- Crenson and Ginsberg, *DOWNSIZING DEMOCRACY*, ch. 7.

October 16 - October 22

Class 16: Midterm Break

Class 17:

- Kernell, Jacobson and Kousser, *THE LOGIC...*, ch. 6, Congress.
- Hamilton, "What I wish Political Scientists would teach about Congress."
- Silver and Gelman, "No Country ..."

Why do members of Congress stay in office for so long? How would this contribute to explaining the puzzle of Divided Government?

Class 18:

- Kernell, Jacobson and Kousser, *THE LOGIC ...*, ch. 7, Presidency, remaining pages.

Be Ready: What tools are available to Presidents to increase their public popularity and provide leverage vis a vis a hostile Congress in a period of divided government?

October 23 - October 29

Class 19:

- Kernell, Jacobson and Kousser, *THE LOGIC ...*, ch. 8, Bureaucracy.
- Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde, *CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN THE 2010 ELECTIONS*, ch. 3.

Q: What are the states that almost always vote Red and which ones almost always vote Blue?

Class 20

MIDTERM EXAM

Class 21

- Fiorina, Culture War?, chs. 1-4.

October 30 - November 5

Class 22:

- Fiorina, Culture War?, chs. 5-8

Q: Is there a Gender Gap in partisan preference? How does abortion contribute to the Culture Wars?

Class 23:

- M. Fiorina, Culture War? chs . 9-10

Class 24:

November 6 - November 12

Class 25:

- C. Caldwell, "The Southern Captivity of the GOP."
- Cook, "Suburbia: Land of Varied Faces."
- Meyerson, "The Rising Latino Tide."
- GOP Suburban Problem

Class 26:

- Teixeira, 2010 elections
- Canon, Six Reasons Obama Wins
- Trende, "Assessing the Obama Coalition,"
http://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2010/11/19/assessing_the_obama_coalition_part_ii_108014.html
- Lerer, "No Congress since the 1960s"

Class 27:

- Brownstein, "White Flight ... Obama"
- Gerson, "Why the Tea Party is Toxic for the GOP"

November 13 - November 19

Class 28:

Crenson and Ginsberg, *DOWNSIZING DEMOCRACY*, chs. 8-10.

Class 29:

IN CLASS FINAL EXAM today

and there will be a **second FINAL EXAM during the exam period.**