

Politics in America: Liberty and Equality
Professor Richard Keiser
Fall 2014

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 current 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 has been labeled "Red States vs. Blue States" and bases these reified divisions upon regional geography and place identity.

All readings are drawn from textbooks for sale in the bookstore (or far less expensively on the internet), appended to the Moodle, or are on e-reserve (Password is POSC). Additional readings that provide insight and depth but are not required can be found on e-reserve. Daily reading of the New York Times domestic sections is expected. You may obtain a subscription from the bookstore, read it in the library, or pick up free copies in Sayles to the extent that they are available.

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 decades.
- A second goal is to introduce students to social science inquiry, specifically to the logic of hypothesis formation and testing about causation. Three 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? (C) How would you evaluate the quality of representation of the many in our democracy?

Grading:

There will be an exam near midterm (30% of grade), another exam on the last day of class (30%), and an essay during the final exam period (30%) that will be your choice of a self-scheduled exam or a research essay. Remainder of the grade will be comprised by class participation and grades on unannounced quizzes (10%). One quiz grade will be dropped from the first half of the term only; missed quizzes cannot be made-up without a medical certification for absence. 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.

Cell phones should be OFF during class. Checking your email while peers are talking is very disrespectful (and impedes your ability to participate) and I reserve the right to look at the screen of any student using a laptop to insure that this affront is not taking place.

If you have questions about the readings, the lectures, and especially the research project, 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.

Class 1:

- Welcome! Welch et al., Understanding American Government (textbook), chs. 1-3. Have this read before entering class on the first day.

Q: Is the institutional arrangement of separation of powers designed to create swift, efficient public policy outputs or arduous and easily derailed policy outputs?

Class 2:

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

Questions that follow a Q are designed to help you focus your thinking and analysis about the reading. Most quizzes will be a paraphrase of these questions. Students are expected to come to class having given time to these questions. You do not have to write or submit answers, unless there is a quiz.

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

Q: How does divided government create an unclear picture for voters regarding whether the elected leaders of their party in Washington adequately represented their interests? How does this obstruct accountability?

Class 3: FDR and Economic Populism

- Welch et al., chs. 7.
- Read FDR's 1933 Inaugural Speech (find it on the Internet or E-reserve). In the first six paragraphs, who does FDR identify as the source of the problems of the Depression that plague the nation? Populism is rhetoric or framing that claims that your side represents the many, the majority and the other side is the few, usually an evil, tyrannical, or out of touch few. Obviously, if people can be persuaded that these delineations of the public are appropriate, populism can be an effective tool for aggregation and mobilization of latent majorities in a democracy. Like the Occupy Movement, or Nixon's Silent Majority?

- “Don’t Dare Call the Health Law Redistribution,” NYT (or the difference between the FDR era and the Obama era).
- J. Calmes, “Obama budget would expand low-income tax break,” NYT (March 4, 2014).
- M. Elk, “AFL-CIO President Trumka “Personally Outraged” by Obama-backed JOBS act,” *In These Times* (April 13, 2012).

Q: Is President Obama an economic populist (in either rhetoric or policy) like FDR?

Class 4:

- Welch et al., chs. 4-6.
- “Reaping profit after assisting on Health Law,” NYT.
-

Q: What do these chapters tell us about how uninformed Americans are about politics? If most people don’t know what is going on in DC, state capitals, or local governments, can they act together to represent a check on corrupt politicians or self-interested factions that form special interest groups whose goal is to pass laws that benefit the few at the expense of the many? Why do so few Americans vote, is it because nonvoters are the most satisfied with politics?

Q: What does the text tell us is the approximate proportion of voters who are truly Independent of partisan attachment? How are the percentages of Independents statistically enlarged and reduced, i.e., under what assumptions is the proportion of Independents much larger, and why do many scholars including the textbook authors have little hesitation in reducing these numbers?

Q: Split ticket voting is obviously related to, and synonymous with, divided government. But we should not consider it an explanation of divided government because it is merely a descriptive label of a voting pattern, not an explanation of that voting pattern. So we are still hunting for explanations for the rise of divided government.

Q: Note the geography-based explanations for the growth in polarization between the two parties.

Class 5: A Political/Racial Explanation for Divided Government, Part 1

- T. Edsall, “Race”
- N. Rae, “The South and American Party Factionalism”
- H. Raines, “George Wallace, Symbol of the Fight to Maintain Segregation, dies at 79,” *New York Times* (September 15, 1998).

Q: How does Edsall’s article present an explanation for the defection of voters from the Democratic Party to the Republicans, at the Presidential level, starting in the 1960s? Be prepared to explain in your own words. Why is it so crucial to stress that this defection was at the Presidential level?

Q: What are the 4 factions of the Democratic party and their defining features? Where do some of the four agree with each other, and what kinds of issues divide members of the Democratic big tent? Free trade and protectionism is merely one of these “wedge issues” but it is one that I want you to not skip in this chapter.

Be sure you grasp the argument of why economic issues are easier to resolve than ethical/cultural issues. Also, the text begins talking about changes in the institutional arrangements for nominating presidential candidates from each party. We will get to this next week, so it may be slightly confusing. You should try to list the attributes of the old system and the new system and the winners and losers of each system so that when we enter the discussion, you will be able to recall the previous material more easily.

Class 6: Friday discussion of current politics/New York Times.

Class 7: A Political/Rights Explanation of Divided Government

- Welch, et al., chs. 12-14.

Q: Pay attention to the Warren Court and consider how the court articulated positions that were not in accord with the majority view? Come to class prepared to explain how *Abington Township vs. Schempp*, *Griswold v. Connecticut*, and *Miranda v. Arizona* were cases in which the Warren Court ruled in favor of a minority rather than the majority. This will require your own research and initiative.

Class 8: A Structural Explanation for Divided Government

- B. Norrander, "Parties and Presidential Nominating Contests."
- J. W. Davis, "The Case Against the Current Primary-Centered System."
- "Republicans Tighten Grip on Debates in 2016 Race," *New York Times* (May 10, 2014).

Q: How did the McGovern-Fraser reforms change the rules and institutions of politics? The intended consequence of the reforms was to return the Democrats to the Presidency that they had in 1960 and 1964 by reconstituting their fraying coalition. The unintended consequence was devastating to the party because it created a nomination system that was heavily influenced by states that were not in the mainstream of the party (which? why?) and transferred power from party leaders (elected) to an unelected media elite. Think about these intended and unintended consequences of institutional/structural reform as you read the article. And remember, the meta-puzzle is divided government.

Q: The original 1988 Super Tuesday focused on Southern states including Texas, Florida and Georgia, Tennessee, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Kentucky and Alabama. How was this an attempt to undo the consequences of the McGovern-Fraser reforms' earliest two contests and return the Democrats to a big tent in the selection of their candidate rather than a narrow tent? How did Dukakis, a Northeastern Liberal, emerge as the big winner on Super Tuesday? What big states did he win on Super Tuesday? What is front-loading, and (think!) how does this help the candidates with the most money? Is that a positive?

Class 9: Friday discussion continues from previous class; bring those readings/notes.

- Welch, ch. 8.

Class 10: Divided Government in Practice

- [Ginsberg and Shefter](#), POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS, "The Republican Offensive"
- N. Rae, "The Democrats' Presidential Weakness"
- J. Harwood, "Democrats Seize on Social Issues as Attitudes Shift," *New York Times* (August 5, 2014).
- S. Saulny, "Republican women seek to play down social issues," *New York Times* (August 30, 2012).
- "Changing Demographics Spelling the End of Culture Wars," *Governing Magazine* (June 2013).

Q: The end of Rae's chapter is entitled "Waiting for Recession." Why did an economic recession prove to be the formula for enabling Bill Clinton to defeat George Bush – how did it paper over divisions in the big tent that Ginsberg and Shefter discuss (From Worker to Patriot, Southerner to Evangelical, Beneficiary to Taxpayer)? This focus on economics and avoidance of _____ (?) is why Clinton's team is famous for the phrase, "It's the Economy, Stupid!"

Q: The New York Times articles are contemporary and contrasting; don't get confused by the jump from

the 1980s to the present. How do they relate to the kinds of Big Tent stretching that is described in the two scholarly articles? What might these news pieces tell us about the contemporary GOP?

Class 11: Congress: The Broken Branch?

- Welch, et al., ch. 9.
- [Silver and Gelman](#), “No Country for Close Calls.”
- J. Zeleny, “GOP seeks Democratic seats on McCain Turf.” NYT 8/7/10.
- “The Split Districts,” Congressional Quarterly (March 23, 2009). *Research Topic!*
- “As Budget Fight Looms, Obama Sees Defiance in His Own Party,” NYT.

Q: In 2002 and 2004, House incumbents had a reelection rate of 99 percent. Only 7 percent of the elections (435 seats) were decided by a margin of less than 10 percent! In 2014 estimates range from 30 to 51 (6.8%-11.7% of 435) competitive elections. Why do members of Congress stay in office for so long (Make a long list of answers)? How could this help us explain the puzzle of Divided Government? Hint: Don't focus on Presidential elections as the anomaly.

Class 12: Friday discussion. Focus on contemporary politics, NYTimes. Please volunteer for each article.

- C. Hulse, “A Consensus in Washington but no action,” New York Times (April 25, 2014) AND C. Hulse, “‘Vote No, Hope Yes’ defines dysfunction in Congress,” NYT (February 13, 2014).
- R. Fausset, “In Mississippi, largess helped a Senator, until it hurt him,” New York Times (June 18, 2014) AND G. Collins, “Mississippi goes for the money,” New York Times (June 26, 2014).
- A. Parker, “Democrats, to counter GOP, turn their focus to local issues for midterms,” NYT (May 29, 2014) AND J. Martin, “Republicans replay 2010 strategy at state level,” New York Times (July 13, 2014) AND J. Weisman, “As Senate spotlight is given to vulnerable Democrats, GOP finds a dimmer,” New York Times (July 12, 2014).
- K. Kondik, “Senate Update: Domino Effects,” Sabato’s Crystal Ball 12:10 [122 Senate 2014 pdf] AND N. Cohn, “Goodbye to the Republican Wave?” New York Times (July 22, 2014).
- J. Rauch, “Where the Missing Middle Went,” National Journal (Feb. 17, 2006).

Class 13:

- J. Jackson and N. Clayton, “Leaders and Followers: Major Party Elites ... 1980-1992.” In J. Green and D. Shea, eds., *The State of the Parties* (NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996).
- J. Rauch, “Bipolar Disorder,” *The Atlantic Monthly* (Jan/Feb 2005).
- 122 Graph Money Polarizes Politics
- C. Schumer, “End Partisan Primaries, Save America,” New York Times (July 22, 2014).

Q: These articles offer a perspective on polarization that differentiates political activists from the other 70 percent of the population. What is the perspective?

Q: What factors at the congressional level (e.g., institutional rules, geography) have made it easier for members of Congress to not be politically and ideologically highly representative of their constituents? This question requires thinking and synthesizing course material.

Class 14: EXAMINATION: Identification of Terms and Explanation of Political Significance

Class 15: The GOP Divisions: Perils of Being a Big Tent (more opportunities to volunteer)

- “McCain Confronts Christian Right, Citing Divisiveness,” *NYT* (February 29, 2000).
- “Tea Party Choice scrambles in taking on Reid in Nevada,” *NYT* (August 18, 2010).
- “Some in GOP choose to return to Akin’s Corner,” *NYT* (10/07/12).
- “Democrat wins race for Senate in Indiana,” *NYT* (11/07/12).
- “North Carolina shows strains within the GOP,” *NYT* (04/13/14).
- “Oil industry’s taxes create odd wedge for Alaska voters,” *NYT* (08/18/14).
- “On Win Streak, mainline GOP takes tougher stance toward Tea Party,” *NYT* (06/01/14).
- “In talk show tour, Jeb Bush promotes ...” *NYT* (March 11, 2013).
- “Boehner Takes Heat from Club for Growth,” *CQ RollCall* (Sept. 3, 2013).
- A. Pantoja, “Latino Voters Strongly Reject house Republican Proposal on Border Crisis,” www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2014/08/01/latino-voters-reject-house-gop-border-proposal/
- N. Cohn, “Why Hispanics Don’t Have a Larger Political Voice,” *New York Times* (June 16, 2014).
- N. Cohn, “Why House Deportation Vote Won’t Hurt the GOP,” *New York Times* (August 5, 2014).
- J. Weisman, “On Immigration, GOP starts to embrace Tea Party,” *New York Times* (August 13, 2014).

Class 16: Midterm Break

Class 17: ADVANCED POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: WHERE THE VOTERS LIVE, SUBURBIA

- W. Schneider, “The Suburban Century Begins,” *Atlantic Magazine* (July 1992).
- J. F. Hale, “The Making of the New Democrats,” *Political Science Quarterly* 110:2 (1995).
- D. Carr, “Suburban Outrage,” *Twin Cities Reader* (11/24-30/93).
- “Obama, noting own student debt burden, expands repayment cap ...” *NYT* (June 10, 2014).

Q: Following Schneider, what is the difference between the Suburban strategy and a Southern strategy for the GOP? Which has roots that go back to George Wallace? Recall Rae’s discussion of Democratic Neoliberals and Regulars; which GOP strategy is more likely to capture each of these two groups of potential party defectors? Which strategy is more likely to appeal to lower income whites, ... to lower income African-Americans?

Q: Since the Clinton years, what are the recipes for success in non-Southern suburban districts? What are the recipes for suburban success in Southern states?

Class 18: ADVANCED POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: THE GOP Tent

- J. Brooke, “After elections, the Republicans are on top, of the Mountains,” *NYT* (November 9, 1998), *note date!*
- Weisberg, “Showdown at the GOP Corral.” *Slate* (2010).
- A. Nagourney, “A defiant rancher savors the audience that rallied to his side,” *New York Times* (April 24, 2014).
- “White House Calls for ban on mining in Rockies Habitat,” *New York Times* (02/04/99).
- “Clinton vs. Western interests encapsulated in battle over Missouri River,” *New York Times* (09/14/00).
- “Democrats expecting inroads in the West,” *New York Times* (10/25/02).

- “Fed up on the Prairie, and voting on seceding from Colorado,” New York Times (10/07/13).
- N. Cohn, “Southern whites’ loyalty to GOP nearing that of Blacks to Democrats,” New York Times (April 24, 2014).
- Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde, Continuity and Change in the 2012 elections, ch. 3.

Q: Name the states that almost always vote for the GOP (4 of 5 and 5 of 5) and those that almost always vote Blue in Presidential elections. Figure 3.3 in Abramson chapter!

Class 19: Further focus on Suburbia

- R. Cook, “Suburbia: Land of varied faces and a growing political force,” Congressional Quarterly (May 24, 1997). Research Topic !
- R. Cook, “Democrats and the White House: From Losing to Winning,” @ <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/democrats-and-the-white-house-from-losing-to-winning/>

Class 20: The Research Paper Option

Class 21: The Executive Branch

- Welch et al., chs. 10-11.
- "[Presidents on the Bureaucracy](#)"

Q: 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?

Class 22: From this point to the end of the term, our reading load is declining. You should use some of this extra time to begin organizing for the end of term exam that will be modeled on the midterm.

- J. Hacker and P. Pierson, Winner-Take-All Politics (course text), Introduction through ch. 3.

Class 23:

- Hacker and Pierson, chs. 4-5

Class 24:

- Hacker and Pierson, ch. 6 and Friday discussions

Class 25:

- Hacker and Pierson, ch. 7-8

Class 26:

- Hacker and Pierson, chs. 9-10-Conclusion
- “The Untied States of America,” *Governing* (June 2013).

Class 27: Continuity and Change in the Obama Coalition

- R. Brownstein, “The US has reached a demographic milestone and it’s not turning back,” National Journal (11/09/12), @ <http://www.nationaljournal.com/magazine/the-american-electorate-has-changed-and-there-s-no-turning-back-20121108>
- “12 from ’12: Some Takeaways from a wild election,” @ <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/12-from-12-some-takeaways-from-a-wild-election/>

Class 28: Democratic Party Tent

- “Democrats in coal country run from EPA,” (June 3, 2014).
- “Battle over fracking poses threat to Colorado Democrats,” NYT (June 10, 2014).
- S. Cook, “Democrats hide when asked about ending high-income loophole ... Social Security,” Remapping Debate (4/12/13) @ <http://truth-out.org/news/item/15702-democrats-hide>
- “If Affirmative Action is doomed, what’s next?” NYT (June 17, 2014).
- “Raising the Floor on Pay,” NYT (04/10/12).
- “Taking page from Health Care Act, Obama climate plan relies on states,” New York Times (June 3, 2014).
- “Populist left makes Warren its hot ticket,” NYT (9/30/13).
- A. Goodman, “Sen. Bernie Sanders: Supreme Court ... Billionaires to ‘Buy Elections’” @ <http://truth-out.org/news/item/22900-sen-bernie-sanders>
- “CEO pay continues to rise as typical workers are paid less,” EPI Issue Brief (#380, June 12, 2014).
- “Voting Restrictions are key variable in Midterm Elections,” NYT (Sept. 4, 2014).
- “2 Sides cite discrimination as battle on Texas voting law heads to court,” NYT (Sept. 2, 2014).
- “Students joining battle to upend laws on voter ID,” NYT (July 6, 2014).

Class 29:

- In class EXAMINATION: Identification of Terms and Explanation of Political Significance

FINAL ESSAY EXAM SCHEDULED DURING FINALS PERIOD