Politics in America: Liberty and Equality  
Professor Richard Keiser  
Winter 2010  
  
Overview:  
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 factors that seem to explain our current political alignment and are likely to predict the future leadership and direction of our country, for better or worse.   
  
All readings are drawn from textbooks for sale in the bookstore or are on e-reserve. 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 second goal is to introduce students to social science inquiry, specifically to the logic of hypothesis formation and testing about causation. What is the role of institutional rules in explaining electoral outcomes such as divided government? What is the role of individual attributes, like race, class or gender in political affiliation or electoral behavior? What about factors like region or culture? And does membership in organizations like unions or parties explain behavior?  
  
Grading:  
Exams will be given at the midterm (20% of grade) and end of term (40% of grade). There will also be a research paper of 10-15 pages of text in addition to data tables (30%). Remainder of the grade will be comprised by class attendance and grades on assignments and unannounced quizzes. One quiz grade will be dropped. It is your responsibility to makeup missed quizzes prior to the next class session.  
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. All students requiring academic accommodations should notify the instructor well in advance.  
  
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 posted in the first week; 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.

**January 3 - January 9**

THE RHETORIC OF AMERICAN POPULISMS  
1/4: First Inaugural speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt , http://www.hpol.org/fdr/inaug,   
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.  
**Assignment**: *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?  
  
AMERICA’S RIGHT TURN: THE REPUDIATION OF LIBERALISM  
1/6: W. C. Berman, America’s Right Turn (course text), ch.1  
N. Rae, “The South and American Party Factionalism”  
J. Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government" (link below)  
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? Why is the period from 1968 forward seen as **unique and irregular** in American history?  
  
1/8: T. Edsall, “Race” AND Berman, ch. 2  
Recommended: J. Kasarda, “Urban Industrial Transition”  
Q: Who was Governor George Wallace? How does his career capture the difficulties that the Democrats faced in keeping together the FDR coalition in the post LBJ world? You may want to find an obituary of the man rather than relying on the first hit of your web browser.

**January 10 - January 16**

REAGAN ARTICULATES MODERN CONSERVATISM  
1/11: N. Rae, “The Democrats’ Presidential Weakness” AND Berman, ch. 3  
Q: What second explanation for divided government is presented in the discussions of the McGovern-Fraser reforms of the nomination process?  
  
Q: Why was Watergate a pyrrhic victory for the Democrats? What new force was introduced into the Democratic party’s Congressional membership with those who were elected in 1974 and 1976?  
  
1/13: Berman, chs. 4-5  
Q: Factions of the GOP? In the absence of global communism, what can unite the wings of the GOP? Consider what might be called military Keynesianism, page 91.  
  
1/15: Ginsberg and Shefter, “The Republican Offensive”  
Berman, ch. 6  
Q: Be ready to define the transformations discussed by Ginsberg and Shefter.

**January 17 - January 23**

1/18: Review  
  
1/20: Berman, ch. 7 and Conclusion   
K. Baer, “Counting on Clinton”  
Recommended: P. Starobin, “Party Hoppers,” National Journal (2/7/08), 276-281.  
Q: Why does the 1992 experience suggest that Super Tuesday worked to solve the Democrats' left wing tilt?   
Q: Deeper Thinking: 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? So then, Super Tuesday didn't work?  
Q: Check the web for details on the incident involving Sister Souljah and Bill Clinton.  
  
1/22: T. Frank, chs. 2, 5, 6, 10. Recommended: Dreyfuss, “Just the Beginning”  
**Assignment**: What does Frank think is the paradox of Kansas and what explains this paradox?  
We may discuss the essay and debate questions below during class.

**January 24 - January 30**

THEORIES OF U.S. DEMOCRACY  
  
Pluralist Theory:   
1/25: T. Dye and H. Zeigler, The Irony of Democracy (course text), chs. 1-2.   
Q: Define "rally around the flag." Define the differences between Elitism and Pluralism. 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? Great day for a Quiz.  
  
Elitist Theory:   
1/27: Dye and Ziegler, chs. 4 and 6.  
Q: In class, we will discuss Federalist 10.  
  
1/29: Dye and Ziegler, ch. 5 and 9 and web page below ("Long standing assessment")  
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.

**January 31 - February 6**

Pluralist Rejoinder: Parties not Individuals  
2/1: A. Downs, “The Statics and Dynamics of the American Party System.”  
**Assignment**: 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. Explain this idea, that the electoral institutions of our two-party system shape the bell curve of public opinion, in one page. Include a few sentences on how this differentiates the US from Europe.  
  
Elitist Rejoinder:   
2/3: J. Judis, “The Pressure Elite;” Dye and Zeigler, ch. 7; and webpage NYTimes article below (The Estate Tax).  
Recommended: J. Jackson and N. Clayton, “Leaders and Followers.”   
  
2/5: Dye and Zeigler, ch. 12. Why do members of Congress stay in office for so long? How would this contribute to explaining the puzzle of Divided Government?

**February 7 - February 13**

2/8: MIDTERM BREAK  
  
2/10: MIDTERM EXAMINATION  
  
ELECTIONS AMERICAN STYLE  
2/12: Abramson, chs. 11-12.

**February 14 - February 20**

2/15: Library Session on Electoral Politics research  
Dye and Ziegler, chs. 8 and 13  
  
  
2/17: Dye and Zeigler, chs. 10-11 and "Presidents on the Bureaucracy" link.  
Q: Familiarize yourself with the Executive Office of the President. Think about the virtues of patronage vs. merit bureaucrats. **AssignmentS***:*

* *Why do Presidential appointees "go native," particularly in GOP administrations?*
* What solution does the text offer for the problem of future Social Security insolvency? Has this been tried before? Would it produce opposition from the majority of Americans?

2/19: Nelson, The Elections of 2008, chs. 2 and 8.

**February 21 - February 27**

2/22: Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde, ch. 3; Nelson, ch. 4.  
Q: What are the states that almost always vote Red and which ones almost always vote Blue?  
  
2/24: First Draft of Paper due in class. Bring 3 copies, one of which will be turned in. Penalty for failure to follow these directions.  
  
2/26: Fiorina, Culture War?, chs. 1-4.

**February 28 - March 6**

3/1: Fiorina, Culture War?, chs. 5-8  
Q: Is there a Gender Gap in partisan preference? How does abortion contribute to the Culture Wars?  
  
  
3/3: M. Fiorina, Culture War? chs . 9-10; Nelson, ch. 7.  
  
3/5: Nelson, chs. 5 and 9.

**March 7 - March 13**

3/8: Discussion of Iron Triangles and the weakness of Regulatory Agencies vis a vis Congress and those they regulate.  
  
3/10: Research Paper Due in Class.  
Exam Review. There will be a two hour final exam during the exam period.