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 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), a research project of ten to fifteen pages (25%, see Classes 18 & 19), 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.

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 will take the liberty of looking 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!

Class 2:

- 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 political leaders of their party in either the Presidency or Congress adequately represented their interests? How does this obstruct accountability?

Class 3

- Welch et al., Understanding American Government (textbook), chs. 1-3.

Q: In what way does the Constitution seem to set the table for divided government outcomes? Yet the Constitution was not enacted in the late 20th century!

Class 4:

- Welch et al., chs. 4-6.
- latimesblogs.latimes.com/money_co/2009/01/obama-roosevelt.html

Q: How informed are Americans about politics? Are average people attentive enough 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?

Class 5: FDR and Economic Populism

- Welch et al., chs. 7.

Class 6: Friday discussion.

Class 7: DISINTEGRATION OF A BIG TENT COALITION

- T. Edsall, “Race”
- N. Rae, “The South and American Party Factionalism”

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 8: Personal Holy Day, Yom Kippur

Class 9:


Q: Did the actions of the Warren Court (and by extension Democratic Presidents JFK and LBJ) articulate positions that were in accord with the majority view? Beyond total recall of the cases mentioned, come to class having also investigated Abington Township vs. Schempp.

Class 10: REAGAN ARTICULATES MODERN CONSERVATISM

- N. Rae, “The Democrats’ Presidential Weakness”
- Ginsberg and Shefter, POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS, “The Republican Offensive”
- Mellow, “Sun Belt Rising”

Q: If the target of the FDR’s New Deal was the cabal of evil bankers and selfish corporate leaders, what easily identified, relatively circumscribed “group” was the cause of all problems according to Reagan?

Class 11:

- Welch, ch. 8.
- Apple, Iowa’s Weighty Caucus
- Beinart, Iowa Caucus
- Black, Ready, Set, Nominate

Q: What prompted the reform of the delegate selection process that ended the era of smoke-filled rooms and replaced them with primary momentum? What happened to turnout during this
transition? Why does the text suggest that the big losers have been the political parties themselves? Who is the big beneficiary of these reforms?

Class 12: Friday discussion

Class 13: Continue discussion of Institutional Reforms of the Presidential Nomination Process


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

Class 15: Friday discussion

Class 16: Midterm Break

Class 17: DEMOCRATIC RESURGENCE, OR PERFECT STORM FLUKE?

- J. Hale, “The Making of the New Democrats,”
- K. Baer, REINVENTING DEMOCRATS, “Counting on Clinton”

Q: Why does the 1992 experience suggest that Super Tuesday worked to solve the Democrats' left wing tilt? Which strong liberal (like McGovern, Mondale or Dukakis) did Clinton defeat on the road to the nomination?

Class 18: ADVANCED POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: RED, OR MAROON AND PINK?

- J. Maggs, “Divided We Stand.”
- Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde, CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN THE 2010 ELECTIONS, ch. 3.

Q: Name the states that almost always vote Red and which ones almost always vote Blue. Figure 3.3 in Abramson.

Project: Are the Red States of the Rocky Mountains different in their conservatism than the Southern Red States?

Class 19: ADVANCED POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY: WHERE THE VOTERS LIVE, SUBURBIA

- W. Schneider, “In Suburbia, It’s New Republicanism,” National Journal, 26:43 (October 22, 1994), p. 2490. You will need to use the databases off the library page to find this. National Journal is a top quality political magazine. What database?
- Rhodes Cook, "Suburbia: Land of Varied Faces."

Project: Since the Clinton years, what are the recipes for success in non-Southern suburban districts? Empirically, which party – and what kinds of candidates stressing what kinds of issues – is winning in these suburbs?

Class 20: Congress: The Broken Branch?

- Welch, et al., chs. 9-10.
• Silver and Gelman, “No Country for Close Calls.”

Q: 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?

Class 21: Friday discussion

Class 22: The Executive Branch

• Welch et al., chs. 11-12.
• "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 24: Friday discussions

Class 25: Dalton, chs. 5-8

Class 26: Election Review, comparison to Abramson, Aldrich, Rohde map of Red vs. Blue states, see class 18.

Class 27: Dalton, chs. 9-10

Class 28: TBA

Class 29: TBA