Liberty and Equality in American Government is an introduction to American Politics. This course assumes that the student has some familiarity with US history since the Great Depression as well as our two party system and federal structure. The course will focus on discussions of our readings and these discussions will enable us to gain a far deeper understanding of the materials. Therefore, reading and class attendance are imperative.

We will focus on a variety of topics in this course, including the election of President Donald Trump, the changes in the electoral coalitions of the Republican and Democratic Parties since the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1932), the political causes of sharply increased economic inequality, and a few ideas about political reforms that may become more relevant in your lifetimes.

Our class conversations will necessarily raise divisive, polarizing and even sometimes uncomfortable topics that will involve challenges to what may be already settled opinions you hold. This class aims to consciously take students beyond the Carleton bubble, yet we will do this within the safety and shared community of the College. In some instances the complications that come from new perspectives and information may lead to an evolution or change in your perspective on politics and history; in other instances such challenges may enable you to be a far more articulate and persuasive proponent of previously held perspectives, better able to anticipate and overcome disagreements. If you do not want to have your opinions challenged, if you do not want to be intellectually uncomfortable, drop the course, now.

POSC 122 will be taught by other instructors next year and many other courses at Carleton College satisfy the same requirements as this course.

All readings are drawn from textbooks for sale in the bookstore (or far less expensively on the internet), or appended to the Moodle. Daily reading of the New York Times domestic sections is an excellent way to see the connections between our historical analysis and contemporary politics. You may obtain a subscription directly from the New York Times at a heavily discounted student rate, read it in the library, or pick up free copies in Sayles or Weitz to the extent that they are available.

Grading will be based on attendance and class participation (20%), a Midterm examination (40%) and a Final examination (40%).

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 or class discussions, 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: Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding US politics

- Welcome!

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: Is the institutional arrangement of separation of powers designed to create swift, efficient public policy outputs or arduous and easily derailed policy outputs that are likely to produce gridlock? Wherever you see the word gridlock in the text, slow down and take some notes about causes.

Q: Political Science emphasizes institutions (p. 6). Think of two or three institutional rules that dramatically affect electoral turnout and election outcomes.

Q: Pluralist and Elite Theories will be a continuing part of the course to the very last class. Be sure to grasp the definitions (p. 5). They are our two competing answers to the question, *Who Governs?*

Q: Figures 1.3A-B and 1.4 should be studied, not skipped.

Q: Delegate vs. Trustee is an important distinction that you should think about in terms of when an elected official is more likely to behave in one manner vs. the other.

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 or the ability to assess performance and reward or punish office holders? If it becomes harder to know how to vote, based on assessment, what is likely to be the result for voting behavior?

Class 2: Public Opinion, Interest Groups and Parties

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 6-7.

Q: How are the two separate ideas of framing effects and bandwagon effects derivative of and dependent on low levels of knowledge about politics by the mass public (the nonattitudes perspective)? Or put another way, on issues about which you know a ton, are you likely to be susceptible to framing effects or bandwagon effects?

Q: Think about the Delegate-Trustee dichotomy in the light of mass nonattitudes.

Class 3: Interest Groups and Parties: cues for reducing complexity and enabling participation
Class 4: Congress and Divided Government: if incumbency preempts Congressional change but the President’s party does change ...

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 9.
- J. Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government" (link below)
  The colored fold-out at the back of the text book helps you to visualize the shift to divided government that this article discusses, and illustrates the continuity of this problem beyond the article.

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

Q: How does divided government promote gridlock? 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 5: Campaigns and Elections: Presidential elections

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 8.
- J. W. Davis, “The Case Against the Current Primary-Centered System.”

Class 6: A Political/Racial Explanation for Divided Government, Part 1

- T. Edsall, “Race”
- Morone & Kersh, ch. 5

Q: How does Racial division produce the election of a Republican president and divided government?

Class 7: A Cultural/Rights Explanation of Divided Government, Part 2

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 4.
- Ginsberg and Shefter, Politics by other Means (“The Republican Offensive”)
- K. Baer, Reinventing Democrats, ch. 7 (“Counting on Clinton”)

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, Mapp vs. Ohio, and Miranda v. Arizona were cases in which the Warren Court ruled in favor of a minority rather than the majority. What years were these cases and was there divided government? This will require your own research and initiative.

Q: And what are the new culture wars in the Trump era?

Class 8:

Prior to class, listen to podcast from This American Life, "Will I know anyone at this party?"

https://www.thisamericanlife.org/600/will-i-know-anyone-at-this-party

Q: Be prepared to write your thoughts and reactions to each of the segments from this podcast! You may use your notes.

Q: For what economic reasons have the corporate sectors of the GOP historically favored a steady flow of immigrants, both low-skilled and high-skilled? And why was the old Democratic Party in favor of slowing, regulating, and limiting the numbers of low-skilled immigrants?

Class 9: TBA (you should be preparing for the exam)

Class 10: **Midterm Examination in Class**

Class 11: Presidency and Bureaucracy

- Morone & Kersh, chs. 11-12

Class 12:

- TRUMPED, chs. 5-9 (course text). Italicized questions are also the most likely quiz questions.

5. What causes might explain high turnout in the 2016 presidential primaries? What would you expect the turnout picture to be in the 2020 primaries, and why? Over the course of a long calendar of primaries, what might explain fluctuations in turnout rates?

What characteristics differ for primary voters vs. general election voters?

6. Are issues of intersectionality relevant to the debate over whether Trump voters are racially-motivated vs. economically-resentful?

7. The Hillary-Bernie split continues to divide and hobble the Democratic Party. Think about the economic class status and educational status of these two camps as you read this chapter.

8. Rather than a prompt, what idea or argument in this chapter seems important or surprising?
9. How might a voter object to the scholarly attempt to separate economic populism sentiments from anti-immigration sentiments? Is there a specific example that you can cite of economic populism that is not synonymous with anti-immigration and xenophobic sentiments?

What was the internal assessment of the Republican Party of their 2012 defeat (Obama v. Romney)?

Class 13

- **TRUMPED, chs. 1-4.**

1. We know Presidents can only serve two terms yet the chapter discusses the potential for third terms. Explain. Why is this relevant to an explanation of Trump’s election? Perusing the voluminous data in this chapter’s tables, pick one comparative statistic and be ready to explain why this is deserving of further consideration.

2. Why is the variable of education level not particularly useful as an indicator of where Trump gained over previous GOP presidential candidates? What does this tell us about single-election, electoral snapshot analyses?

> The text discusses voters that are “distributed inefficiently.” What does this mean and who are the inefficiently distributed?

3. What have states done to increase their autonomy from “presidential coattails?” Why was there a “much worse map” for the Democrats than the GOP in the 2018 Senate elections?

4. Describe the electoral anomaly (inequity?) that redistricting/gerrymandering has produced. Has this always produced a Republican advantage?

> What is the typical pattern of outcomes in midterm elections? Be careful about the difference between Party X losing the election and Party X losing ground in the election.

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Class 14

- **TRUMPED, chs. 10-14.**

10. From the scholarly perspective of trying to understand voting behavior, why should we care, i.e., what is the relevance, of knowing how many voters decide in the last weeks of the election? Conversely, from the perspective of explaining the narrow and surprising victory of Donald Trump, why is it relevant that voters who made up their minds in the final days favored Trump?

> What is the relevance of the story about the 1975 Public Affairs Act? What does this tell us about public opinion, knowledge, malleability, and the salience of polling data?

11. As users of Social Media, are there particular passages – please quote – from this chapter that resonate with you as correct and insightful or evoke deep skepticism from you?

12. Does this chapter confirm that the candidate who raises the most money and spends the most money typically wins the election?

13. After this chapter, what are your thoughts on the tangle between racial resentment and economic discontent? Is this an academic issue or does it also have real-world policy consequences?
14. *What seems to be the claim of the “emerging Democratic majority” thesis?* If a Republican presidential candidate agreed with this thesis, what strategies would they pursue?

Are these three chapters in agreement or disagreement with each other in their discussion of Hispanic voters?

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**Class 15:**

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

**Class 16:**

- Hacker and Pierson, chs. 4-5.

**Class 17:**

Hacker and Pierson, ch. 6-8. *There is one italicized question below, and many others that you should be prepared to answer.*

Is the story about Bill Brock or about organization?

Electoral Spectacle resurfaces 174. Find definition of this from earlier chapter and then compare to this usage.

On 179 we again see this term postmaterialism. What was the earlier definition and does this usage help you to understand the meaning?

Was Reagan about tax cuts? 187-88

What do tax increases have to do with social security 188?

Chuck Schumer, should Progressives love him and be led by him?

Clinton and W. expansion of the top 1% 194 Bipartisan? Is there a party of the 99%, or the working class

Glass Steagall 197. This policy is discussed in every presidential election cycle. Explain it.

200-201, 204. In terms of policies, not voters, is the Trump GOP in accord with past Republicans?

FUTURE EVOLUTION OF PARTIES QUESTION, Will a populist/working class party, perhaps multiracial, emerge to face an upper middle class and higher party?

207-08 Explain RINO Hunters, Club for Growth, Americans for Tax Reform and their impact on polarization. At what electoral juncture are they most powerful? Is Tom Steyer much different, or EMILY’s List?

TAX CUTS heavily skewed to rich, no longer tax cuts and spending increases paired together or tax hikes and spending cuts. 212-214
Class 18:

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 3.
- Hacker and Pierson, chs. 9-10-Conclusion
- “The Untied States of America,” Governing (June 2013).

Class 19: Review

Class 20: In Class End of Term Exam