Politics in America: Liberty and Equality
Professor Richard Keiser
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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 <u>not required</u> 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. 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 (30% of grade), another exam on the last day of class (30%), and an essay during the final exam period (30%). 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 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!

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. Any quiz 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 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

- **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.**

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.**
- **Read FDR's 1933 Inaugural Speech (find it). In the first six paragraphs, who does FDR identify as the source of the problems of the Depression that plague the nation?**

Class 6: Friday discussion.

- **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 umbers?**
- **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.**
- **Note the geography-based explanations for the growth in polarization between the two parties.**
- **Is the Tea Party some new phenomenon, or just another iteration of Purists?**

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? 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 8:

- **Welch, et al., chs. 12-14 (older textbook volume 13-15).**

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 9: Friday discussion

Class 10: REAGAN ARTICULATES MODERN CONSERVATISM

- **Ginsberg and Shefter, POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS, "The Republican Offensive"**
- **Apple, "Iowa's Weighty Caucus"**
- **Beinart, Iowa Caucus**
- **Black, "Ready, Set, Nominate"**

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.

Q: How was Super Tuesday an attempt to undo the consequences of the McGovern-Fraser reforms 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?

Class 11:

- **Welch, ch. 8.**
- **N. Rae, "The Democrats' Presidential Weakness"**
- **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?

Q: 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? This is why Clinton's team is famous for the phrase, "It's the Economy, Stupid!"

Class 12: Friday discussion

Class 13: Continue discussion of Institutional Reforms of the Presidential Nomination Process and links to Divided Government and Congressional Polarization

- **Jackson and Clayton, "Leaders and Followers: Major Party Elites, Identifiers and Issues."**
- **M. Fiorina, "America's Moderates: Hidden in Plain Sight," The American Interest**
  http://www.the-american-interest.com/article.cfm?piece=1380

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?

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.**
- **G. Giroux, "Democrats' 2008 Strategy Has a Mountain View." CQ Weekly (August 1 2005): 2096-98.**
- **A. Bettelheim, "Democrats Look West for Mile-High Gains." CQ Weekly (January 15, 2007): 167-68.**
- **J. Healy, "National Debate on Gun Control Hits Home in Colorado Recall." NYT (September 3, 2013).**

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

Q: 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, "Democrats and the White House: From Losing to Winning." http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/articles/democrats-and-the-white-house-from-losing-to-winning/**

Q: 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., ch. 9 (9 and 10 in older text).**
- **Silver and Gelman, "No Country for Close Calls."**
- **J. Zeleny, "GOP seeks Democratic seats on McCain Turf." NYT 8/7/10.**

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? Hint: Don't focus on Presidential elections as the anomaly.

Class 21: The Executive Branch

- **Welch et al., chs. 10-11 (11 and 12 in older text).**
- **"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.**

Class 26:

- **Hacker and Pierson, chs. 8-9**

Class 27:

- **Hacker and Pierson, chs. 10-Conclusion**

Class 28:

- **Final Exam Review**

Class 29:

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

FINAL ESSAY EXAM SCHEDULED DURING FINALS PERIOD