Liberty and Equality  
POSC 122 – Winter 2017  
Carleton College  
(MW 9:50-11:00 a.m. & F 9:40-10:40)  
WCC 233

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Office Hours: Monday and Thursday 1-3 pm or by appt.

Course Description

This course introduces the basic structures, processes, and conflicts of the American system of government. First, we will talk about the big ideas and issues for which consensus and disagreement exist in the current U.S. political landscape. After we have set the stage, we will turn to the founding of the nation to better understand our governmental institutions, identity as a nation, and some of the country’s most core and long-lasting conflicts. We will explore the key federal institutions that constrain and shape political processes. Following this section, the course shifts its focus from elites and institutions to citizens and the ways in which mass preferences are transmitted to government actors to produce actual policy. We will examine the development of rules that protect individual citizens from the government (civil liberties) and from the majority (civil rights). What opinions, characteristics, and behaviors of citizens are relevant to politics? We will grapple with the questions of whether or not fair and full democratic representation of citizens exists and if it is even possible? Finally, the last section examines interest groups and the policy outputs of the American political process. Ultimately the goal of this course is to give you the basic tools needed so you will be better able to analyze, interpret, and potentially shape political events and governmental processes.

Notes

You are expected to read the entire syllabus at the beginning of the term.

Please be aware that this syllabus contains hyperlinks. While you are encouraged to print out a hardcopy to read and reference through the term, you will also want to have an electronic version to easily access all external websites and resources.
Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify and understand the structure and processes of federal U.S. government institutions;
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system;
- Understand some of the foundational theories of political institutions and behaviors;
- Critically analyze political inputs (public opinion, elections, etc.) and outputs (policy, news reports, etc.).

Class Structure and Expectations

This term, each class will be highly structured, yet hopefully in a way that will give a high degree of involvement to everyone in the class. I do NOT want this class to be one where the professor stands in the front of the room next to a powerpoint presentation while students remain passive observers. As a result, each class will roughly follow the following format:

- Reading Quiz and Feedback (ten minutes)
- Current Events Discussion (ten minutes) (not on Fridays)
- Mini Lecture (25 minutes)
- Class Discussion (25 minutes)

The reading quiz is discussed in more detail below, but the main goal of this exercise is to ensure you have the basic terminology and conceptual building blocks needed to take the topic to a higher level during class discussion. Current events discussions will be student-led and not necessarily connected to the topic of the day but should be designed to help us think more critically about the world around us. Mini-Lectures will be varied in design: they may involve some sort of activity, delve deeper into a concept, introduce ideas or cutting edge research not found in your readings, or present a particular thesis regarding the broad topic of the day. Finally, during class discussions, I, as the professor, will take a step back and let you as a class take charge. Discussions can draw on the discussion questions provided for each lecture topic or they can be based on questions that arise naturally in conversation. Two “devil’s advocates” will be assigned to help challenge our assumptions, perceptions, and question consensus/authority during these discussion periods.

To facilitate insightful and interesting discussions, you are required to complete the assigned readings before each class and contribute to class discussions. I also encourage you to pay attention to a quality daily newspaper (recommended papers include The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The Hill, and The Wall Street Journal).

Required Readings

Grading

Note that most of your assignments will be submitted electronically via Moodle. It is your responsibility to make sure the file is not corrupted (you should be able to download and view the file after you upload it to Moodle). Corrupted files will be treated as though they are late until they are correctly uploaded. Your grade will be based on the following:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion and Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Participation</td>
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<td>Current Events Discussion Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Devil's Advocate Discussion and Response Paper</td>
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<td>Enrichment Activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Quizzes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytical Paper</td>
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<td>Local Politics Group Project</td>
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<td>Midterm</td>
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| Total                                           | 100%       |

Discussion and Participation 10%

Overall Participation 2%

The overall participation grades will be determined by the quality, not just quantity, of comments/questions in class discussion.

Current Events Discussion Leader 3%

DUE: 11:59 THE EVENING of the day you were assigned to be the Current Events Discussion Leader

SUBMISSION FORMAT: Submit to Moodle (if you are using .pages, please convert to .pdf before submitting)

You will be assigned as a current events discussion leader for one of the lectures. The ten minutes each class will be reserved for class discussion of a current event. You will be responsible for picking one current event to talk about, reading up on the event, briefly summarizing the event verbally in class, and then posing a discussion question for the class to help us delve into the implications of the event or connected to some concept addressed in readings or lecture.

After you have served as discussion leader, you must submit on Moodle by 11:59 p.m. THAT SAME EVENING a document with the title/links to at least one article/media regarding the current event you chose and the discussion question you presented in class.

Grading Criteria

1. Kept within 10 minute time limit.
2. Summary of event was brief and helped quickly bring everyone on board.
3. Discussion question pushed us to a higher level of critical thinking, conceptual application, etc.
Devil’s Advocate Discussion and Response Paper 5%

DUE: 11:59 ONE WEEK after you were assigned to the Devil’s Advocate role
SUBMISSION FORMAT: Submit to Moodle (if you are using .pages, please convert to .pdf before submitting)

For one class in the term, you and another individual will be assigned to play the role of “devil’s advocate.” This assignment is twofold in purpose. First, while there are a wide variety of experiences and perspectives at Carleton, it is sometimes difficult to get a wide range of opinions expressed in group settings. This exercise is designed to raise opinions and perspectives that might not naturally be voiced. Second, this experience is designed to help you and others think more critically about the materials covered in this course. As the “devil’s advocate” you are not only supposed to challenge the dominant (in class and/or society) opinion regarding issues, but also the authority figures (professor/academics/media), the validity/reliability of the data presented, and assumptions made in class or in discussion. Your role is to keep us on our toes! While asking hard questions or pushing us to think about things from another angle is your main job, you should also try to accurately represent perspectives that may not be your own. As a result, you should prepare for this role by exploring news media you might not normally read, checking out opinion polls, or doing the readings with the aim of seeing the “other” side for the topic corresponding to your assigned day. Finally, as the “devil’s advocate,” you will be required to wear a pair of sparkly devil horns in class that day. The purpose of this is to remind other students that you may be saying things you do not personally agree with to help us have a more productive discussion.

Write a 1-2 page double-spaced response paper regarding your experience as devil’s advocate. Select at least one topic related to the lecture of the day and briefly address the different sides of the opinion/claims/research. Due by 11:59 pm ONE WEEK after you were assigned to the Devil’s Advocate role.

Grading Criteria

1. Content (60%): Draws on empirically grounded and logical claims (cite polls and news articles)
2. Balance (10%): Provides a balanced description of at least two competing opinions/perspectives. Does not belittle or pass judgement on either perspective.
3. Style (10%): Clear structure. Can be broken into short unconnected sections if needed. Clean in terms of grammar and spelling. Consistent citation style (footnote with links is acceptable).
4. In-Class Discussion (20%): Comments in class were insightful and germane to the discussion. Devil advocate’s comments stimulated more discussion.

Enrichment Activities 2%

As announced. For the most part, these activities are graded purely on participation, not content, as they are designed to make lectures more interesting and enjoyable.
Reading Quizzes 3%

To ensure you have mastered the building block concepts required for insightful and critical class sessions, short reading quizzes covering the materials in your reading will be conducted at the beginning of each lecture. The quizzes will be self-graded in class (feedback will be presented immediately after the quiz) and then turned in to help you effectively encode the basic terms and ideas. Bring a different colored pen to class. The two lowest scores will be dropped.

Analytical Paper 15%

DUE: Friday, February 10 at at 11:59 p.m.
SUBMISSION FORMAT: Submit to Moodle (if you are using .pages, please convert to .pdf before submitting)

Your paper should draw on specific examples, be thoughtful, logical, and concise. You should have a clear thesis that you then support in the following paper. You must address each of the questions asked. Papers should be 6-7 pages long, double-spaced, using Times New Roman 12 point font, and the margins should be 1-inch. You are encouraged to draw on other readings or web-based resources, but you must cite any ideas or materials that are not your own. You must clearly cite your sources using the American Political Science Association citation style. For more information see http://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/Publications/APSAStyleManual2006.pdf

Institutions are defined by Douglass North in Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performances as “the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction.” From this perspective, political institutions can be thought of as rules of the game. And as anyone who has played Calvinball knows, rules have the ability to shape outcomes.

For this paper you will consider the U.S. Constitution from the perspective that rules can shape outcomes. The American Constitution serves as an example of an institution that was carefully and strategically constructed to produce certain desired outcomes.

While the Constitution was structured to be relatively stable and difficult to change, there are four general paths by which constitutional alterations may be made. They include judicial review, statutory laws and acts of Congress, executive orders, and amendments. Drawing on these routes:

- Select one current provision in the U.S. Constitution that you think should be reformed (NOT THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE). Or think of a new amendment that should be added to the Constitution.
- Why would you change/add the rule and what specific changes would you make?
- What is the most likely path this constitutional alteration would follow?
- How would this reform change the existing balance of power? Would it produce a democratic expansion or contraction?

Grading Criteria

1. Content (70%)
   - Thesis makes sense, is focused, easily found, accurately voices main idea of project
   - Demonstrates critical thinking
   - Addresses all questions
(a) Select Constitutional provision to reform/add
(b) Why would you change rule?
(c) How could this reform be brought about?
(d) What are the possible implications of the reform?
   • Supports claims with logical and relevant evidence
   • Clearly defines terms and concepts

2. Structure and Style (30%)
   • Strong in terms of grammar and spelling
   • Clear, logical organization and transitions
   • Engages reader

Local Politics Group Project 10%

DUE: Monday, Mar. 6 at 9:00 a.m.
SUBMISSION FORMAT: Powerpoint slides submitted on Moodle (may want to convert to pdf to ensure formatting).

Suppose a local politician approached you concerned about the tone of conversation and interactions in the local city council meetings. This local politician wants to know what recommendations political scientists might have to help improve the quality of discourse and ability of people with different goals and preferences to work together in a civil manner. In teams of 3 (10 groups), you will research this question and develop at least five recommendations.

For this assignment, you are required to research the general topic as applied to the local government of Northfield. **First**, you need to analyze city council meetings. To do this, you can peruse city council minutes, local newspaper articles, attend current city council meetings, or interview members of the community. Why are some meetings more contentious than others? From your observations what seems to work and what doesn’t?

Some Possible Resources

• Recording and commentary on a city council meeting:  [click here].
• League of Women Voters, Northfield  [http://lwvnorthfieldmn.org/](http://lwvnorthfieldmn.org/)
• Northfield City Council Files  [goo.gl/6rMoLA](http://goo.gl/6rMoLA)
• Northfield.org  [http://northfield.org/](http://northfield.org/)
• Northfield City Council Meetings (1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month)  

**Second**, you need to conduct a search of political science research that may help address the question of how to improve civility in local political meetings. Some possible keywords to get you started might include, civility, deliberation, inter-personal interactions, political discourse, city council procedures etc. I would recommend searching as a group so your chosen research articles are logically related. Each team member should be in charge of carefully reading **one** related

Finally, based on your research of Northfield politics and political science research, your group will develop at least five recommendations and produce a powerpoint presentation that presents your 1) Northfield politics research, 2) Academic research and 3) Concrete recommendations to improve meeting civility. As a group you will present your research and recommendations to class.

Grading Criteria

1. Northfield research (10%) - draws on multiple sources to develop informative picture of city council meeting quality.
2. Academic sources (10%)- Main point accurately and succinctly described. Logically connected to recommendation. One article per group member.
3. Slides (15%)- informative, visually pleasing, not too crowded with text (put detailed notes in note section). Cite sources.
4. Presentation (35%) - engaging, included a good hook
5. Content (30%)- Recommendation realistic, based on academic research, grounded in research of the local situation/problems.

Midterm Exam 25%

DATE: Friday, January 27 from 9:40-10:40
The midterm exam will be held IN CLASS on Friday, January 27 and will cover materials covered up to (and including) the Jan. 25 lecture (Judicial Branch). The exam will consist of identifications (define and state significance of terms provided), short answers, and an essay. You are allowed to bring 1 sheet of paper with notes (8.5 x 11, front and back).

Final Exam 35%

DATE: Wednesday, March 15 from 8:30-11:00
The final exam will be held in WCC 233 on Wednesday, March 15 from 8:30-11:00 and will cover materials covered the second half (Jan 30-Mar 3 lectures) of the course (not comprehensive). The exam will consist of identifications (define and state significance of terms provided), short answers, and an essay. The exam will be CLOSED BOOK and CLOSED NOTES.

Course Policies

Grading Policies
I will assign grades using the following scale : A (93.33), A- (90), B+ (86.67), B (83.33), B- (80), C+ (76.67), C (73.33), C- (70), D+ (66.67), D(63.33) D- (60) F (Below 60). I do not round your final grade up or down (so if you receive a 93.327, you will receive an A- for a final grade).

Additional Grading Policies:

1. I will not receive grade complaints if more than one week has passed after the assignment has been returned to you. Before I review your grade you must first:
• Wait 24 hours.
• Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
• Submit a formal appeal in writing (email is sufficient—but be clear that it is the appeal in the subject heading) that clearly identifies content in the assignment and the reasons why you think your grade should be changed. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not to vague reasons like “I worked really hard.”

The second grade, whether higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

2. Late assignments are not tolerated. Your grade will be lowered 5 percentage points for each day it is late. That is if the assignment is due on Tuesday at 8:20 am and you turn it in sometime between 8:20 am and Wednesday 8:20 am, the highest grade you can achieve is 95.

3. The ONLY acceptable (not penalized) excuses for not completing an assignment on time are family emergencies or illnesses. However, in these cases, I will arrange to give you extra time ONLY if you communicate with me BEFORE the assignment is due and you provide DOCUMENTATION of the circumstance.

Electronics in Class Policy

If possible, I would like you to bring your own laptop (or mobile device) to class as we will often need to access the Internet for in-class activities. However, I expect you to be responsible in your use of electronic equipment: please avoid visiting social networking sites, or otherwise browsing the internet on sites unrelated to the course. I would also recommend you read through the discussion (including comments), Computers in the Classroom, to think about the possible pros and cons of using computers in a classroom setting. Individuals who abuse this privilege will find their participation grade reduced. Please turn off all cell phones during class.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to abide by fundamental standards of academic honesty. A discussion of plagiarism can be found at: https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/. All work is expected to be your own. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else’s words or ideas without properly citing them), and all forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be strictly handled according to university policy. If you are uncertain, cite your sources!

Acknowledgements

Several of the discussion questions listed below in the Course Schedule were drawn/modified from Douglas B. Harris’s Instructor’s Manual for the Brief Twelfth Edition of American Government: Power & Purpose.

Disability-Related Accommodations

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Burton Hall 03) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have,
or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum dis-
orders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, sensory, or physical), please contact
Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services, by calling 507-222-5250 or sending an email to cdal-
lager@carleton.edu to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable
accommodations.

Course Schedule

Readings should be completed BEFORE the lecture.

WEEK 1

Lecture 1 (Jan. 4): Popping the Bubble: Introduction and Logistics

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What is the last political discussion you had? With whom, where, about what?
• How would you describe the overall political landscape/climate at Carleton? (ideology, participation,
interest, salient issues, partisanship, nature and tone of deliberation)
• What are the pros and cons of like-minded communities. Should political bubbles be popped?
• What is a belief you hold with which many people disagree?
• What are the consequences of taking political science classes? What do you hope to gain from this
class?

Lecture 2 (Jan. 6): Ties that Bind: Political Culture

READINGS

• Power and Purpose: Chapter 1
• Louis Hartz, Rogers M. Smith, and Daniel J. Elazar. Political culture. In David T. Canon, John J.
Coleman, and Kenneth R. Mayer, editors, The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contempory Readings
• Minnesota’s political culture?: https://goo.gl/JivAgp

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What does the “American Dream” mean to you?
• What is the American Dream and is it a reality in the United States?
• In your opinion, is there broad agreement around a unified set of goals and ideas in the United States?
Is there an American Creed? What might be some evidence of a creed?
• Do you think Americans are in agreement on the values of the liberal tradition?
• Where does the American Creed come from? How is it maintained?
• What might be some of the advantages and disadvantages of high degree of agreement on basic values
for American society and politics?
• Does a highly diverse country require a shared identity of some sort?
• Should English be a required language? Should there be efforts to “Americanize” immigrants?
• According to Smith (2008), what are some examples of how Americans in the late nineteenth century simultaneously held liberal and ascriptive hierarchical views?
• Do you believe that ascriptive hierarchy is still a powerful strain of thought in American political culture? If so, what are some examples?
• How well do you think Elazar’s political culture label describes your home state?
• How might migration and shifting populations influence state-level political culture? Do you think people adopt the culture of the area to which they move?

WEEK 2

Lecture 3 (Jan. 9): All the Divides Us: Ideology and Polarization

READINGS

• “Partisans on the couch.” 2012, The Economists at: goo.gl/S2f3oB
• Moral Foundations at http://www.moralfoundations.org/

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What are your top five personal values?
• What is your personal ideological position? Why?
• What do you feel are the main lines of cleavage in the US? Are these cleavages reinforcing or cross-cutting?
• What is political ideology? How is it developed—what are its sub-elements? Where does ideological structure come from? What produces political ideologies?
• Do you think ideology is best measured as liberal-conservative or should a more complex measure be used? What are the implications of the Feldman Johnston (2014) model of ideology for strategic elites seeking reelection?
• Is there a cultural war in America? How divided are the parties?
• Which comes first—values or partisanship?
• How do values and ideology help organize politics?
• Can Democrats and Republicans have productive/successful conversations in the current political climate?
• Is political polarization good or bad for 1) governing productivity, 2) representation, 3) inter-personal relations, 4) other?
• Haidt’s Moral Foundations: How do we know the moral foundation list is exhaustive/complete? Does rationalization always follow automatic reactions? What about for novel situations that are not easily categorized by underlying values. What happens in cases where two valued morals conflict?

Lecture 4 (Jan. 11): “We Have to Start Somewhere”: The Founding and Constitution

READINGS

• Power and Purpose: Chapter 2
• Power and Purpose: APPENDIX (pp. A3-A33)
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What were the problems associated with the Articles of Confederation? Which specific elements of the Constitution countered these problems? Were all institutions designed by the Constitution equally successful in addressing the problems of the Articles?
- How is the Constitution used as a campaign talking point? Why? When? By Whom?
- How much deference must be given to the Constitution’s text? To what extent may judges legitimately resort, beyond that literal text, to “fundamental rights,” or to broader principles of law?
- What weight should be given to the moral imperatives of an earlier day, as opposed to competing ideas that seek to square constitutional mandates with social realities and evolving democratic values?
- Consider this statement made by Barack Obama regarding the Constitution (WEBEZ Radio Sept. 2001): “I think it is an imperfect document, and I think it is a document that reflects some deep flaws in American culture, the Colonial culture nascent at that time... I think we can say that the Constitution reflected an enormous blind spot in this culture that carries on until this day, and that the Framers had that same blind spot. I don’t think the two views are contradictory, to say that it was a remarkable political document that paved the way for where we are now, and to say that it also reflected the fundamental flaw of this country that continues to this day.” Discuss this comment. What fundamental flaw(s) is Obama talking about? Is the Constitution, as currently amended, still fundamentally flawed today?

Lecture 5 (Jan. 13): We are Not Angels: Federalism and Separation of Powers

READINGS

- Power and Purpose: Chapter 3
- Power and Purpose: APPENDIX (pp. A34-A42)
- (Browse) Fiscal Federalism Initiative - The Pew Charitable Trust: https://goo.gl/qHlFFm

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The federal government is often seen as the champion of minority rights, protecting them from state and localities. However, this situation is sometimes reversed. Discuss the issue of sanctuary cities as an example of how federalism and constitutional limits of federal power can be used to protect vulnerable minorities. How might Trump use cooperative federalism to discourage sanctuary cities?
- Discuss Goldberg’s (National Review article) claim that “People on the ground in their own communities have a better understanding of how they want to live and what they want from government. Local politicians are easier to hold accountable, and culture-war arguments aren’t abstractions when the combatants have to look each other in the eye.”
- What is gained, what is lost when states decide? Consider Medicaid, a means-tested form of redistribution, from a federalism perspective.
- Thinking about separation of powers, who is to blame/praise for current state of the federal economy? Under what conditions might we be more confident in deciding who gets the credit/blame?
- What are some patterns in how federal spending is distributed across the states?
WEEK 3

Lecture 6 (Jan. 16): Sausage Making: Congress pt I

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 5
- To help you read the above more efficiently first read quick summary of Mayhew (1974) at: [http://wikisum.com/w/Mayhew:_Congress](http://wikisum.com/w/Mayhew:_Congress)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Compare and contrast the differences between the House and Senate. How do the relative sizes of the House and Senate affect each institution's membership, structure, process?
- What institutional hurdles may Trump face (or not face) in Congress given the current ideological structure in Congress?
- Why do members of the House and Senate follow complex, arcane rules and precedents in processing legislation even when such devices keep majorities from getting their way? Discuss how congressional institutions of committees and parties address problems legislators must deal with (voting instability, matching influence and interest, information, compliance).
- Consider the informal internal organizations of congressional caucuses (e.g., demographic groups, interest-oriented, issue-oriented). How do such organizations change or supplement more traditional congressional representation of districts and states? How might such organizations enhance congressional policy making?
- Do you think Mayhew’s portrayal of congressman members as “single-minded seekers of reelection” is accurate? Might there be other motives that we need to acknowledge to accurately describe and predict congressional behavior? What behaviors does Mayhew argue come from this reelection motive? How does the structure and organization of Congress help congressional members perform these behaviors?
- Why should members of Congress be so concerned with their actions in Congress if most of the public is not aware of what they do?
- Consider the congressional representation styles of delegates and trustees. Members of Congress adopting the delegate style of representation follow closely what their constituents want and act accordingly. Members of Congress who conceive of themselves as trustees frequently use their own judgment on an issue regardless of what their constituents want. Which style of representation do you prefer? Are there circumstances or certain issue areas where one style is more appropriate than the other? What are the potential negative consequences of the use of either a strict delegate style or a strict trustee approach? Even if a member of Congress favors the delegate style of representation, how may other factors (staff members, interest groups, the president, and professional policy researchers) influence the decision-making process?
- Is the legislative process slow by design? Does the complexity and speed of legislating increase the deliberative and quality of legislation that reflects diversity of legislation?
- Is it important to have the legislative body represent the nation demographically (substantive versus descriptive representation)?
Lecture 7 (Jan. 18): Sausage Making: Congress pt II

READINGS

- 115th Congress Profile: https://goo.gl/fUHP7O
- 2017 House Calendar: https://goo.gl/4dk4z6

IN-CLASS ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

Lecture 8 (Jan. 20): This Should be Interesting: The Presidency

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 6
- “Trump’s promises before and after the election.” *BBC* at: https://goo.gl/YCNxnP
- “Presidential Signing Statements.” *The American Presidency Project* at: https://goo.gl/n7MUAa
- “Executive Orders: SNL” at https://youtu.be/JUDSeb2zHQ0

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Define and discuss the terms of adverse selection and moral hazard. What were Trump’s campaign promises? How has he to this point addressed or not addressed those campaign promises? Do you think Trump will be able to be more “flexible” on issues than past presidents? Why or why not?
- Analyze Trump’s administration appointments and the inauguration in light of what image he may be trying to build.
- Discuss signing statements and executive orders. Why are these mechanisms controversial? Analyze the signing statements as organized on *The American Presidency Project* site. Can you see any patterns regarding the use of signing statements (when used, by whom, for which issues)? Why did Obama advise Trump to try to go through the legislative route first before executive orders see here?
- How much power does Trump have as president? In what areas does he face the most/least constraint? Given that most presidential powers are delegated and informal, the president’s ability to shape American politics is largely contingent on public support. Analyze Trump’s current approval levels comparison to past presidents at their inaugurations. Which areas of Trump’s agenda should be most sensitive to public support, which areas should be relatively unrelated to public support? Can you identify any clear strategy in Trump’s public appeals/rhetoric that might be aimed to strengthen his policy agenda goals?
- Should the Electoral College be abolished? What are some of the arguments/claims of who generally wins and loses under the Electoral College system. If the Electoral system was abolished, what would you propose as the replacement?
WEEK 4

Lecture 9 (Jan. 23): Red Tape and Drift: The Executive Branch

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 7
- “Idea to create a secretary of business finally runs out of steam.” *PolitiFact* at https://goo.gl/33LX0y

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe the last interaction you had with the federal bureaucracy. Was it a positive or negative experience?
- Many of Trump’s Cabinet selections have clearly stated positions against the agencies which they will be managing. For example, Rick Perry has been selected to be Energy Secretary. As a GOP nominee hopeful in 2011, he argued the Energy Department should be abolished. Scott Pruitt, the chosen E.P.A. Administrator, is a strong ally of the fossil fuel industry. History has shown killing and reorganizing bureaus, departments, and agencies to be a very difficult endeavor (e.g., last major reorganization was under Carter in the 1970s, Obama’s recent attempt failed). First, what might explain the seeming immortality of agencies and departments? How do the goals of bureaucrats as well as those of the politicians who seek to control them contribute to this phenomenon? Why does the bureaucracy continue to grow even though the public dislikes it so much? Second, do you think the bureaucracy (or at least certain parts) will be reduced under Trump? What factors increase/decrease the likelihood of this happening?
- What might be gained and what might be lost by privatizing education policy, trash removal, criminal incarceration, or national defense?
- Who controls the bureaucracy? The president? Congress? No one? What is the nature of the control over the bureaucracy afforded by the presidential appointment power? What is the nature of congressional control via appropriations and oversight? Do you think that divided-party control of Congress and the executive branch make for better oversight or just needless partisan investigations?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of merit selection of the bureaucracy? What were the intentions of the reformers who instituted civil service in the federal executive branch? How might the goals and perspectives of civil servants and political appointees conflict? What are the relative strengths and weakness of increasing the number of political appointees in the executive branch? Are presidents gaining greater control of the bureaucracy or merely swimming upstream against a powerful current of bureaucratic autonomy?
- Which is more important, bureaucratic efficiency or accountability? Are these mutually exclusive goals? Can we have both? Is goal order dependent on agency type?
- The argument has been made that politics (public and elected officials) should determine broad goals but that administrators should be trusted to make the more specific, tactical decisions about how best and most efficiently to implement public policy. What role should elected officials play in bureaucratic decisions? What role should public opinion play in bureaucratic decisions? How can we draw the line between the public’s not having any role in administrative decisions and the public’s being meddlesome?
Lecture 10 (Jan. 25): Judicial Branch/Midterm Review

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 8
- Browse: https://www.supremecourt.gov/
- “The Supreme Court: A Winning Issue in the Presidential Campaign?” NPR at: https://goo.gl/Vl7Yuf

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The Judicial Branch is the supposed “apolitical” branch of government. However, according to many measures, the Court has become partisan and polarized in recent years. Modern judges seem to vote in a matter that aligns closely to the to part of the President that appointed them. Judges are clearly identified as “liberal” and “conservative.” Judicial appointments are highly partisan matters, and justices tend to rely on clerks that reflect their own ideological views. What are some of the possible consequences of partisan polarization of the Court? Does it underline the Court’s legitimacy, public respect, permanence of their rulings?
- Debates continue regarding what constitutes an appropriate role for the judiciary. Some argue that courts have become too powerful and that judges “legislate from the bench.” What does it mean for a court to be activist? What does it mean for a court to show judicial restraint? Although conservatives had long complained about the activism of liberal justices and judges, in recent years conservative judges and justices have been likely to overturn precedents and question the power of elected institutions of government. When is judicial activism appropriate?
- What was the role of the Supreme Court in the 2016 election?
- Think about the relationship between the president and his/her judicial nominee as a principal-agent relationship. Does a president have any control over nominees once they are selected and put on the court for life terms? Failing such *post hoc* opportunities to control judicial nominees, how else might the president (the principal) control the judge or justice (the agent)?

Lecture 11 (Jan. 27): MIDTERM

WEEK 5

Lecture 12 (Jan. 30): Freedom From Government: Civil Liberties

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 4 (pp. 84-105)
- *Power and Purpose*: Bill of Rights (pp. A24-A25)
- “Should There be Limits on Freedom of Speech?” PBS at: https://goo.gl/loDxcA
- (especially the Q&A section) Carleton College Convocation: Greg Lukianoff at https://goo.gl/HzeIEo

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When two rights clash (right to privacy versus right to free speech), which one should prevail? Why?
• Should the First Amendment be interpreted so as to protect the political speech of the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, or the Westboro Baptist Church? What are the costs to society of allowing such extreme voices a preferred position because of their political nature? What are the alternatives to allowing such uncomfortable and distasteful speech?
• Should universities have the right to ban extreme speakers from campus? Should colleges prohibit racist/sexist speech on campus?
• What are the pros and cons of safe spaces on campus?
• Why do you think “political correctness” was a salient phrase in the 2016 presidential election? What do you think about these authors’ opinions: see here and see here?
• Are norms of civility merely ways to suppress speech through societal norms? Is being polite a restriction of individuals’ right to free speech?

Lecture 13 (Feb. 1): Freedom From Majority: Civil Rights

READINGS
• Power and Purpose: Chapter 4 (pp. 105-129)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
• Often discussion of rights and liberties in the study of politics focuses on the African-American civil rights movement. In what ways are the rights and liberties struggles of other groups (for example, women, homosexuals, and the disabled) analogous to the struggles of African Americans? In what ways to they differ? Can you think of ways in which the successful fight for rights by one of these groups has led directly or indirectly to the pursuit of rights by other groups?
• What impacts – both positive and negative – might Obama’s presidency have on the lingering effects of racial resentment and discrimination?
• Consider the Black Lives Matter social movement. How is this similar and different from the civil rights movement of the 1960s?

Lecture 14 (Feb. 3): Difficult Discussions

READINGS
• “Research says there are ways to reduce racial bias. Calling people racist isn’t one of them.” Voc at: https://goo.gl/ZXWB7P

WEEK 6
NO LECTURE (Feb. 6): MIDTERM BREAK

Lecture 15 (Feb. 8): The Voice of the People: Public Opinion

READINGS
• Power and Purpose: Chapter 9 (pp. 274-294)

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What is public opinion? Who is the public? What is opinion?
• How confident are you in the quality of your opinions of political issues?
• What role should public opinion play in determining government policy? Although any republic finds the ultimate authority for its actions in the will of the people broadly conceived, this is much different from saying that every (or even most) government decisions should be based on the prevailing popular sentiment. Is the proper role of public opinion the same across the full range of public policy issues? Or are there certain types of issues where public opinion should be followed, but others where its influence should be more muted? What role, for example, should public opinion play in the president’s and Congress’s decision to go to war?
• Why did the 2016 election polls miss their mark?
• A common complaint in contemporary politics is that politicians are poll driven. But we do want politicians to be responsive to public sentiment. What is the proper use of polls? Is it, for example, proper to use poll information to set the public agenda (that is, to decide what issues to pursue)? Is it proper to use poll information to anticipate and plan for the public reaction to activities politicians plan to pursue? Is it proper to use poll information to find a way to talk about an issue to make it publicly palatable?
• What are the benefits and cons of public deliberation?
• Do presidential campaigns produced “enlightened” or “silenced” public opinion? How malleable is public opinion? Can elites strategically shape public opinion?

Lecture 16 (Feb. 10): Forum, Fount, Filter, or Fire alarm? The Media

READINGS

• Power and Purpose: Chapter 9 (pp. 294-311)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• From where do you get the majority of your political news (type of platform: digital, radio, television, print newspaper; specific sources)? Are there differences in agendas set and the frames used by these different outlets? Is the tone and content of media different across different platforms? If yes, why? Are some outlets more likely to be “fair and balanced” compared to others? Why? Pick a news topic, gather articles from different sources, and compare/contrast the presentation of the news.
• How is the United States’ news media unique from other countries’ media.
• What role does media play in enabling democracy? Does the media merely convey information to the public or does it independently influence public opinion?
• Is there ideological bias in the media? Do liberals and conservatives consume media differently?
• Has the rise of social media changed the nature of news and media in the US? If yes, how?
• How do elites attempt to produce strategic/influential political communications? Do these forms of political communication making influence opinion-for whom, when, why?
WEEK 7

Lecture 17 (Feb. 13): Whose Voices? Political Participation

READINGS


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Most people acknowledge it is important for citizens to vote. Nevertheless, most Americans do not vote. Why do you think Americans tend not to vote? Are they happy with the system as it is? Do they think that they cannot make a difference? Do you vote? If so, why? If not, why not? Why do some people feel it is important to vote in presidential years but not important enough to vote in midterms?
- Have you ever gotten involved in a campaign? Why or why not?
- Why do you think people get involved beyond voting? What factors make them get involved in local/state/national politics? Are people who participate in politics (through voting, putting a sign on their lawn or sticker on their car/computer, volunteering in campaigns, donating money to candidates, attending rallies or protests) different from those who do not participate?
- A true representative democracy is one where elected officials are responsive to public opinion and wishes and 2) all voices contribute equally to that public opinion. However, this ideal is obviously one that is difficult to achieve. How close to the mark are we in the U.S.?
- Will social media and blogging or other emerging online abilities improve young people’s engagement?
- What are the pros and cons of increasing political participation?
- What are structural constraints that depress political participation? Are all groups equally influenced by these structural constraints?

Lecture 18 (Feb. 15): Focal Point of Democracy: Elections

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 10
- Gelman, Andrew. 2016. “19 Lessons for Political Scientists from the 2016 Election.” *Slate* at: https://goo.gl/yIR7l6

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Discuss the 2016 Election....
- The costs of elections has increased considerably in recent years. In order to compete, politicians must raise vast amounts of money. Does the process of raising money have an impact on the behaviors of politicians? Are politicians bought and paid for? Is there a way to address the inequities of the campaign finance system without trampling on the free speech rights of campaign donors?
- In 2016, the presidential candidate who won the most popular votes lost the White House. Many argue that the Electoral College should be abolished because it is undemocratic. Others argue that it performs the important function of protecting small states from being ignored by politicians campaigning for the White House. Still another group of critics take issue with the winner-take-all system whereby a candidate who wins a state (even by the smallest of margins) gets all of that state’s electoral votes. Should the Electoral College be abolished? Should it remain as it is? Or, alternatively, should the structure of the Electoral College be left intact but with revisions such as the elimination of the winner-take-all system? Who is most likely to win under a “wrong winner” scenario?
• Some argue that elections are decided long before the actual Election day. They claim that key factors in the economy and society determine electoral outcomes more than do the candidates or their campaigns. Foremost among these arguments is the idea that favorable economic conditions lead to the retention of the party in power, whereas a bad economy leads to turnover in power. Others argue that key elements of a political campaign actually determine the outcome of an election—that is, they argue that candidates’ abilities to shape and deliver messages, raise and use campaign funds effectively, and mobilize and persuade voters have demonstrable impacts on election outcomes. Do campaigns matter? In what ways and under what conditions might elections matter? In what ways and under what conditions might it be correct that no amount of campaigning could change the outcome of an election. Did campaigns matter in 2016?

• We generally assume that helping our preferred politician win office is the goal of voting. But why do voters sometimes vote for candidates who are sure to lose? Why do Republicans vote at all in Democratic states and vice versa where their preferred candidate is likely to lose? More to the point, why do voters vote for third parties? Was it rational for liberal voters to vote for Ralph Nader for president in 2000 and 2004 assuming that a vote for Nader made it more likely that George W. Bush would win? Or why did people vote for Jill Stein knowing a vote for Stein made a Trump victory more likely?

Lecture 19 (Feb. 17): Not all Fun and Games: Political Parties

READINGS

• Power and Purpose: Chapter 11

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Some political scientists claim that political parties are essential to modern democracy. What might modern democratic government look like without political parties? Are they, in fact, essential for the functioning of democratic government? What roles and functions do parties perform? How might contemporary political parties be reformed to perform these functions better?

• Some people have argued there are no significant differences between the two major parties. What do you think? Why might the parties seek to be like one another? What are the primary areas of difference between contemporary Democrats and Republicans? How are the two parties similar? Do you think there is a reasonable chance that Americans could ever support a third-party presidential candidate? Why or why not?

• “Generally speaking, do you consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican, an independent, or what?” Is this a good measure of partisanship? According to this measure, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of people calling themselves independents. However, over the same period of time, there has been a dramatic and clear rise in the ideological and partisan polarization in the public and increasing consistency in ideological preferences of partisans in the public? What might be the causes and consequences of these trends?

• Consider the key services that contemporary parties offer their candidates—candidate recruitment, developing and polishing party media images and brands, independent expenditures, coordinating funds and efforts to strategic races, fundraising, and so on. Does one party enjoy an advantage in any of these areas? What do Democrats do better than Republicans? What do Republicans do better than Democrats? What do you think explains these differences?

WEEK 8

Lecture 20 (Feb. 20): “All Politics is Local”: Local Politics

READINGS


DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What issues and problems are mainly dealt with at the local level?

• How might the currently polarized climate at the state and national level influence what are supposedly non-partisan elections? Given partisanship can often be inferred easily from non-political cues or issue positions, can elections ever be truly non-partisan. Do federal/state elections have any type of down-ballot effect on local elections?

• How else might local political elections be unique compared to state and national level? How do you make a vote choice in a low-information environment?

• What might the implications of an at-large district versus ward districts influence the nature of a city-council?

• How can small communities increase the quality of public officials and political participation?

• How can you become more involved in local politics? What are the advantages and disadvantages of local political participation?

Lecture 21 (Feb. 22): Guest Speakers

NO READINGS

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• Before class, submit a list of questions you would be interested in discussing with the guest speakers.

Lecture 21 (Feb. 24): Surprise Day

WEEK 9

Lecture 23 (Feb. 27): Organization Matters: Interest Groups

• *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 12


• Ideological Ranking of Think-tanks: https://goo.gl/J2cKux

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• How might Schattschneider’s “scope of conflict” concept apply to interest groups? Do interest groups seek to expand or contract the scope of conflict?

• People tend to view their own interests as closely related to the overall public interest, while often deeming the interests of other individuals and groups as special interests that work to the detriment of the common good. Why do you think this is the case? How might we differentiate between special interests and the common good? Is such objectivity possible? If so, is it necessarily desirable?

• What interests are more likely to be organized?
• Do interest groups have too much power in American politics? Discuss interest group involvement in elections, lobbying legislators and executive-branch officials, and suing and submitting amicus briefs in the judicial process. Might certain types of interests expect to do better in the legislative process than in the courts, or vice versa? Why, for example, did civil rights organizations such as the NAACP stress litigation over legislation in the 1950s? Why does it seem that the NRA is more likely to make its case before the Court than in the courts?

Lecture 24 (Mar. 1): The End Goal: Policy Domestic

READINGS

• *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 13
• [https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/dpc](https://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/dpc)
• Browse: [https://fas.org/sgp/crs/](https://fas.org/sgp/crs/)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• What are some examples of market failures in the U.S.? Many traditional, even conservative, theorists of government argue that the proper role of government is to do those things for which the market does not provide. What do you think of this argument? If this argument is correct, is it fair to complain about the inefficiency of government? Moreover, given the trend toward privatization, should the government give way to businesses when they argue that they can be profitable performing government functions?
• Through subsidies, tax breaks, grants, and contracts, businesses benefit from government activities. Still, businesses complain that government interferes with their productivity and profitability and their ability to compete in world markets. To what extent does this simply exemplify the natural desire to get something for nothing? What role should the government play in the economy? When is regulation appropriate? When is government interference unwarranted?
• Is monetary policy more important than fiscal policy? Some argue the policies of the Federal Reserve Board chairperson are more influential on the economy than those of Congress or the President. If this is true, what are the implications of having an unelected public official make such an important policy?
• Opponents of welfare programs argue that welfare programs actually hurt the poor by creating a cycle of dependency and a permanent underclass in society. How might welfare programs actually hurt the groups and individuals that they intend to help? Given the functions welfare and “poor support” generally perform in society, what alternatives exist? Is there a way of providing support without incurring unintended negative consequences?

Lecture 25 (Mar. 3): The End Goal: Policy Foreign

READINGS

• *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 14

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

• In an era of increasing globalization, the United States has benefited from increased international trade, the increased exchange of information throughout the world, and its leadership in an ever-expanding world community. Still, globalization is controversial in American politics. Amid the advantages of globalization, are there costs for the United States? What are those costs? How should domestic political concerns affect foreign-policy decisions?
When most people think of foreign policy, they think of war and diplomacy. Still, in recent years U.S. foreign policy has increasingly dealt with trade issues such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the granting of most favored nation status, the granting of fast-track trade authority for presidents, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the Trans-Pacific Partnership. Should trade policy be subject to the same political and constitutional considerations as war and diplomacy? More specifically, should Congress be as likely to defer to presidents in the realm of international trade as it is during times of war and other foreign-policy crises?

Considering recent involvement foreign conflicts, in what ways was American involvement a result of our merely pursing our interests? In what ways can American involvement be interpreted as our acting on the basis of more idealistic motivations? Might America’s role in foreign conflicts be interpreted as a mix of these complex (and even contradictory) motives?

WEEK 10

Lecture 26 (Mar. 6): Local Politics Group Presentations

Lecture 27 (Mar. 8): Local Politics Group Presentations

Lecture 28 (Mar. 10): Final Review