

Political Science 122, Politics in America: Liberty and Equality

Winter 2000

SYLLABUS

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Political Science 122 offers an introduction to how political scientists study American politics. This is not a course in current events; rather, it is a course in which historical and contemporary political issues and problems of governance (empirical data) are discussed to illustrate hypotheses about how politics works (theory) and to further refine these hypotheses.

At the founding of this nation there existed tensions between liberty and equality that we will trace to modern debates about small government vs. big government and debates between conservatives and liberals. 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 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. Throughout, a prominent concern will be how incentives for individual and group behavior are shaped by *institutional arrangements* and how these rules of the game shape political outcomes.

There will be two examinations during the term and one final examination (25-25-30%). Class attendance and participation (5%) and quizzes (15%) will also be part of the requirements of the course. Quizzes will be unannounced but will only ask the question(s) that the syllabus poses for each set of readings (i.e., the "Q:" questions). Missing a quiz earns an "F" except for excused absences. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped.

If you have questions about the readings, lecture material, or the writing assignments, please come to my office. My office is 417 Willis, office hours will be announced in the first week of class, 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 646-4122, home phone **until 9 p.m. only** is 645-5666, and my e-mail is rkeiser@carleton.edu. *I would like to receive an e-mail from every student in the first two weeks so that I can compile all of your addresses and send information to the entire class.* Tell me something interesting about yourself, your family background, and your interests, political or otherwise.

The books for the course are:

S. Welch, et al., *Understanding American Government* (5th edition)

W. Hudson, *American Democracy in Peril* (3rd edition)

D. Amy, *Real Choices, New Voices*

Readings labeled RR on the syllabus are on reserve at Gould Library.

Regular reading of the *New York Times* (available at the bookstore for \$30 for the term) will enrich your experience in this course. Frequently, we will discuss today's political news and its relation to our course material.

Students eligible for academic accommodations such as longer test time are responsible for providing official documentation to the instructor at the start of the term.

Democratic Theory and Practice

FRI: Hudson, Intro.

Q: Come prepared to summarize all 4 models of democracy.

MON2: Welch et al., chs. 1-2 and Appendix C (Federalist #10).

Q: What lessons were drawn from Shays rebellion? How are they reflected in Federalist #10?

WED: Hudson, ch. 3 and ch. 8, Step 3; Welch, ch. 4.

Q: What is the paradox of collective action (a.k.a. the logic of collective action)? How would you describe the people who are most and least likely to vote? How informed is public opinion? This undermines Madison's cure for the mischiefs of faction (having nothing to do with voting). Explain.

FRI: Hudson, ch. 2 and ch. 9, Step 2; Welch, ch. 14.

Q: Define "prisoner's dilemma" and the "Tragedy of the commons."

MON3: Welch, chs. 5 and 8-9.

Q: What kinds of biases do these chapters suggest are common in the American political system (specific examples)? How do these chapters comport with the 4 models of democracy?

WED: Hudson, ch. 5 and ch. 8, Step 5; Schlozman & Tierney, "Who Is Represented?" RR

Q: What are the factors that leave business with a privileged position in American politics? What are some empirical examples of this privileged position? What are the best arguments against this view (you might refer back to readings from last class as well)?

FRI: Hudson, ch. 6 & ch. 8, Step 6; J. Cassidy, "Who killed the middle class?" & Welch, ch. 15.

Q: Is economic inequality a cause of political inequality, or vice-versa, or are they merely coincidental?

MON4: Downs, "The Statics and Dynamics of Party Ideologies," RR; Big Tent Readings, RR.

Q: How does Downs' portrait of the electorate fit with our previous readings on the state of public opinion and level of public knowledge about issues? Think about four or five issues including both high and low profile ones. Do you think Downs' portrait is accurate?

Does the political party system, through the structure of competing big tents, make democracy representative, responsive and accountable? Think about Hudson's theories of democracy.

WED: Hudson, ch. 4 and ch. 8, Step 4; Welch, chs. 6-7.

Q: Why have elections become trivialized?

Institutional Conflict and Consensus, by Design and by Default

FRI: Welch, Appendix D (Federalist #51). {Mike/Barry}

MON5: Welch, ch. 10 and "Interest Groups, Congress and the Policy Process" packet, RR

Q: On average, how frequently do incumbent representatives and senators win reelection? Why are they so successful? Is this a good thing or not?

WED: Welch, chs. 11-12.

Q: On p. 318 Welch writes, "Not surprisingly then, some scholars see the growth in influence in EOP officials as having come at the expense of cabinet secretaries." Explain this viewpoint, being sure to highlight the redundancy and to explain and justify (at least from the President's perspective) this redundancy. How is the growth of the EOP as a responsive tool for the President linked to the Iran-Contra scandal?

The Contemporary Party System and the Collapse of Party Democracy

FRI: Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era," RR and Smith, *The Power Game*, chs. 17-18, RR.

Q: What is divided government? How does it damage the big tent theory of democracy? Can incumbency be blamed for the divided government that characterized the 1970s and 1980s?

MON6: Midterm Break

WED: **Exam due at start of class.** No readings for this class day. {M/B}

FRI: Rae, *Southern Democrats*, chs. 1 and 3 RR (Any student with a deep interest in current American political history is urged to read the entire book during the course of the term.); and Baer, "Moving From New Dealers to Neoliberals." RR

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? How did the party that won by a landslide in 1964 lose the presidency in every subsequent election but one until 1992?

MON7: Polsby and Wildavsky, *Presidential Elections* (9th edition), ch. 4 RR.

Q: Explain why after the McGovern-Fraser reforms it is only necessary to capture a wing of the tent (mobilize a plurality) rather than build a big tent coalition (mobilize a majority)? Why are Iowa and New Hampshire not wise places for the Democrats to hold their first 2 primaries? How does the nomination process allegedly produce candidates who are not well positioned (from Downs' view) to win election? Can you make the argument that these reforms and their consequences are a cause of divided government and gridlock?

WED: Ginsberg and Shefter, "The Republican Offensive" RR; Hale, "The Making of the New Democrats," RR.

FRI: Caesar and Busch, "The Republican Nomination;" "The Democratic Nomination."

Q: Does the outcome of 1992 Super Tuesday prove that this latest reform has solved the Democrats' problems in presidential elections? What factors produced splitting at the seams in the Republican tent in 1992?

MON8: Guth and Smith, "South Carolina Christian Right;" Smidt and Penning, "Michigan;" Lunch, "Oregon;" and Appleton and Francis, "Washington." RR

Q: In some states Christian Coalition candidates seem to help the GOP tent to expand and in others they divide the tent. Explain the causes using the four cases.

WED: Caldwell, "The Southern Captivity of the GOP" RR; Cook, "Suburbia: Land of Varied Faces" RR.

FRI: Pomper, "The Presidential Election [1996]" RR; "Future of American Politics" packet, RR;

One Perspective on Reform: Proportional Representation

MON9: D. Amy, *Real Choices, New Voices*, chs. 1-3

WED: Amy, chs. 4-7.

FRI: Amy, chs. 8-10.

MON10: Further discussion of Proportional Representation, Instant Runoff, etc.

WED: TBA {Future of Amer. Politics Redux and analysis of 2000}

FRI: **In class essay examination** on topic of proportional representation.