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.

One additional very specific caution is required. One of our course texts, *Canarsie*, is based on interviews with white citizens of New York. Throughout the book there are numerous quotes that contain the real N-word. The author also analyzes the use of this word, by whites and African-Americans, to delineate differences in work ethic and respectability among blacks. The author never endorses the use of this word but he does not edit it out or ignore it. Our class conversations will involve our reading of quotes from the book and it is highly likely that you will hear this word in our classroom as we read quotes from the text or paraphrase opinions within the text. If confronting the actual N-word in a text that discusses politics of the 1970s and/or in a classroom discussion of the text in 2018 are circumstances that you feel will disrupt your ability to contribute constructively to this class, then it seems wise to not enroll in this class. 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 homework assignments based on the readings (50%), class participation (20%), and a Final Essay Examination during the self-scheduled final exam period (30%).

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.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE
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The Puzzle of Divided Government: No longer an anomaly

J. Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government" (link below)
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.

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

Q: What is the difference between what this article calls divided government and what is commonly labeled institutional Separation of Powers?

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TRUMPED, chs. 5-7 (course text).

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.

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WEEK 2

TRUMPED, chs. 2, 8, 14. Submit responses to questions in italics by email, PDF, prior to class. This will be the instruction hereafter.

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?

8. Rather than a prompt, what idea or argument in this chapter seems important or surprising?

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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TRUMPED, chs. 10-12. Submit responses to questions in italics.

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?

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Prior to class, listen to podcast from This American Life, "Will I know anyone at this party?" Act one, "Party in the USA," is the part we will focus on.

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

Beyond the video: For what economic reasons has the corporate sector 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?
WEEK 3

TRUMPED, chs. 1, 9, 13 (chicken plant audio). Submit responses to questions in italics.

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.

9. How might a voter object to the scholarly attempt to separate economic populism sentiments from anti-immigration sentiments? What specific types of articulation (give examples) of economic populism are not synonymous with anti-immigration and xenophobic sentiments?

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

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?

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TRUMPED, chs. 3-4. Submit responses to questions in italics.

3. Be capable of defining the difference between straight-ticket and split-ticket voting. How does split ticket voting relate to divided government (Executive and Legislative branches led by different parties) and stalemate in policy making between President and Congress?

What have states done to increase their autonomy from “presidential coattails?”

Why is 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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CANARSIE, Introduction and ch. 1 (course text).

One set of overarching and ubiquitous questions for you to consider in every chapter of this text: What does this text tell us about what some would label today as Trumpism? How unique, aberrational, and unconventional are Donald Trump’s rhetoric, brand of populist appeal, and policies? When Trump departs from politics, regardless of the circumstances, what expectations for change and continuity should we have of the Republican Party and US voters?

Be ready with specific pages and quotes to discuss all. If your last name begins with letter A-K, Choose any 3 to submit, by PDF email, prior to class:

1. Similarities and differences among Jews and Italians in NY and between these two distinct groups
2. Italian and Jewish historical allegiance/opposition to the Democratic Party and specific (name them, describe them) policies they favored and opposed.
3. Economic status and trajectory of each group, early 20th century to the 1980s.
4. Distinctive cultural values with political ramifications of each group
5. Socio-political enemies of each group, past and present
6. Attitude toward government policies (positive, beneficial, negative, unfair?), past and present
7. Where do we hear Rieder’s own views on the discontent of Jews and Italians?
8. (Harder question) What role do richer (Long Island) suburbs play in the evolution of Canarsie?

WEEK 4

CANARSIE, chs. 2-3

Be ready with specific pages and quotes to discuss all. If your last name begins with letter L-Z, Choose any 3 to submit:

1. In 3-4 sentences, with page referenced examples, explain what the author means by optimistic universalism and nervous provincialism.
2. How do issues of respectability and deservingness appear in the discourse of Canarsie residents?
3. What evidence do we have that the Jews and Italians are what we would also label “working class whites?” What white groups enhance the appropriateness of this label? Find examples from both chapters.
4. What behavioral patterns and beliefs of the white residents of Canarsie sound like attributes of Trump supporters (at least to Trump critics)?
5. Class distinctions within the white ethnic communities are repeatedly drawn. Are African-Americans treated more homogeneously by the whites and/or by the author?
6. What is meant by “law and order,” and what issue areas does this, and the antipathy to civilian grievance boards in particular, evoke in today’s politics?
How and why does the rise of law and order rhetoric correspond to the declining popularity of liberalism among long-time Democrats?

7. (Harder) What responses would you offer to those interviewees who dismiss books like Roots and other black voices that continue to blame slavery for the problems and poverty of Blacks, even though slavery ended long ago and Italians and Jews weren’t even in the US territory at that time?

8. In the eyes of white ethnic voters, why is government to blame, what government policies are responsible for their electoral defections from the Democrats and the decline of liberalism?

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CANARSIE, ch. 4

All students, Answer one of the two numbered questions; be prepared to discuss them all.

- Take note of the discussion of the middle class squeeze and think about whether this is part of politics in 2018.
- Equal opportunity is not the same as steps toward equality. Yet, they sound the same. See the discussion on 96 and think about LBJ’s famous quote on affirmative action.
- Would a Bernie Sanders appeal be effective with these voters who seem racist and resentful? Would an anti-union, anti-government appeal like that of Governor Scott Walker be effective with these voters? Explain with evidence from the text.
- Be attentive to the argument against affirmative action as a policy that undermines a merit-based society. What is LBJ’s response to that? What aspects of the US you live in support the claim that affirmative action is nothing more than discrimination against whites (and Asian-Americans) and what aspects of this US suggest that affirmative action is necessary for the same reasons (name them) that are suggested by LBJ’s metaphor? Fill in the metaphor with specifics.
- Is Rieder’s coalition of the less fortunate a disguise for the protection of privilege or is it really a path toward the Emergent Democratic Majority?

1. What aspects (3 examples) from this chapter would you use to answer the question of why a class about Trump is using a book written in 1985 about the 1970s?

2. What parts of the text seem to signal a shift in the perspective of white voters from seeing themselves as BENEFICIARIES of government policies to overburdened TAXPAYERS paying for policies that benefit others?

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"The GOP must do something about the conservative media industrial complex ..." BusinessInsider.com

WEEK 5

Canarsie, chs. 5-6
Be ready with specific pages and quotes to discuss all. All students, Choose any 2 to submit:

1. Which, if any, aspects of the narrative of this chapter that could be interpreted as precursors to the nostalgic desire to Make America Great Again?
2. Reading the phrase, “hyperactivity ... is just a fancy term for a bad kid” (146), what is evoked in your mind from contemporary US society and politics?
3. Using what we have learned about Trump voters in the Sabato volume as a springboard for your answer, would they reflect the kind of divide that existed between support for ERA and opposition to Civilian Review Boards, or not? Why and why not?
4. Vietnam divided Americans over what constituted patriotism, service to the military in a long tradition of justified wars (“fight fascism in Germany and Japan”) or service to American ideals of self determination and liberty. Are there issues in today’s politics and society that divide Americans on similar lines. Explain and be detailed in making the analogy between Vietnam, patriotism, and your issue.
5. Choose 2 examples from chapter 6 that sound very similar to politics in 2018 and make the cases persuasively for these similarities. Don’t write about issues you have already addressed in a previous answer for today.

Winner-Take-All Politics (course text), Introduction through ch. 3.

Be ready to offer an opinion on this article, drawn from the broad lessons of Canarsie.

"Hillary Clinton embraces ideas from Bernie Sanders’ college tuition plan." NYT

"Put 15 million back to work fixing $2.2 Trillion in Infrastructure." Truthout (July 23, 2011).
"Obama unveils stricter rules against segregation in housing." NYT (July 9, 2015).


"Who will pay the political price for affordable housing?" July 15, 2015.

Is this (each policy, above) the old Liberalism, the new liberalism, or some other coalition? Why?

WEEK 6

MIDTERM BREAK

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Winner-Take-All Politics, chs. 4-5

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Winner-Take-All Politics, ch. 6

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WEEK 7

Winner-Take-All Politics, ch. 7-8. Choose any two italicized questions and respond by email, pdf, prior to class.

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 (that was Canarsie), 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 RINO Hunters. Litmus testers, Club for Growth, Americans for Tax Reform 208. 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

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Winner-Take-All Politics, chs. 9-10-Conclusion
“The Untied States of America,” Governing (June 2013).

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K. Baer, Reinventing Democrats, ch. 7 ("Counting on Clinton")

"CEOs make 276 times more than typical workers."

"Rich people are living longer ... tilting Social Security in their favor." NYT

A. Semuels, "Finance is ruining America," theatlantic.com

"Big business tax breaks may worsen inequality" NYT

WEEK 8

Real Choices, New Voices, chs. 1-3

Be prepared to discuss:

- Wasted votes
- Safe seats
- Manufactured majorities and "illusions" of "mandates"
• Impact of inappropriate policy outcomes. What makes them inappropriate?
• Cracking and Packing
• Claim that SMP produces rule by the minority?
• Incumbency Protection and noncompetitive elections

Submit in writing, prior to class, by email/pdf: Rather than blaming low voter turnout on US ignorance, the media, our busy work lives, voter registration barriers and inconvenient polling places, this author claims that people are responding rationally to our institutional structure. In your own words, explain why voters are rational rather than lazy or dumb and why part of the blame belongs on our institutional design.

**Think deeply, like for a quiz.** How does the protection of incumbents, say the landslide of Democrats elected in 1974 due to W????, or the large number of Republicans elected in 1994, produce **divided government** when political preferences shift? What part is shifting and what is not shifting and how does this contribute to divided government?

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**Real Choices, New Voices, ch. 4**

How does the SMP institutional arrangement produce ambiguity rather than specificity from politicians? Is this an accurate picture of contemporary American politics?

if so few people vote for 3rd parties, why would we want to create conditions for them to thrive, as the author seems to urge?

Would the Republicans and Democrats be better off without some of their more extreme segments? Would you be a more satisfied voter if the so-called extreme perspectives were in parties of their own that were not forced to compromise? Would the moderates be better off? Think about your top issues, as well as the dynamics described in Canarsie.

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T. Edsall, ”The Democratic Party is in worse shape than you thought.” NYT (6/8/17).
N. Cohn, “Why Democrats can't win the House,” NYT (9/6/14).
“Florida’s changing Latino population veers from GOP.” NYT (3/10/16).

WEEK 9 (ELECTIONS)

Real Choices, New Voices, chs. 5-7.

Would these changes really produce more women and minorities in office? Would they be ignored in office and simply be representatives without influence?

Real Choices, New Voices, chs. 8-11

Be ready to discuss whether you have been persuaded to be an advocate for these reforms.

SUBMIT BY EMAIL: List 4 of the most persuasive arguments you would use in favor of these reforms at your Thanksgiving dinner. What is the most persuasive argument against these reforms?

M. Wines, "Drive against gerrymandering finds new life ..." NYT 7/24/18.
"Corporate suppression of direct democracy fuels fight ..." "Voting restrictions are key variable in midterm elections." NYT 9/4/14.
M. Tomasky, "Who needs congressional districts?" NYT
"City in Maryland may let noncitizens vote, a practice with U.S. Precedent." NYT

WEEK 10

The Privileged white male, political science view, aka orthodoxy, conventional wisdom:


REVIEW for Final Exam