Political Science 122, Politics in America: Liberty and Equality

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 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 process of policy making and focus on the incentives of Congress members and the tools of the Presidency.

There will be two in class midterm exams (25% total), one research paper (25%), and a final examination (30%). Class attendance and participation will be monitored (5%). Quizzes (15%) will be unannounced but will only ask the question(s) that the syllabus poses for each set of readings (i.e., the "come prepared to explain" 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:


Dionne, They Only Look Dead

Rae, Southern Democrats

Hudson, American Democracy in Peril

There are also quite a number of readings on reserve at Gould library, labeled RR on the syllabus.

Students are expected to read the national news section of the New York Times, (available at the bookstore, deeply discounted for this course) so that we can discuss today's political news within a context of historically-derived theory. At least ten percent of both exams will be drawn directly from current news.
Does liberty undermine equality? Does economic inequality promote political inequality? Is political inequality caused by unequal resources for factional organizing and mobilizing?

Mon1: Introduction to the course

Wed: Wayne et al., ch. 2 and Federalist #10 in Appendix C.

Come prepared to explain: What are the two cures for the "mischiefs of faction" that large republics offer according to Madison in Federalist #10 (cures, not solutions that he suggests and then discredits)? What implicit expectations of the abilities of average citizens are assumed in Madison's discussion of the formation of a faction? What faction does Madison suggest is most vulnerable to the tyranny of others?

Fri: W. Russell Neuman, *The Paradox of Mass Politics*, chs. 1, 8 RR; and Wayne, et al., ch. 7.

Come prepared to explain: What do these readings tell us about the level of knowledge that most Americans have about politics? How does this undermine Madison's cure for the mischiefs of faction?

Mon2: Wayne et al., ch. 8; Schlozman and Tierney, "Who Is Represented?" RR and Loomis and Cigler, *Interest Group Politics*, ch. 1RR. In Loomis and Cigler, pay close attention to the ideas of Truman (derived from Madison) and Olson. Recommended: Judis, "The Pressure Elite," RR.

Come prepared to explain: In contemporary US politics, are interest groups a functional substitute for the Madisonian prescription of faction checking faction? What is pluralism? What is the Disturbance Theory?

Wed: Entman, *Democracy Without Citizens*, ch. 1, RR; Wayne, et al., ch. 11


Come prepared to explain: Is the media a tool for increasing the level of knowledge about politics? Why?

Come prepared to explain: Where does public opinion come from? Who Votes? Is the turnout of registered voters in the U.S. dramatically lower than in most European countries? Why is the rate of voter turnout in Minnesota's elections one of the highest in the nation?

Fri: Downs, "The Statics and Dynamics of Party Ideologies," RR; and news clips on the contemporary big tent. Recommended: Keiser, "Explaining African-American Political Empowerment," RR.

Come prepared to explain: What is meant by a big tent? How does a competitive party system enhance the likelihood of democratic responsiveness and accountability to particular interest groups?

From the NEW YORK TIMES

1/18/90 "GOP Blurs Abortion Focus"
5/18/90 "Tiptoeing, Bush Comes to a Fork on Civil Rights"
11/21/91 "Issue tormenting Bush"
8/8/96 "Accord Satisfies GOP Moderates"
3/23/98 "Religious Right, Frustrated, Trying New Tactic"
Institutional Conflict, by design and by default

Mon3: Wayne et al., Federalist #51 in Appendix C; Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era" RR; Wayne, ch. 9.

Come prepared to: Define the phrase "constitutionally designed institutional conflict?" Provide illustrative examples. We will review Monday's material on what is meant by the "Big Tent Theory" and how this relates to the question of the degree of democracy that exists in the U.S.

Wed: H. Smith, The Power Game, ch. 17-18 RR

Come prepared to explain: What is divided government and how does it damage the "big tent theory" of democracy?

Fri: Hudson, American Democracy in Peril, chs. 1-3 and pp. 316-318.

Come prepared to discuss: If you had to give a lecture on these chapters and wanted to be sure that your audience, which had read the chapters, understood the most important, most eye-opening points, what would you discuss?

Friday afternoon or Sunday evening, 1 hour film, The Power Game: Pentagon

Mon4: Wayne et al. chs. 12-14; Smith, The Power Game, ch. 13 RR.

Come prepared to explain: How is pork barrel politics a recipe for reelection of both Republicans and Democrats? What is an iron triangle and why are they relevant for our discussion of interest groups and democracy? Also, while reading these chapters make a list for yourself of tools and strategies that either the President or Congressional leaders can use to temporarily build bipartisan coalitions that will break gridlock.

Wed: Hudson, American Democracy in Peril, chs. 4-5 and 319-321.

Assignment (graded as quiz): If you had to give a lecture on these chapters and wanted to be sure that your audience, which had read the chapters, understood the most important, most eye-opening points, what would you discuss? Every student must turn in by e-mail (or under my door) by 10 am (anything later will be docked one full letter grade) a typed discussion of two ideas from chapter 2 and two other ideas from chapter 3 that you believe are significant and interesting.

Fri: Hudson, American Democracy in Peril, chs. 6-7 and 322-324.

Assignment (graded as quiz): Same as previous reading from this book.

Mon5: Open day for review

Wed: Examination 1, Part A -- in class

Fri: Examination 1, Part B -- in class

Have a fun midterm break!!
The Contemporary Party System and the Collapse of Party Democracy


Come prepared to explain: List the reasons why incumbents win congressional elections more than 90% of the time?

Fri: Rae, Southern Democrats, chs. 1-4 (skim ch. 2 and focus on pp. 40-45) RR.

Come prepared to explain: Chapter one is an overview of the book's argument. It will be hard to follow to begin with, so you should skim this and then reread it carefully after you have completed the first six chapters. Why is 1948 the turning point in the shift of Southern allegiance rather than, for instance, 1968? Pay attention to the distinction between economic issues and social/cultural issues. Who wins the 1964 and 1968 presidential elections and how do southern states vote in these elections? Begin making a list of the party factions and their defining differences. Why did southern voters continue to elect Democrats to Congress long after they were defecting at the presidential level? How does Jimmy Carter's election prove to be an exception to Rae's thesis and how does his one term of governance bear out Rae's thesis? Why does Rae believe that the Democrats were waiting for, and hoping for, economic recession prior to the 1992 election?

Mon7: Edsall and Edsall, Chain Reaction, chs. 3, 7, and 9 RR.

Come prepared to explain: Who are the newly mobilized groups (or "New Politics" groups) within the Democratic party that have produced the divisions and wedges that have led to the disintegration of the New Deal coalition? Where do the authors differ on the previous question? Who might the old politics groups be and what kinds of issues did they emphasize? How does the Edsall explanation differ from Rae's (hint - in terms of the group that is emphasized as crucial for explaining the party's decline and in terms of the timing of that decline)?


Come prepared to explain: What do we mean when we say, analogously, that the New Politics groups apply "litmus tests" to candidates in the primaries? 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? Can you make the argument that these reforms and their consequences are a cause of divided government and gridlock?

Fri: Rae, Southern Democrats, chs. 5-7; Hale, "The Making of the New Democrats," RR.

Come prepared to explain: Who is the DLC? How do their opponents describe and criticize them? What role did Super Tuesday have in their grand strategy?

This is the point in the term at which you should begin research on your paper.

Mon8: E. J. Dionne, They Only Look Dead, chs. 1-3.

Recommended: Ginsberg and Shefter, Politics By Other Means, ch. 1.

Come prepared to explain: What is the politics of moral annihilation? Why is this a phenomenon that typifies the post-1968 period of divided government? Does it hurt both parties? Does it hurt one party more than the other?
Wed: Dionne, *They Only Look Dead*, chs. 4-5; Ceaser & Busch, *Upside Down*, ch. 3 RR.

Come prepared to explain: Does the outcome of 1992 Super Tuesday prove that this latest reform has solved the Democrats' problems in presidential elections? How did Clinton overcome the suburban problem that Schneider spells out for Democrats? Pay attention to Dionne's discussions of Clinton's performance in the suburban electorate in these and the following chapters!


**Social Movement of the Right?**

*Are the Republicans a Party with Greater Unity than the Democrats?*

Mon9: Ginsberg & Shefter, *Politics by Other Means*, ch. 4; Polsby, "Party Realignment in the 1980 Election." RR; Ceaser & Busch, *Upside Down*, ch. 2 RR.

Wed: Dionne, chs. 6-7; Wilcox, *Onward Christian Soldiers*, chs. 4-5 RR.

Come prepared to explain: When and how did Republican factionalism become evident? Are the Republicans a "party splitting at the seams" or are they a party on the verge of completing a realignment that is only impeded by a neo-Republican President?

Fri: Mayer, "The Presidential Nominations," RR; Caldwell, "The Southern Captivity of the GOP" RR.

Come prepared to explain: Why might one argue that the electoral mobilization of the formerly quiescent Christian Right represents either the best or the worst development for the Republican party coalition?

Mon10: Dionne, ch. 9 and Afterword; Fallows, "A Democrat Who Admits It," RR.

Wed: **Research Paper Due.**

**There will be a final examination on the scheduled day.**