Politics in America: Liberty and Equality

This course has two primary goals. We will raise questions, offer critiques and provide defenses regarding the quality of democracy in the United States. This is a question about which every citizen should be deeply concerned. We will also survey modern American political history from the Great Depression to the present. Every citizen ought to be familiar with the history of the period that continues to shape and define our politics and culture.

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 three in class examinations (20% each) and one final examination (40%). For a good deal of the term, readings will not overlap with lectures at all. It is therefore important to do all of the readings in a timely manner and attend all classes. 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.

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.

The books for the course are:

- R. J. Spitzer, et al., Essentials of American Politics
- J. Kingdon, America the Unusual
- D. West and B. Loomis, The Sound of Money
- A. Hamby, Liberalism and Its Challengers (2nd edition)
- D. Amy, Real Choices, New Voices

Other readings on the syllabus are on reserve at Gould Library.

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

**Founding of a Nation and Forging of Institutions**

Mon 4/1: Madison and Modern Pluralism

Fri 4/5: Kingdon, chs. 4-5 [3 students]

**Limits of our Democracy**

 Mon 4/8: Spitzer et al., chs. 5-6

 Wed 4/10: Spitzer, ch. 7.

 Fri 4/12: Review/Current Relevance

 Mon 4/15: **Exam 1** (Identification of Terms, Comprehension of Reading)

**FDR and Modern American Political History**


 Fri 4/19: Weiss, chs. 1, 6; 9, 10. [students]

 Mon 4/22: Hamby, ch. 2 & Hodgson, ch. 3.

 Wed 4/24: Hamby, ch. 3 & Hodgson, ch. 4.

 Fri 4/26: Hamby, chs. 4 & 5

 Mon 4/29: Review

 Wed 5/1: **Exam 2** (Format TBA)

 Fri 5/3: Spitzer et al., chs. 3 & 9

 Mon 5/6: Midterm Break

**More than Separated Powers: Divided Government & the Policy Process**

 Wed 5/8: Hamby, ch. 8 and Epilogue & Spitzer et al., ch. 8.

 Fri 5/10: Baer, "Moving From New Dealers to Neoliberals," and Guth, "Clinton, Impeachment and the Culture Wars"

 Mon 5/13: Spitzer et al., chs. 10-12.


 Fri 5/17: West and Loomis, chs. 4-7 [4 Students]

 Mon 5/20: West and Loomis, chs. 8-9

 Wed 5/22: **Exam 3**

 Fri 5/24: Beyond Clinton

**New Institutions for a New Order, or Square Pegs in Round Holes?**

Wed 5/29: Amy, chs. 4-7

Fri 5/31: Amy, chs. 8-10.

Mon 6/3: Further Discussion of Proportional Representation and other alternative institutional arrangements.

Wed 6/5: Last Class/Review for Exam. A two hour final exam will be given during exam period.