Politics in America: Liberty and Equality

Political Science 122 offers an introduction to how political scientists study American politics, particularly don politics. This is not a course in current events; rather, it is a course in which historical and contemporary po- issues and problems of governance (empirical data) are discussed to illustrate hypotheses about how politics w (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-vi and as members of the interest groups and social movements that influence public policy. We will then exam the role of political parties in creating electoral accountability through the nomination and election of presider and members of Congress. We will examine in depth the impact that popular social movements have on partie the politics of compromise and coalition. We will also look at the constitutionally designed sharing of power 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 factors that seem to explain our current political alignment and are likely to predict the future leadership and direction of our country, for better or wo

All readings are drawn from textbooks for sale in the bookstore or are available in the Closed Reserve section c Gould Library.

Goals:

- One goal of this course is to give students a solid grasp of 20th century American political history and prc a foundation for informed citizenship in the 21st century.
- A second goal is to introduce students to social science inquiry, specifically to the logic of hypothesis formation and testing about causation. What is the role of institutional rules in explaining electoral outcomes such as divided government? What is the role of individual attributes, like race, class or gen-political affiliation or electoral behavior? What about factors like region or culture? And does member in organizations like unions or parties explain behavior?
- A third goal is to give first and second year students some experience with the research process and the plethora of resources that are available for students.

Grading: There will be two examinations (30% each) and a research paper (30%). Class attendance, participation, and quiz grades will constitute the remaining ten percent of your grade. Quizzes may be given unannounced in any class. Content of the quiz will be regurgitation of material directly from the readings. The purpose is to create an incentive for regular reading of the material and the ability to participate fruitfully in our class discussions. The lowest quiz grade will be dropped; non-medical absences on quiz days will result in an F grade. 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.

If you have questions about the readings, lecture content, 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 .
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.

3/31 Baer, Reinventing Democrats, ch. 1.

4/2 Kernell and Jacobson, Logic of American Politics, ch. 4; Edsall and Edsall, Race. Atlantic Monthly(RR). We want to understand why the Democratic party lost its position of electoral dominance at the federal and state levels. Region, culture, policy and/or institutions?

4/4 Baer, Reinventing, chs. 2-4.

4/7 Baer, Reinventing, ch. 5; Ginsberg & Shefter, Politics by other means, ch. 4(RR). Are voter preferences based on class? Ought they be? What other factor(s) seem particularly relevant? Who benefit when voters don’t vote their pocketbook?

4/9 Baer, Reinventing, chs. 6-7.

4/11 Lunch, Oregon: The Flood Tide Recedes. Appleton and Francis, Washington: mobilizing for victory; Guth and Smith, South Carolina Christian Right: Just part of the Family Now? Smidt and Penning, Michigan: Veering to the Left? (RR) 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.

4/14 Review

4/16 EXAM ONE


4/21 Hudson, American Democracy in Peril, chs. 2 and 6.

4/23 Hudson, American Democracy in Peril, chs. 3 and 4.


4/28 Kernell and Jacobson, chs. 1-3. Great day for a quiz. Pay close attention to the discussion of Federalist #10. Note the link to pluralism and be sure you recall this from Hudson. How does Shays Rebellion mirror the fears expressed in Federalist #10? How do collective action problems and commons issues under Federalist #10’s argument that in a large republic factions of all stripes will spring up to defend against attacks on their interests, thus checking majorities and moving competing factions toward compromise?

4/30 Downs, The Statics and Dynamics of Party Ideologies

5/2 Review and Discuss paper topic on explaining change and continuity in recent elections, 3 explanations and you devise the test.

5/5 Midterm Break

5/7 Exam Two

5/9 Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, Change and Continuity in the 2000 Elections, chs. 1-3. Were the outlines of the Clinton coalition evident in the Dukakis defeat? Based on the past few presidential elections,
could you confidently predict the outcome in twenty states? Forty states?

5/12�� Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chs. 4-5; Kernell and Jacobson, ch. 11 (Voting, Campaigns, Elections).

5/14�� Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, ch. 6; Kernell and Jacobson, ch. 10 (Public Opinion).

5/16�� Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, ch. 7; Kernell and Jacobson, ch. 7 (Presidency).


5/21�� Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, ch. 8; Kernell and Jacobson, ch. 12 (Political Parties).

5/23�� On this day, in 1959, Richard Allan Keiser was born. TBA

5/26�� Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chs. 9-10.

5/28�� Kernell and Jacobson, ch. 6 and 13 (Congress and Interest Groups).

5/30�� Schneider, Suburban Century Begins; Cook, Suburbia: Land of Varied Faces; Thomas, The United States of Suburbia.


Brooks, One Nation, Slightly Divisible, Atlantic Monthly. (RR)

6/4�� TBA. Paper is due at the time of the final, welcome earlier.