

Politics in America: Liberty and Equality  
POSC 122 – Fall 2019  
Leighton 402  
(MW 11:10a.m.-12:20p.m. & F 12:00p.m.-1:00p.m. – 3a Schedule)

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## I. Course Description

This course provides an overview of American government and politics. The topics covered are the historical development of American politics, federalism, political participation, institutions, public opinion, political parties, elections, and the media. In covering these topics, the course introduces the basic structures, processes, and conflicts of the American system of government.

We will grapple with some of the complex challenges of American political life, which include political inequality, partisan polarization, and the tensions between political freedom and control. First, we will discuss what “political” means, which will set the stage for our exploration of the ideas underlying the nation’s founding and its constitutional foundations. We will examine the development of rules that protect individual citizens from the government (civil liberties) and from the majority (civil rights). We will then discuss the structure and function of the American political institutions and the ways in which they work separately and together to constrain and shape political processes. Lastly, we will shift from our discussion of elites and institutions to discuss mass politics and the behavior of individuals. We will focus on the behavior of the mass public in the political process through public opinion, political parties, interest groups, and the media. Ultimately the goal of this course is to give you the basic tools needed so you will be better able to analyze, interpret, and engage with political events and governmental processes.

## II. Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to introduce you to political science and to fundamentals of government and politics in the United States. The aim of this class is not to teach you *what* to think about politics nor provide a venue for you to attempt to convince others of your political views. Rather, the goal of this class is to teach you *how* to think about politics in the United States.

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Understand the systematic forces—the rules, institutions, and procedures—that structure politics as practiced in the United States;
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system;
- Critically analyze political inputs (public opinion, polls, elections, etc.) and outputs (claims made by politicians and journalists, legislations and policies, media, news reports, etc.);
- Recognize how political parties, the media, and interest groups interact with political institutions to affect policy change in the United States.

### III. Required Course Readings

Theodore J. Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth A. Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabahere. *American Government: Power and Purpose*. W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., Core Fifteenth Edition, 2019. (Power and Purpose)

- Occasionally, I will assign supplemental readings, which will be available on Moodle. This means that material for exams will come from the required text, as well as from class lecture and discussion. This heightens the importance of you being in class and getting notes from a classmate when you must miss a class.
- I also encourage you to pay attention to a quality daily newspaper (recommended papers include but are not limited to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Hill*, and *The Wall Street Journal*).

### IV. Class Structure and Expectations

This term, most classes will consist of the following structure, but we will be flexible if particular events or topics need more attention. If schedules work out, we will also have some guest speakers occasionally join us throughout the term. However, you are expected to attend all classes and exams and participate in all quizzes and discussions.

- Reading Quiz and Feedback (approx. ten minutes)
- Current Events Discussion (approx. ten minutes)
- Lecture (25-30 minutes)
- Class Discussion (20-25 minutes)

You can also expect me to arrive to class on time, to return assignments in a timely manner, and to be accessible during my office hours. I will strive to make this course understandable and accessible for all students. If you have any questions about the content or structure of the course or about specific assignments, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always happy to help if you come to me before assignments or exams are due. Please do not wait to ask for help until after the due date – come talk to me before if you are struggling.

## V. Course Requirements and Grading

The requirements for this course involve both the completion of assignments on your own and your active and informed contributions to our class discussions. Some of your assignments will be submitted electronically via Moodle. It is your responsibility to make sure the file is not corrupted (you can download and view the file after you upload it to Moodle). If you use .pages, rather than Word (.doc or .docx) please convert to .pdf before submitting. Corrupted files will be treated as though they are late until they are correctly uploaded. Your grade will be based on the following requirements:

**READING QUIZZES: (5%)** To ensure you have mastered the building block concepts, short reading quizzes covering the materials in your reading will be conducted at the beginning of each lecture that begins a new chapter/topic. The quizzes will be self-graded in class (feedback will be presented immediately after the quiz) and then turned in to help you effectively encode the basic terms and ideas. Bring a different colored pen to class. The two lowest scores will be dropped.

**TV/MOVIE REFLECTION PAPER PART I: (5%)** After viewing your choice of a political TV show or movie, you will write a brief reflection paper at the beginning of the term about your expectations for how well (or poorly) the show or movie represents American politics. More information will be provided in class.

**TV/MOVIE REFLECTION PAPER PART II: (5%)** Toward the end of the term, you will write a brief reflection paper based on your Part I paper. You will discuss how your expectations differed from course material, as they apply to the TV show or movie watched for Part I. More information will be provided in class.

**RESEARCH PAPER: (25%)** Your paper should draw on course material, be thoughtful, logical, and concise. You should have a clear thesis that you then support in the paper. Final papers should be 8-10 pages long, double-spaced, using Times New Roman 12-point font, and the margins should be 1-inch. You are encouraged to draw on other readings or web-based resources, but you must cite any ideas or materials that are not your own. You must clearly cite your sources using the American Political Science Association citation style. For more information see: <http://www.apsanet.org/media/PDFs/Publications/APSASStyleManual2006.pdf>

The research paper will be broken into four components, due throughout the term: 1) research paper topic; 2) annotated bibliography; 3) introduction draft and paper outline; and 4) final paper. Breaking the paper up in this way should take the pressure off of writing the full paper toward the end of the term. More information on each component will be provided in class. You will also be required to meet with our Writing Assistant for this term.

**TWO EXAMS: (25% EACH; 50% TOTAL)** Students will take a midterm and a final exam. The exams will assess your knowledge of material contained within the assigned readings, from lecture, and from our course discussions. All of the exams will combine multiple-choice questions, identifications, and short essays. The midterm exam will cover material from the first half of the course. The final exam is cumulative, so information from the beginning of the semester will be helpful as we discuss information from the latter portion of the class.

**PARTICIPATION: 10%.** The final portion of your grade is based on your ability and willingness to contribute to our class. What does this require of you? Please prepare for, attend, and participate meaningfully in class weekly. “Meaningful” participation comes in a number of forms: asking questions to clarify course topics, answering questions that I pose in class, drawing connections between course topics and current events, and participating respectfully in class discussions. In other words, good participation is simply being a good member of our class community. Everyone’s experience in this course is enhanced by regular attendance and active participation; conversely, everyone’s experience suffers if individuals do not participate. Remember that a sincere question often adds as much (if not more) to our understanding of the course material as an explanation of the week’s readings. So, don’t be afraid to speak up!

**EXTRA CREDIT:** This year, students have the unique opportunity to submit Constitutional amendment proposals for a mock Constitutional Convention hosted by Prof. Kim Smith Spring 2020. Students will be able to earn extra credit if they research, prepare, and submit an amendment proposal for the Constitutional Convention during the term. Students may complete this amendment individually or as part of a small group. Prof. Smith will also be offering a course in the Spring term that will involve participation in the Convention. Students from our course who propose amendments are NOT required to participate in the course in order to participate in the Convention, have their amendment considered, or receive extra credit this term. Amendment proposals must be submitted (to me and to Prof. Smith) by the end of the term in order to receive extra credit.

GRADING SCALE. The course will follow a standard grading scale:

- A: Achievement outstanding relative to the basic course requirements
  - A 93 or higher
  - A- 90-92
- B: Achievement significantly above the basic course requirements
  - B+ 87-89
  - B 83-86
  - B- 80-82
- C: Achievement meeting the basic course requirements
  - C+ 77-79
  - C 74-76
  - C- 70-72
- D: Achievement worthy of credit but below the basic course requirements
  - D+ 67-69
  - D 63-66
  - D- 60-62
  - F Below 60

ADDITIONAL GRADING POLICIES:

1. I will not consider grade complaints if more than one week has passed after the assignment has been returned to you. Before I review your grade, you must first:

- Wait 24 hours.
- Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
- Submit a formal appeal in writing (email is sufficient—but be clear that it is the appeal in the subject heading) that clearly identifies content in the assignment and the reasons why you think your grade should be changed. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not vague reasons like “I worked really hard.”
- The second grade, higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

2. Late assignments will not be accepted, unless official documentation is provided. Your grade will be lowered 10 percentage points for each day it is late. That is if the assignment is due on Monday at 9:50 a.m. and you turn it in sometime between 9:50 a.m. and Tuesday 9:50 a.m., the highest grade you can achieve is 90.

- The only acceptable (not penalized) excuses for not completing an assignment on time are family emergencies or illnesses. However, in these cases, I will arrange to give you extra time only if you communicate with me before the assignment is due and you provide documentation of the circumstance.

## VI. Notes

You are expected to read the entire syllabus at the beginning of the term. While you are encouraged to print out a hardcopy to read and reference through the term, you will also want to have an electronic version to easily access all external websites and resources. Depending on the dynamics of the class or campus emergency, the information on this syllabus may be modified by the instructor. Students will be notified promptly of any changes.

## VII. Academic Honesty

In writing course papers, students must document all passages, paraphrases and/or ideas that are borrowed from any source, and direct quotations must be placed within quotation marks. Similarly, papers must represent research conducted for the course in which they are assigned and no other; it is not appropriate to submit a paper that has already been or will be submitted to another course. Finally, papers must be the product of students' own work. Papers written by anyone other than the student, including those purchased from commercial research services, are unacceptable.

All work is expected to be your own. Cheating, plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without properly citing them), and all forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated and will be strictly handled according to university policy. If you are uncertain, cite your sources! A discussion of plagiarism can be found at: <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/>.

## VIII. Electronics in Class

You are responsible for taking notes in class, whether by computer or by pen and paper. Occasionally, we may use laptops (or mobile devices) in class to access the Internet for in-class activities. However, I expect you to be responsible in your use of electronic equipment if you do use a laptop in class: please avoid visiting social networking sites, or otherwise browsing the internet on sites unrelated to the course. This can become distracting to your colleagues around you. I would also recommend you read through the discussion (including comments), "The Distracted Classroom" article from *The Chronicle of Higher Education* posted on Moodle, to think about the possible pros and cons of using computers in a classroom setting. Individuals who abuse this privilege will find their participation grade reduced and/or will be asked to move to the last row in the classroom. Please turn off all cell phones during class.

## IX. Course Schedule

Below, you'll find a list of all class meetings and the topics we'll discuss. You should bring any questions that you have with you to our class meetings. In the event that deviations from this schedule are necessary, they will be announced in class.

Readings should be completed BEFORE the lecture. Reading are listed in *italics*.

### WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION AND THE FOUNDING

- 09/16        Introductions and Syllabus Review
- 09/18        Logic of American Politics and Collective Action Problems  
*Chapter 1 Power and Purpose*
- 09/20        Constructing a Government: The Founding, Part I  
*Chapter 2 Power and Purpose*

### WEEK 2 – THE FOUNDING, CONTINUED

- 09/23        Constructing a Government: The Founding, Part II  
*The Articles of Confederation* (in *Power and Purpose* pp. A7-A12)  
*Federalist Papers* (in *Power and Purpose* pp. A34-A42)  
*Antifederalist Papers* (on Moodle)  
DUE: IN-CLASS DEBATE OF MADISON AND HAMILTON
- 09/25        Federalism  
*Chapter 3 Power and Purpose*  
*The Constitution* (in *Power and Purpose* pp. A13-A23)
- 09/27        Separation of Powers  
*Chapter 3 Power and Purpose*

### WEEK 3 – CIVIL LIBERTIES VS. CIVIL RIGHTS

- 09/30        Civil Liberties  
*Chapter 4 Power and Purpose*
- 10/02        Civil Liberties and Civil Rights  
*Chapter 5 Power and Purpose*
- 10/04        Civil Rights  
*Bill of Rights* (*Power and Purpose* pp. A24-A25)  
DUE: REFLECTION PAPER, PART I

WEEK 4 – LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

- 10/07 Congress, Part I  
*Chapter 6 Power and Purpose*  
*David R. Mayhew. Congress: The Electoral Connection. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1974. (Moodle)*
- 10/09 Congress, Part II and Midterm Review
- 10/11 MIDTERM EXAM

WEEK 5 – EXECUTIVE BRANCH

- 10/14 Presidency, Part I  
*Chapter 7 Power and Purpose*
- 10/16 Presidency, Part II  
*Chapter 8 Power and Purpose*  
DUE: RESEARCH QUESTIONS & PAPER TOPIC
- 10/18 Presidency, Part III  
*Chapter 8 Power and Purpose*

WEEK 6 – JUDICIAL BRANCH

- 10/21 NO CLASS – MIDTERM BREAK
- 10/23 Judiciary, Part I  
*Chapter 9 Power and Purpose*
- 10/25 Judiciary, Part II  
DUE: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

WEEK 7 – PEOPLE, PUBLIC OPINION, AND PARTICIPATION

(REMINDER OF GENERAL ADVISING DAYS 10/28-11/05 & 11/01 S/CR/NC DEADLINE)

- 10/28 Public Opinion, Part I  
*Chapter 10 Power and Purpose*
- 10/30 Public Opinion, Part II
- 11/01 Public Opinion, Part III



WEEK 8 – ELECTIONS, POLITICAL PARTIES, AND IDEOLOGY

- 11/04 Elections, Part I  
*Chapter 11 Power and Purpose*  
DUE: DRAFT OF RESEARCH PAPER INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE
- 11/06 Elections, Part II  
*Gelman, Andrew. 2016. "19 Lessons for Political Scientists from the 2016 Election." Slate (Moodle)*
- 11/08 Political Parties, Part I  
*Chapter 12 Power and Purpose*

WEEK 9 – GROUPS, INTERESTS, LOBBYING, AND POLICYMAKING

- 11/11 Political Parties, Part II  
DUE: REFLECTION PAPER PART II
- 11/13 Groups and Interests, Part I  
*Chapter 13 Power and Purpose*
- 11/15 Groups and Interests, Part II  
*E. E. Schattschneider. The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America. Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1975. (Moodle)*

WEEK 10 – GROUPS, INTERESTS AND THE MEDIA

- 11/18 The Media, Part I  
*Chapter 14 Power and Purpose*
- 11/20 Wrap-Up and Final Review  
DUE: FINAL PAPER
- 11/22 NO CLASS – READING DAY

WEEK 11 – FINALS WEEK

- 11/25 FINAL EXAM 8:30-11:00A.M.

## X. Additional Carleton Policies and Student Support

### INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES - HELPDESK

The ITS helpdesk is a centralized support center for all students, staff and faculty on campus. For students, we support their personally-owned devices including a drop-off repair service for software and some minor hardware issues. The helpdesk also supports and maintains 13 [public computer labs](#) and their associated printers across campus. To contact the ITS helpdesk, go to <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/its/services/helpdesk/> or you can call, email, or contact the helpdesk directly by phone at 507-222-5999 (x5999 from on campus). Phone is best for time-sensitive requests. You can also email [helpdesk@carleton.edu](mailto:helpdesk@carleton.edu) (Any email sent to this address automatically opens a support ticket) or contact the Web Help Desk: <https://helpdesk.carleton.edu/> to open your own ticket.

### ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Burton Hall 03) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, sensory, or physical), please contact Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services, by calling 507-222-5250 or sending an email to [cdallager@carleton.edu](mailto:cdallager@carleton.edu) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

### TECHNOLOGICAL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

The Assistive Technologies program brings together academic and technological resources to complement student classroom and computing needs, particularly in support of students with physical or learning disabilities. Accessibility features include text-to-speech (Kurzweil), speech-to-text (Dragon) software, and audio recording Smartpens. If you would like to know more, contact [aztechs@carleton.edu](mailto:aztechs@carleton.edu) or visit [go.carleton.edu/aztech](http://go.carleton.edu/aztech).

### LEARNING STRATEGIES AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Steve Schauz, Academic Skills Coach, is eager to help you develop learning strategies that work in the Carleton context. His goals are to heighten your awareness of your personal strengths and to offer different ways you can approach your academic work so you're more efficient and effective. For details and resources: [Learning Strategies & Time Management](#). If you prefer to learn these skills and strategies on your own, visit "[Helpful DIY Resources](#)."

## LIBRARY RESOURCES

Your librarian for this course and for Political Science is [Sean Leahy](#). You may also email [reference@carleton.edu](mailto:reference@carleton.edu). Librarians are excellent sources of assistance with your research in this class. You can drop by the library's [Research/IT desk](#) to ask any question you have, at any point in your process, or chat with a librarian online 24/7. Librarians help students find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. For more information on hours and librarians, visit the Gould Library website at [go.carleton.edu/library](http://go.carleton.edu/library).

## WRITING SUPPORT

The Writing Center, located in 420 4th Libe, has peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the [writing center website](#). You can reserve specific times for conferences in 420 4th Libe by using their [online appointment system](#). Walk-ins are welcome, though writers with appointments have priority.

If you are a second language writer and believe you might benefit from working individually with a writing consultant on a regular basis this term, email Renata Fitzpatrick, [Multilingual Writing Coordinator](#), call her at x5998, or stop by her office in 420D 4th Libe. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.

## STUDENT HEALTH

Carleton College urges you to make yourself--your own health and well-being--your priority throughout this ten-week term and your career here. It is important to recognize stressors you may be facing, which can be personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. Sleep, exercise, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you flourish at Carleton. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, feel free to contact me and/or pursue other resources, such as [Student Health and Counseling](#) or the [Office of Health Promotion](#).

Carleton College seeks to provide an environment that is free of bias, discrimination, and harassment. If you have been the victim of sexual harassment/misconduct/assault we encourage you to report this. If you report this to a faculty member, she or he must notify our college's Title IX coordinator about the basic facts of the incident (you may choose whether you or anyone involved is identified by name). For more information about your options at Carleton, please go to: [https://apps.carleton.edu/dos/sexual\\_misconduct/](https://apps.carleton.edu/dos/sexual_misconduct/).