

Politics in America: Liberty and Equality

POSC 122 – Spring 2020
Carleton College
MW 8:30 - 9:40 am & F 8:30-9:30 am
Willis 204

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Course Description

This course will introduce you to the basic structures, processes, and conflicts of American government. We will consider the political institutions, behaviors, and policies of the United States to ask the broader questions of what is government, why is it necessary, and what are its problems and limitations. In the course, we will first turn to the founding of the nation to better understand our governmental institutions, identity as a nation, and some of the country's most core and long-lasting conflicts. The second section examines the development of rules that protect individual citizens from the government (civil liberties) and from the majority (civil rights). Following an introduction to the key federal institutions that constrain and shape political processes, the course shifts its focus from elites and institutions to citizens and the ways in which mass preferences are transmitted to government actors to produce actual policy. We will consider the opinions, characteristics, and behaviors of citizens that are relevant to politics. In this section, we will grapple with the questions of whether or not fair and full democratic representation of citizens exists and if it is even possible? Finally, we will consider policy outputs of the American political process and the role political parties and interest groups in the process. Ultimately the goal of this course is to give you the basic tools needed so you will be better able to analyze, interpret, and potentially shape political events and governmental processes.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, you will be able to:

- Identify and understand the structure and processes of federal U.S. government institutions;
- Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the American political system;
- Understand some of the foundational theories of political institutions and behaviors;
- Critically analyze political inputs (public opinion, elections, etc.) and outputs (policy, news reports, etc.).

Required 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)
- *CQ Weekly: Congressional Quarterly Magazine*. Published every Monday. Access online through the Gould Library at https://bridge.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/permalink/01BRC_INST/1tn7c8c/alma991016323706402971

Remote Plan, Course Requirements, and Expectations

My plan for moving to online instructions relies heavily on Moodle. Any student without reliable internet access needs to email/call me directly as soon as possible to make alternate arrangements. While we will still have opportunities for synchronous discussions through Zoom (Google Hangouts will be used as backup if Zoom has issues) during the regular class period, I have planned the class using an asynchronous model, so you can complete work on your own schedule if needed. The following structure will organize what you are expected to do for each lecture:

1. Complete assigned readings.
2. Complete reading quiz (only for days where a textbook chapter has been assigned as the reading).
3. View Pre-Recorded Lecture (around 15-20 minutes) on Moodle.
4. Participate in Lecture Discussion (*two options*):
 - OPTION 1: Participate in Zoom Discussion 9:00 - 9:30 am Central Time & post ONE comment/response/question to Lecture Discussion Forum on Moodle on your own schedule. We will often break out into smaller discussion groups to give everyone an opportunity to participate.
 - OPTION 2: Post THREE comments/responses and ONE question to the Lecture Discussion Forum on Moodle on your own schedule.
 - NOTE: Comments can be audio/video/written.

To facilitate insightful and interesting discussions, you are required to complete the assigned readings *before* each class and contribute to class discussions. You are also required to pay attention to a quality daily newspaper (recommended papers include *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Hill*, and *The Wall Street Journal*).

Remote Learning Resources

- **VPN:** You will want to make sure you have the Carleton VPN (Virtual Private Network) on the main device that you will be using during the term. If the VPN is turned on, you will be able to access more academic articles when searching in Google Scholar. See Carleton ITS for more information if you need to set this up:
<https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/its/services/accounts/offcampus/>
- **Minute to Learn it Videos:** <https://vimeo.com/academictechnology/minutetolearnit2019>
- Video Conferencing and Capture: <https://tinyurl.com/yx8yhaj6>
- Gould Library Guide: Learn how to locate and cite useful political science research, data, and current events at <https://gouldguides.carleton.edu/posc122>. Sean Leahy is the Political Science Department's amazing library liaison and is available to meet remotely if you would like further guidance.

Grading

Your grade will be based on the following:

Class Participation and Attendance	10%
Analytical Essays	30%
Paper I: Considering the Constitution (April 27)	15%
Paper II: Opinion Essay (May 25)	15%
Group Podcast Project	30%
TEAM: Topic Proposal and Academic Citation (April 15)	3%
INDIVIDUAL: Article Review and Critique (April 20)	5%
TEAM: Interview Script (April 22)	2%
TEAM: Relevant Statistics and Stories (April 29)	2%
TEAM: Interview Transcript (May 13)	3%
TEAM: Rough Draft Script (May 20)	3%
TEAM: Final Podcast (May 30)	10%
INDIVIDUAL: Self and Group Member Evaluations (May 30)	2%
Midterm Assessment (May 1)	15%
Final Assessment (June 6)	15%
Total	100%

Class Participation (Attendance, Discussion and In-Class Activities) - 10%

I will be tracking both asynchronous (e.g. viewing pre-recorded lectures and participating in any related exercises) and synchronous (e.g., participating in group discussions during normal class time) participation. An absence will be counted as failure to view the lecture's video, failure to participate in the lecture's discussion board (4 entries OR 1 brief entry + Zoom participation), and failure to complete the reading quiz (if any). I will be tracking all of your Moodle access and expect to see you regularly logging in and engaging with the class. If for some reason, you become so ill or are unable to participate in class, try to notify me as soon as possible. If you

need substantial accommodations, I ask that you first contact your class student dean to ensure you get the holistic support you need.

Number of Unexcused Absences	Penalty
3	Participation grade lowered by 1/3 (e.g., from B+ to B)
4	Participation grade lowered by full grade (e.g., from B+ to C+)
5	Participation grade lowered by two full grade (e.g., from B+ to D+)
6	Participation grade = 0
7	Automatic F for the class

Analytical Essays - 30%

You will write two brief essays (no more than 3-4 pages single-spaced) that exhibit mastery of the topic, critical thinking, and quality argumentation. See “Class Assignment Details” handout for more information.

Group Podcast - 30%

The final project for this course will be a professional-quality podcast episode that student teams will create (about 3 people per team). On the first day of class, teams members and general areas will be assigned on Moodle to ensure the podcasts cover all of the major class topics: federalism, separation of powers, civil liberties, civil rights, Congress, presidency, bureaucracy, judiciary, public opinion, media, political participation, elections, political parties, interest groups. Your podcast should breath life into a published piece of academic research that addresses a research question within this general topic area. Using your own analysis of the published research claims, relevant current events (anything in the past 4-5 years, but I am also open to historical connections), stories, statistics, and an interview you personally design and conduct, your podcast will take what is typically hard to digest political science research and make it palatable, engaging, and more accessible to a broader audience. To facilitate a high-quality end product, the podcast assignment has been broken into several preliminary components discussed in the following subsections. **The podcasts will be published online and made publicly available through the Political Science Department website at the end of term.** For all group assignments, teams should use Google Documents and Google Hangout to collaboratively write the assignments. Your team can choose how to delegate and divide group work, but each team member is expected to provide equal contribution and will be graded according to their level of contribution.

See “Class Assignment Details” handout for more information.

Assessments - 30%

To ensure you have mastered the building block concepts you will be given regular assessments regarding your knowledge and understanding of readings and lecture. Some of these assessments will be embedded in lectures (e.g., the regular reading quizzes) while others components will be scheduled during the formal Midterm (May 1 on your own time) and Final times (June 6, 7:00-9:30 pm is the technical final time, but you can complete the exam on your own time). The reading

quiz that you will take after you have read each chapter will be a small portion of the grade. View them as practice for the larger timed cumulative multiple choice quiz at the middle and end of the class. ASSESSMENT GRADE BREAKDOWN

- (2%) 14 Reading Quizzes (not timed; can take multiple times, instant feedback)
- (7%) Midterm Multiple Choice (timed; can only take once)
- (7%) Midterm Take-home essay (timed; choose one from two essay prompt options)
- (7%) Final Multiple Choice (timed; can only take once)
- (7%) Final Take-home essay (timed; choose one from two essay prompt options)

Course Policies

Grading Policies

A	93 or higher
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	67-69
D	63-66
D-	60-62
F	Below 60

Late Work

Assignments are due by 10:00 p.m. (Central Time) on the deadline date indicated in the assignment. All written work should be submitted electronically on Moodle (Word docs so I can easily add comments/revisions). Note that Moodle time stamps identify the minute of submission, so be sure to give yourself enough time and don't try to cut things too close. Any work submitted late (even by a minute) will face an automatic deduction of 4 percentage points (roughly equivalent to 1/3 letter grade) per 24 hours past the deadline. For example, if a 89% (B+) paper was submitted 1 minute late, it is automatically deducted to 85% (B). If the the paper was submitted 24 hours late, the grade will be reduced by 6 points to 81% (B-), etc. Unless there are campus-wide issues, technological difficulties do not excuse late work. Always backup your work. I highly recommend storing your files on Dropbox. Do not expect any grace period with online submissions.

Extensions

Being able to reliably meet deadlines is a very useful skill. Simply having a lot of work or having a schedule conflict is not grounds for an extension. Take the time at the beginning of the term and build a clear calendar of your respective deadlines and then plan ahead. If you have a conflicting event, find a way to get your assignment done in advance. Prioritize your learning. In the case of an emergency or serious conflict, I ask that you reach out to your student dean and have

them contact me, and we work to find an appropriate accommodation. Because I understand the difficulties of juggling schedules and the fast pace of the Carleton term, I will allow you to have a 24-hour extension for only ONE individual assignment (does not apply to final project or exams).

Grade Complaints/Concerns

I will not receive 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 (Technical problem dealing with errors in score calculations can be sent immediately).
- Schedule a time to meet with me to discuss your grade.
- Submit a formal appeal via email that clearly identifies content in the assignment and the reasons why you think your grade should be changed. Be clear that it is the an appeal in the subject heading. These appeals should refer to specific things in the assignment, and not to vague reasons like “I worked really hard.”

The second grade, whether higher or lower, will become your grade on the assignment.

Academic Honesty

You are expected to abide by fundamental standards of academic honesty. A discussion of plagiarism can be found at: <https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/doc/integrity/>. 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!

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Disability Services office (Henry House, 107 Union Street) 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, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact disability@carleton.edu or call Jan Foley, Student Accessibility Specialist (x4464) or Chris Dallager, Director of Disability Services (x5250) to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

You can learn more about other academic support available at:

<https://apps.carleton.edu/campus/asc/syllabusstatements/speaking/>

Coping with COVID-19

A few reminders as we transition to online coursework:

- This is a stressful time for many so practice self care. Eat properly, get enough sleep, and take care of your physical and mental health.

- Be kind. I have not taught online classes before and am figuring this process out along with you. I promise to do my best to teach in this format, and I know you will do your best to learn.
- Let me know if you experience any technical problem or learning challenges and I will do my best to help.

Ways to reduce stress and cope with anxiety:

- Learning—connect to others through class; develop analytical skills/tools that might help you navigate complex and scary situations.
- Talk to someone.
- Write in a journal or meditate.
- Light exercise. Go for a walk, do some yoga, stretching. I personally have found jogging in place while watching an episode of the *Great British Baking Show* almost always helps!
- Take deep breaths.
- Use the “five senses” method if you are panicking (name five things you can see, hear, smell, and/or taste).

Where can I get help when I need it?

- Carleton Student Health: <https://apps.carleton.edu/studenthealth/>
- Office of Health Promotion: <https://www.carleton.edu/health-promotion/>
- Carleton Announcements: <https://www.carleton.edu/disease-updates/coronavirus/>

Course Schedule

Readings should be completed prior to class. I reserve the right to make changes to the course schedule. Supplementary readings/podcasts/videos will be added on Moodle. I will alert you to any changes made on Moodle.

INTRODUCTION AND THE FOUNDING

Lecture 1 (Monday, April 6): Why Governments? Conflict, Cooperation, and Major Theoretical Approaches to Politics

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 1
- Read through the entire U.S. Constitution, *Power and Purpose*: A13-A33

Lecture 2 (Wednesday, April 8): Constructing a Constitution

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 2, A34-A42

Lecture 3 (Friday, April 10): Federalism

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 3

Lecture 4 (Monday April 13): Separation of Powers

READINGS

- “The Unconstrained Presidency: Checks and Balances Eroded Long Before Trump”: <https://tinyurl.com/y9lmg8k>
- A Madisonian Constitution For All - What would James Madison make of American democracy today? Recovering a Madisonian Congress” By Daniel Stid <https://tinyurl.com/raaanc2>

Lecture 5 (Wednesday April 15): Civil Liberties

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 4, A24-A25

Lecture 6 (Friday April 17): Civil Rights

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 5

Lecture 7 (Monday April 20): Civil Rights

READINGS

- Go on a walk or exercise (if possible) while listening to Episode 4 of *Constitutional* at <https://tinyurl.com/sn7cgog>

Lecture 8 (Wednesday April 22): Congress

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 6

Lecture 9 (Friday April 24): Congress

READINGS

- Browse the Congressional Research Service Reports at <https://tinyurl.com/rjy46ne>. Come to class ready to discuss one of the 5 most recent reports (make sure to select “Reports” box under the *Content Types* box on the left hand panel).

Lecture 10 (Monday April 27): Presidency

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 7

Lecture 11 (Wednesday April 29): Guest Speaker

READINGS

- TBA

Lecture 12 (Friday May 1): Midterm Review and Assessment

READINGS

- No Readings

Lecture 13 (Monday May 4): MIDTERM BREAK

Lecture 14 (Wednesday May 6): Executive Branch

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 8

Lecture 15 (Friday May 8): Judiciary

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 9

Lecture 16 (Monday May 11): Judiciary

READINGS

- Watch *Arguing before the Supreme Court* on Kanopy at <https://tinyurl.com/yxyy35jx>

Lecture 17 (Wednesday May 13): Public Opinion

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 10

Lecture 18 (Friday May 15): Media Effects, Misinformation, and Manipulation

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 14

Lecture 19 (Monday May 18): Participation

READINGS

- “How to Participate in Politics”, *The New York Times*: <https://tinyurl.com/y7prkpuD>

Lecture 20 (Wednesday May 20): Elections

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 11

Lecture 21 (Friday May 22): Elections

READINGS

- READ Chapter 1 of Sides, John, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck. 2018. *Identity crisis: The 2016 presidential campaign and the battle for the meaning of America*. Princeton University Press.
- AND/OR LISTEN to podcast: <https://tinyurl.com/rdkzq6>

Lecture 22 (Monday May 25): Political Parties

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 12

Lecture 23 (Wednesday May 27): Political Parties

READINGS

- Explore the Comparative Agendas Project: <https://tinyurl.com/wpp3342>

Lecture 24 (Friday May 29): Interest Groups

READINGS

- *Power and Purpose*: Chapter 13

Lecture 25 (Monday June 1): Podcasts

PRESENTATIONS

Lecture 26 (Wednesday June 3): Podcasts

PRESENTATIONS