

Liberty and Equality in American Government is an introduction to American Politics. This course assumes that the student has some familiarity with US history since the Great Depression as well as our two party system and federal structure. The course will focus on discussions of our readings and these discussions will enable us to gain a far deeper understanding of the materials. Therefore, reading and class attendance are imperative.

We will focus on a variety of topics in this course, including the election of President Donald Trump, the changes in the electoral coalitions of the Republican and Democratic Parties since the New Deal of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1932), the political causes of sharply increased economic inequality, and a few ideas about political reforms that may become more relevant in your lifetimes.

Our class conversations will necessarily raise divisive, polarizing and even sometimes uncomfortable topics that will involve challenges to what may be already settled opinions you hold. This class aims to consciously take students beyond the Carleton bubble, yet we will do this within the safety and shared community of the College. In some instances the complications that come from new perspectives and information may lead to an evolution or change in your perspective on politics and history; in other instances such challenges may enable you to be a far more articulate and persuasive proponent of previously held perspectives, better able to anticipate and overcome disagreements. If you do not want to have your opinions challenged, if you do not want to be intellectually uncomfortable, drop the course, now. POSC 122 will be taught by other instructors next year and many other courses at Carleton College satisfy the same requirements as this course.

All readings are drawn from textbooks for sale in the bookstore , or articles appended to the Moodle. Daily reading of the *New York Times* domestic sections is an excellent way to see the connections between our historical analysis and contemporary politics.

Grading will be based on attendance and class participation (20%), a Midterm examination (30%) and an end of term cumulative examination (50%).

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.

Students eligible for academic accommodations should insure that the professor is notified in a timely manner.

Cell phones should be OFF during class. Checking your email while peers are talking is very disrespectful (and impedes your ability to participate) and *I reserve the right to look at the screen of any student using a laptop to insure that this affront is not taking place.*

If you have questions about the readings or class discussions, please drop in to zoom office hours or come to my office. My office is 417 Willis, office hours will be announced and are posted on the POSC department website; 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 222-4122, and my e-mail is rkeiser@carleton.edu.

Class 1: Welcome and overview

Class 2: Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding US politics

- James A. Morone and Rogan Kersh, *By the People: Debating American Government* (2019), chs. 1-2.

Questions that follow a Q are designed to help you focus your thinking and analysis about the reading. Most quizzes will be a paraphrase of these questions. *Students are expected to come to class having given time to these questions.* You do not have to write or submit answers, unless there is a quiz.

Q: Is the institutional arrangement of separation of powers designed to create swift, efficient public policy outputs or arduous and easily derailed policy outputs that are likely to produce **gridlock**? Wherever you see the word gridlock in the text, slow down and take some notes about causes.

Q: Political Science emphasizes institutions (p. 6). Think of two or three institutional rules that dramatically affect electoral turnout and election outcomes.

Q: Pluralist and Elite Theories will be a continuing part of the course to the very last class. Be sure to grasp the definitions (p. 5). They are our two competing answers to the question, *Who Governs?*

Q: Figures 1.3A-B and 1.4 should be studied, not skipped.

Q: **Delegate vs. Trustee is an important distinction** that you should think about in terms of when an elected official is more likely to behave in one manner vs. the other.

Class 3: Public Opinion, Interest Groups and Parties

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 6-7.

Q: How are the two separate ideas of framing effects and bandwagon effects derivative of and dependent on low levels of knowledge about politics by the mass public (the *nonattitudes* perspective)? Or put another way, on issues about which you know a ton, are you likely to be susceptible to framing effects or bandwagon effects?

Q: Think about the Delegate-Trustee dichotomy in the light of mass nonattitudes.

Class 4: Interest Groups and Parties: cues for reducing complexity and enabling participation

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 9.
- “Before Deadly Crashes, Boeing Pushed for Law That Undercut Oversight.”
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/27/business/boeing-737-max-crashes.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

Q: What allegedly overstated concept in the chapter does this article illustrate?

Class 5: Congress (incumbency; filibuster)

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 10.

Class 6: The Divided Government Puzzle (Part 1): if incumbency preempts Congressional change but the President’s party does change ...

- J. [Sundquist](#), "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government" (link below)
The colored fold-out at the back of the text book helps you to visualize the shift to divided government that this article discusses, and illustrates the continuity of this problem beyond the article.

Q: Why is the period from 1968 forward seen as unique and irregular in American *electoral* history?

Q: How does divided government promote gridlock? How does divided government create an unclear picture for voters regarding whether the elected leaders of their party in Washington adequately represented their interests? How does this obstruct accountability?

Class 7: Campaigns and Elections: Presidential elections and divided government (part 2)

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 8.

Class 8: Presidential Primaries and Caucuses

- J.W. Davis, “The Case Against the Current Primary-Centered System.”
- L.J. Sabato, K. Kondik, & J.M. Coleman, eds., *A Return to Normalcy* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2021), ch. 2. [course text]
- “Only 9% of America Chose Trump and Clinton as the Nominees.”
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/08/01/us/elections/nine-percent-of-america-selected-trump-and-clinton.html?searchResultPosition=1>

Class 9: A Political/Racial Explanation for Divided Government, Part 3

- T. Edsall, "Race"

Q: How does Racial division produce the election of a Republican president and divided government?

Class 10:

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 5

Class 11: A Cultural/Rights Explanation of Divided Government, Part 4

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 4.

Q: Pay attention to the Warren Court and consider how the court articulated positions that were not in accord with the view of the majority of Americans, the group that Nixon and Reagan called "the Silent Majority." Naturally this breeds resentment from those who the Supreme Court rejects. Resentment against whom (think bigger than the minority)? **Come to class prepared to explain how Abington Township vs. Schempp, Mapp vs. Ohio, and Miranda v. Arizona were cases in which the Warren Court ruled in favor of a smaller faction (minority) rather than the majority.** What years were these cases and was there divided government? *This will require your own research and initiative.*

Class 12:

- Ginsberg and Shefter, *Politics by other Means* ("The Republican Offensive")

Q: [Ginsberg and Shefter](#) discuss three transformations during the Reagan years. These switched former Democratic supporters to GOP supporters by shifting the groups' self-perceptions. They were,

1. Southerners to _____
2. Beneficiaries to _____
3. _____ to Patriots

Class 13:

- K. Baer, *Reinventing Democrats*, ch. 7 ("Counting on Clinton")

Q: And what are the new culture wars in the Trump era that divide the two parties?

Class 14:

Prior to class, listen to podcast from This American Life, "Will I know anyone at this party?"

<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/600/will-i-know-anyone-at-this-party>

Q: Be prepared to write your thoughts and reactions to each of the segments from this podcast! You may use your notes.

Q: For what economic reasons have the corporate sectors of the GOP historically favored a steady flow of immigrants, answering separately for low-skilled and high-skilled? Why was the old Democratic Party in favor of slowing, regulating, and limiting the numbers of low-skilled immigrants?

Class 15: Midterm Break

Class 16: **Midterm Examination in Class**

Class 17: Presidency

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 11

Class 18: Bureaucracy

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 12

Q: Compare Table 11.4 and 12.2 and look to identify redundancy of mission.

Q: Think about Truman's quote regarding the likely frustration that Eisenhower will face -
- could this also have contributed to the expansion of the EOP and to the redundancy?

Class 19: The Trump Impact *Trumped*, chs. 2, 9, 13.

Class 20: More-on Trump

- Sabato, Kondik, & Coleman, *A Return to Normalcy?* chs. 1 and 13.

Class 21: Congress: Candidate-centered incumbents or Nationalization?

Sabato, Kondik, & Coleman, *A Return to Normalcy?* chs. 6-7

Class 22: Institutional Rules

Sabato, Kondik, & Coleman, *A Return to Normalcy?* chs. 8 and 11.

“The Student Vote is Surging. So Are Efforts to Suppress It.”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/24/us/voting-college-suppression.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

Class 23: Significant Changes in Coalitions?

Prior to class, listen to podcast from This American Life, "Will I know anyone at this party?"

<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/600/will-i-know-anyone-at-this-party>

Q: Be prepared to write your thoughts and reactions to each of the segments from this podcast! You may use your notes.

Q: For what economic reasons have the corporate sectors of the GOP historically favored a steady flow of immigrants, answering separately for low-skilled and high-skilled? Why was the old Democratic Party in favor of slowing, regulating, and limiting the numbers of low-skilled immigrants?

Class 24: Similar Patterns of Coalition Realignment?

Sabato, Kondik, & Coleman, *A Return to Normalcy?* ch. 9

L. W. Bergad & L.A. Miranda, Jr., “Latino Voter Registration and Participation Rates in the 2020 Presidential Election.”

https://clacls.commons.gc.cuny.edu/wp-content/blogs.dir/7199/files/2021/05/Laird-W.-Bergad-and-Luis-A.-Miranda-Latino-Voter-Registration-and-Participation-Rates-in-the-2020-Election.pdf?utm_id=29013&sfmc_id=3403683

“No One Should Take Black Voters for Granted,”

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/11/opinion/black-voters-democrats-2020-election.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

Class 25: Biden’s election: Continuity, but with what?

Sabato, Kondik, & Coleman, *A Return to Normalcy?* chs. 4-5

Class 26:

Sabato, Kondik, & Coleman, *A Return to Normalcy?* chs. 10 and 12.

Class 27: Sold Souls and Faustian Bargains

Hacker and Pierson, *Winner Take All Politics*, chs. 1-2.

Class 28:

Hacker and Pierson, *Winner Take All Politics*, chs. 8-9.

Class 29:

- Morone & Kersh, ch. 3.
- Keiser, "Disunited States of America"

End of Term Exam during Finals Period