

PS2: Introduction to American Politics
Professor Gadarian
M,W 11:30-12:45
Classroom: Science Center L32

Office: Trotter 304
Office Hours: M, W 2:30-4:00 and by appointment
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Description.

How does the American political system operate? This course provides an introduction to American political ideas, institutions, behaviors, and processes. Topics include (among other things) the Constitution, Congress, the presidency, the mass media, civic participation, and public policy. Although we will cover the “nuts and bolts” of American government, our focus is on political science rather than civics, which means our task is not to memorize names and dates but rather, to analyze and interpret political phenomena.

Format.

Class will combine some elements of lecture, discussion, and what is traditionally considered the “Socratic method” (targeted questioning of students). Each student will be assigned to be on a panel that will be responsible for knowing and understanding the class material for several classes during the semester. This method is used in the nation’s top law schools, and will prepare you well for upper-level course in political science. Of course you should always know the class material, but students on the panel should expect to be called on to clarify readings, question the author’s findings, and spur discussion.

Contributions.

Essays (20% each for a total of 60%). Three 4-6 page analytic essays. You may, if you wish, submit a fourth essay, in which case I will drop the lowest of the four when calculating your course grade. A selection of questions will be posted on Blackboard under “Assignments” at the end of each unit. You will hand in an essay answering the question of your choice approximately one week later at the beginning of the class period. Each assignment will have a specific due date that will be posted along with the assignment.

Your assignment is neither to do outside research nor simply to summarize the week’s readings but, rather, to analyze the assigned material, reflect on the issues at hand, and articulate your own argument in the form of a well-reasoned and well-supported answer to one of the assigned questions. At least one of these essays must be completed before spring break.

Final Exam (25%). A cumulative exam consisting of identifications and essays. Provided sufficient interest, I will be glad to hold a review session at the conclusion of the semester. More details on both the exam and the review session will be provided at a later date.

Class Participation (15%). A process of *active engagement* that entails more than simply showing up. Accordingly, participation grades are not a “free 15%” but, rather, a reflection of my holistic assessment of your performance in class.

This is your chance to “earn points,” so take advantage of it. Your participation grade will be a function of your participation during each class as well as the class periods when you are on the panel.

Late Essays. Each of you will have two, 1-day extensions over the course of the semester. You may distribute them as you see fit. If you want to turn in one of your essays two days late or two essays one day late, you may do so. If you do not ever want to turn in a paper late, that is fine also. However, these are the only extensions that I will be giving over the course of the semester (with the exception of documented medical or family emergencies). You do not need to ask permission to use these 1-day extensions. Please just note on the top of your essay when you choose to use them.

All assignments are due in hard copy at the beginning of class on the due date. If you will be using your extension, please drop your essay off in my mailbox in Trotter Hall. After you have used your two extensions, all other late assignments will be penalized one third of grade for every 24 hours that they are late. Assignments more than 48 hours late will not be accepted. Unstapled assignments will not be accepted. Emailed assignments will not be accepted.

Readings. There are four books required for this course that are available through the Swarthmore book store. Readings are to be done before class. Lectures and discussions will be based on the readings assigned for that class period.

Books: *The Federalist Papers* – Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison
The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change – Gerald Rosenberg
Principles and Practice of American Politics – Samuel Kernell and Steven Smith (Noted as PP on the syllabus)
The Race to 270. Daron Shaw.

All other readings can be found on Blackboard under the week we will be discussing the readings. <http://blackboard.swarthmore.edu>

Part 1 – A government by the people: The structures of government

Week 1- The Foundations of Government

January 19 — Introduction

An introduction to the study of American politics.

NOTE: To be read before class on January 19

The Founding

De Tocqueville, Alexis, *Democracy in America*, pp39-62

January 21— Class Canceled.

We will reschedule one class for a time later in the semester

Week 2- The Constitution and Federalism

January 26 —Constitutional Provisions and Controversies

The Federalist Papers #s 10, 51, 70 & 73

The Complete Anti-Federalist: Volume 2, Federal Farmer I & II, Brutus I & VI

U.S. Constitution (PP)

January 28 – Federalism and Separated Powers

The Federalist Papers #46

Peterson, Paul, "Who Should Do What," *Brookings Review* 13(2): 1995, pp 1-6 (5)

Buchanan, James "Federalism as an Ideal Political Order and an Objective for Constitutional Reform," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 1995 (PP)

Elazar, Daniel, "The Evolving Federal System," *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 34(2):5-19. (14)

Jost, Kenneth "Gay Marriage," pp1-28 (28)

Class discussion: Federalism – Debating the merits of devolution: Gay Marriage

Week 3- Rights, Liberties, and Institutions

February 2 - Civil liberties and Civil Rights

Lincoln, The Perpetuation of our Political Institutions (5)

King, Letter from a Birmingham Jail (5)

Pearlstein, Deborah, "Rights in an Insecure World," *The American Prospect*. 2004. p1-5 (5)

McCarthy, Andrew, "The Patriot Act without Tears," *National Review*. June 2004. p1-5 (5)

Class discussion: Civil Rights -Should citizens give up civil liberties for security?

February 4 – Representation

Burke, Edmund. *Speech to the electors of Bristol on being elected* in *The Works of the Right Honorable Edmund Burke*. Vol. II. New York: Oxford University Press. (Selection)

Mansbridge, Jane. 1999. "Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent 'Yes'". *The Journal of Politics*, 61(3) pp. 628-657 (29)

Guinier, Lani, *Tyranny of the Majority*, pp1-20, 119-156 (57)

Class discussion: Representation - What is the right type of representation?

Week 4 – Article 2: Legislative Institutions and Policies

February 9 - Congressional Institutions

Mayhew, David, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, pp 3-18, 49-73 (39) (PP)

Smith, Steven. *Congressional Trends* (PP)

Class discussion: Congress - How does the structure of Congress affect policy outputs?

February 11 - Congressional Policy

Arnold, Douglas, *The Logic of Congressional Action*, pp 3-36 (33)

Clemmitt, Marcia, "Pork Barrel Politics" pp1-24 CQ researcher

Class discussion: Congress - Who gets what out of Congress?

Week 5 – The Presidency

February 16 - Presidential Roles, Expectations, Tactics

Neustadt, Richard, *Presidential Power*, pp 29-49 (PP)

Kernell, Samuel, *Going Public* (Selections) (PP)

Class discussion: Presidency – Is the president a powerful political actor?

February 18 - The Presidency as an Institution

Greenstein, Fred, *The Presidential Difference*, pp1-9 & 191-223 (40)
Lewis, David, "Presidents and the Bureaucracy: Management Imperatives in a Separation of Powers System," pp410-429 (19)
Class discussion: Presidency – What matters more, the office or the person?

Week 6 – The Courts

February 23 - The Role of the Court in American Democracy
Rosenberg, Gerald. *The Hollow Hope*, Part 1
Class discussion: Courts – Is the Supreme Court constrained?

February 25 - Courts and the Public
Dahl, Robert, "Decision Making in a Democracy," pp 279-295 (16)
Scalia, Antonin, "Common-Law Courts in a Civil-Law System: The Role of United States Federal Courts in Interpreting the Constitution and Laws" in Canon, David T. and John J. Coleman and Kenneth R. Mayer, *The Enduring Debate*
Breyer, Stephen, "Our Democratic Constitution" in Canon, David T. and John J. Coleman and Kenneth R. Mayer, *The Enduring Debate*
Class discussion: Courts – Should we have an activist court? Do we have an activist court?

Week 7 – Separation of Powers?

March 2 – How Our Institutions Interact: An Example
Recount the Movie
Class Discussion: What does the movie tell us about federalism and the courts?

March 4 – Bureaucratic Structure, Development, and Control
Moe, Terry, "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure", pp 267-329 (PP)
McCubbins, Mathew and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrol Versus Fire Alarm. *American Journal of Political Science* 28 (1):165-77.
Class Discussion: Bureaucracy – What is the bureaucracy intended to do? Does it achieve those goals?

Spring break – No class March 9, 11

Week 8 – Parties and Interest Groups

March 16 – Parties
Key, V.O. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, chapter 14, pp298-310
Aldrich, John. *Why Parties*, chapters 1-2, pp3-61
Class Discussion: Parties – Why do political parties form? Do they help democracy work efficiently?

March 18 – Party Cleavages
Downs, Anthony, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, chapters 7-8, pp96-141 (45)
Brooks, David "One Nation, Slightly Divisible"
Nather, David "Social Conservatives Propel Bush, Republicans to Victory," CQ Weekly pp2586-2591
Class Discussion: Parties - Do parties create polarization or reflect it?

Week 9 – Interest Groups and Voting

March 23 - Interest Groups

Schlozman, Kay Lehman and Tierney, John T. *Organized Interests and American Democracy*, chapter 4, pp58-87 (29)

Billetteri, Thomas, “Financial Bailout,” pp1-24

Class Discussion: Interest Groups - Are interest groups good for democracy?

Part 2 – Of the people

March 25 - Voting Rights

Valelly, Richard – *The Two Reconstructions: Chapter 1* (22)

Keyssar, Alan. *The Right to Vote*, Chapter 3 pp 53-76 (23)

Class Discussion: Voting - How democratic is America?

Week 10: The Public: Public Opinion

March 30 - Public Opinion

Page and Shapiro, *The Rational Public*, chapters 1 & 2, pp1-65 (65)

Zukin, Cliff, “Sources of Variation in Published Election Polling: A Primer” (5)

Class Discussion: Public Opinion- Does the public know enough about politics?

April 1 - The Role of Public Opinion

Bartels, Larry, “Homer Gets a Tax Cut” pp1-48 (48)

Bartels, Larry, “Is Popular Rule Possible?” pp1-5 (5)

Schudson, Michael, “America’s Ignorant Voters” pp1-9 (9) (PP)

Class Discussion: Public Opinion - Can the people govern?

Week 11: Participation in Politics: Who Participates? Who should participate?

April 6 - Political Participation – Who participates? Why?

Rosenstone, Stephen J. and Mark Hansen. *Mobilization, Participation and Democracy in America*, Chapters 1-3 pp1-70 (70)

Class Discussion: Political participation – What determines participation in politics?

April 8 – Political Participation – What counts as participation?

Mansbridge, Jane. *Beyond Adversary Democracy*. Chapters 4, 5, 9 (p. 39-58, 97-114)

Harris-Lacewell, Melissa. *Bibles, Barbershops, and BET*. Ch 1 (p.1-35) (34)

Class discussion: Political participation - Should more people participate in politics?

Week 12: The News Media

April 13 - The News Media as an Institution

Cook, Timothy, *Governing with the News*, chapter 5, pp 85-115 (30)

Class discussion: Media – Do the media govern?

April 15 - The Effect of Media on Public Opinion

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder, *News That Matters*, pp 1-3, 16-33, 63-72 (29)

Gilens, Martin, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy*, chapters 5-6, pp102-153 (49)

Class discussion: Media - Should we be concerned about bias in the media?

Week 13: Campaigns and Elections

April 20 - Presidential Primaries

Bartels, Larry. 1985. Expectations and Preferences in Presidential Nominating Campaigns. *American Political Science Review*. 79(3): 804-815.

Cohen et al. 2003. Beating Reform: The Resurgence of Parties in Presidential Nominations. p. 1-14, 25-50. (40)

Class discussion: Campaigns – Do either of these theories account for the nomination of Barack Obama or John McCain?

April 22 - Elections

Campbell, A et al. 1960. The American Voter. Chapter 4.

Shaw, Daron. 2006. *The Race to 270*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Selections)

Class discussion: Campaigns – Do campaigns matter?

Week 14: Elections and More on Participation

April 27 - Media Coverage of Election Campaigns

Timothy Crouse, *The Boys on the Bus*, Chapters. 1, 2, 6-14, 16, 17.

Larry Sabato, *Feeding Frenzy*, Selections

Class discussion: Voting, Elections, and Campaigns - What determined the outcome: 2008 Elections

April 29 - *You(th) and American Politics*

Constitution : Article I, Section 2, Clause 2 ; Article I, Section 3, Clause 3
Article II, Section 1, Clause 5; 26th Amendment (PP)

Brooks, David. 2001. "The Organization Kid". *The Atlantic Monthly*

Pew Research Center, 2008. "A Portrait of 'Generation Next'"

Cannon, Carl. 2007. "Generation 'We'" *National Journal*

Martin, Courtney. 2007. "The Problem with Youth Activism." *The American Prospect*.

Carney, Eliza. 2008. "Where are the new voters?" *National Journal*

Class discussion: Youth– What is the future of American politics?

May 4 – Exam preparation – Come with questions

May 6 – We will keep this as an open period. If needed, we will have class. Otherwise, you can use it as another exam prep period.

Final Exam - Time and date TBA