

Political Science 104; Fall, 2010
American Politics and Government
Professor David Canon
MW 2:30 - 3:45 p.m. Humanities 3650

Office Hours: M+W 4-5 p.m. and by appt.
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Course Description:

This course is an introduction to American government. By the end of the semester you should have a good understanding of how the government makes policy and why decisions are made as they are. The course will combine accounts of how "Washington really works" from the popular media, scholarly work on the governmental process, and debates on various political issues and institutions. This is an especially exciting time to be taking a class on American politics, with the midterm elections this fall, continuing debates over the war in Afghanistan, and issues such as health care reform, Social Security reform, energy and global warming, and how to deal with the budget deficits.

The course begins with a discussion of the foundations of our governmental system: the Constitution, federalism, capitalism and questions concerning the democratic nature of our government. Then we will examine the American political institutions: Congress, the president, the bureaucracy, and the courts. From there we turn to political participation and examine public opinion, parties, campaigns and elections, the media, and interest groups. Finally, we will see how it all fits together by examining civil rights, social policy, economic policy, and foreign policy. While the course is a lecture class (intimate discussions are a little difficult with more than 400 students), I encourage you to raise questions you have about anything presented in the lectures.

Course Evaluation:

The grades for the course will be based on two midterms (27.5% each), attendance and participation in discussion section (10%), and a final exam (35%). The midterm exams will be a combination of multiple choice and short IDs and the final exam will be a combination of multiple choice, short IDs, and one long essay. The multiple choice and short essay portions of the final exam will not be comprehensive and only cover material since the second midterm; the long essay, which I will give you in advance, is comprehensive in nature. All reading material and lectures will be fair game on the exams.

Books and Readings:

The following books are required for the course and are available for purchase at the University of Wisconsin Bookstore on State Street and the Underground Textbook Exchange, and a Room of One's Own. The books should be shrink-wrapped together as a packaged deal from Norton.

William T. Bianco and David T. Canon, *American Politics Today*. 1st ed. W.W. Norton, 2009.
David T. Canon, John J. Coleman, Kenneth R. Mayer, eds. *The Enduring Debate: Classic and Contemporary Readings in American Politics*, 5th ed., W.W. Norton, 2008.

A few required readings are on posted on my web site (<http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/dcanon/>). Also, I urge you to read a good national newspaper, such as the *New York Times* or the *Washington Post*. The national news weeklies, such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, or *U.S. News and World Report* also would be useful for keeping you current on what is happening in the world of politics. I will make available to you on the first day of class order forms for the *New York Times*. Home delivery (to your dorm or apartment) of the *Times* is available at a reduced rate.

A friendly word of advice on the readings that should be taken seriously: you should complete the assigned reading before the topic is discussed in lecture. At a minimum you should complete the reading before your discussion section or you will not be prepared to participate. Also, many of the lectures will use the readings as a point of departure, so your understanding of lecture material will be enhanced by having completed and understood the assigned reading. The reading load averages about 85 pages a week. This should not be a difficult pace to maintain if you do not fall behind. If you put off reading anything until before the exams will you find yourself staring at 425 pages for each of the exams . . . this strategy is not recommended. One other thing I should mention – the reading load is not equally distributed across the weeks. Some weeks you will only have 30-40 pages of reading; other weeks will be more than 100. Therefore, it may be useful for you to try to get ahead on the next week's readings when the reading load for a given week is relatively light.

Web Sites

W.W. Norton has a “study space” Web site for the textbook that you may find useful for the course. The address is: <http://www.wwnorton.com/college/polisci/ampol/>. It includes chapter reviews, study questions, on-line quizzes, links to other political sites, political blogs, vocabulary flash cards, plus other readings and resources. I have a homepage at “<http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/dcanon/>” that includes links to other political sites and information about the course, the additional readings, and outlines of the powerpoint presentations, which will be posted before each lecture.

Lecture Schedule, Reading Assignments, and Discussion Questions:

The following abbreviations are used in the outline of assigned reading for each day: “ED” for The Enduring Debate and “APT” for American Politics Today. There are a few on-line readings that will be available on my web site.

I. FOUNDATIONS

- A. Introduction to the Course – September 8
Preface and Chapter 1 in APT, xxv-xxix, 2-23.

Discussion Section Questions, September 8 -15 (Discussion sections will meet starting on the 8th after lecture): What are the three themes of the textbook? Can you think of examples from your life that illustrate the idea that “politics is everywhere?” Why is government necessary? Do you think conflict in politics is a good thing or bad thing? Why?

- B. The Constitution – September 13-15
Chapter 2 in APT, 24-61.
The Constitution and its Amendments, A6-A15 in APT (back of the APT book).
Louis Hartz, “The Liberal Tradition in America,” ED, 3-8.

Michael Kammen, "The Nature of American Constitutionalism," ED, 51-59.

Charles Beard and Robert Brown, "An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution: Founding Fathers, the Question of Motive," ED, 70-81.

Federalist Papers #10 and #51, A16-A19 in APT (back of the APT book).

Discussion Section Questions, September 15-22: What were the central problems the Founding Fathers faced at the Constitutional convention and how did they resolve them? What are some of the unresolved constitutional problems? What is distinctive about the American constitutional system? What are the advantages and disadvantages of having a strong central government? What explains the simplicity and durability of the Constitution? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the document's simplicity? What is the "liberal tradition" in America and how did it affect the founding era? Do you think it is good to regularly amend the Constitution to reflect changing values and address current problems, or should the Constitution be changed only rarely? How did the Founding Fathers' view of people help shape the Constitution? Did their self-interest play an important role? What does Madison say about the relation between self-interest and the nature of government in Federalist #10? When should the national government have the power to coerce states to adopt national policies against their will, if ever? Does the Constitution give the national government the power to tell the states what to do?

C. Civil Liberties – September 20-22

Chapter 4 in APT, 98-139.

Jonathan Rauch, "In Defense of Prejudice," ED, 142-49.

Cole, Dempsey and Posner, "Civil Liberties and the Fight Against Terror," ED, 150-66.

Discussion Section Questions for September 22-29: Should the Bill of Rights apply to the states as well as the federal government? Why? Should hate speech be allowed? Do you agree with Rauch's assessment of the problems associated with trying to limit hate speech? If so, is all speech protected by the Constitution? If not, where do you draw the line between protected free speech and speech or actions that may be harmful to others? What about defendants' rights, protections against illegal searches and seizures (as discussed in lecture and in the textbook)? How would you address the tradeoff between security and freedom in the fight against terror? Do you think we have the right balance, or are we undermining civil liberties too much or ignoring security too much?

D. Democracy in the United States – September 27

Democracy and Participation

Howard Zinn and Sidney Hook on "Democracy: How Democratic is America?", on my web site at <http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/dcanon/104spr10/zindem.pdf>.

Democracy and Capitalism

Milton Friedman, "The Relation Between Economic Freedom and Political Freedom," on my web site at <http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/dcanon/104spr10/friedman.pdf>.

Charles Lindblom, "The Market as Prison," *Journal of Politics* 44:2 (May, 1982): 324-36, on my web site at <http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/dcanon/104spr10/lindblom.pdf>.

E. Federalism – September 29

Chapter 3 in APT, 62-97.

Paul Peterson, "The Price of Federalism," ED, 87-95.

George Annas, "Jumping Frogs, Endangered Toads, and California's Medical Marijuana Law," ED, 96-

Discussion Section Questions, September 29-October 6: How democratic is America? Are Zinn's or Hook's arguments more compelling? What are the central areas of their disagreements? How can their arguments be related to the state of American democracy today? Is capitalism consistent with (or indeed reinforce) democracy, or does it serve as a 'prison' for policy makers? Does the recent economic crisis tend to support Lindblom or Friedman? How powerful is the political elite in the United States? What is the proper role for the federal government in terms of controlling the market? How does the tradeoff between freedom and power relate to the debate about the relationship between capitalism and democracy? In what areas should government use its power? How has the balance of power between the states and the national government evolved over time? How are the states fighting back to resist centralization at the national level? What role has the Supreme Court played in this evolution (as in the medical marijuana and assisted suicide cases)? Do you think the Supreme Court should have intervened in either of these cases, or left those decisions up to the states? How is the debate playing out with regard to current issues such as immigration reform and health care reform?

***** First In-Class Midterm Exam on Wednesday, October 6th *****
(exam will cover readings and lectures through September 29th)

II. POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

A. Congress – October 4-11

Chapter 10 in APT, 342-385.

Edmund Burke, "Speech to the Electors of Bristol," ED, 169-73.

David Mayhew, "Congress: The Electoral Connection," ED, 174-77.

John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, "Too Much of a Good Thing," ED, 178-84.

Goldston, Cohn, and The *Pig Book*, "Pork Barrel Politics," ED, 185-205.

Discussion Section Questions for October 7-13 (sections will not meet on Wednesday after the exam): Is Congress truly the "first branch" of government? What aspects of its operation either justify or undermine that label? Do the justifications for the bicameral legislature presented by the Founders still ring true today, or would we be better off with a unicameral legislature? What have been the most important changes in Congress in the last 20 years? What are the advantages and disadvantages of the strong reelection goal among members of Congress? Why do Hibbing and Theiss-Morse argue that having a responsive Congress is "too much of a good thing?" Do you agree? Would term limits help solve the problem of an over-responsive Congress? Is "pork barrel" politics evidence that Congress is not working properly, or evidence that we are getting the type of representation that we want? What are the contrasting views of "pork" presented by the authors? How is the debate over pork related to the roles of delegate or trustee?

B. The Presidency – October 13-18

Chapter 11 in APT, 386-417.

Richard Neustadt, "The Power to Persuade," ED, 206-15.

Charles O. Jones, "Perspectives on the Presidency," ED, 216-22.

Pfiffner and Simendinger, "Politicizing the Bureaucracy," ED, 223-44.

Discussion Section Questions for October 14-20: Neustadt argues that the president's central power is the "power to persuade." Do you agree? Has the president become too powerful? What would the Founding

Fathers say about the current state of the presidency? How are the president's powers limited by our system of separated powers? Have these limits on presidential power changed during war time? Do you think it is appropriate for the president to have strong control over the bureaucracy to make sure that his policy views are being implemented, or should career civil servants be more immune from this political pressure? What are the pros and cons of having a more politicized bureaucracy?

C. The Bureaucracy – October 20

Chapter 12 in APT, 418-450.

James Q. Wilson, "What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It," ED, 254-63.

NCTC report, Posner, and Light, "Reforming the National Security Bureaucracy," ED, 264-84.

D. The Courts – October 25

Chapter 13 in APT, 452-494.

Alexander Hamilton, *Federalist* 78, ED, 285-91.

David O'Brien, "The Court in American Life," ED, 292-99.

Leon Friedman, "Overruling the Court," ED, 300-304.

Antonin Scalia and Stephen Breyer, "Interpreting the Constitution: Originalism or a Living Constitution?," ED, 305-26.

Discussion Section Questions for October 21-27: Does the bureaucracy serve the public interest? What is the proper standard for assessing the bureaucracy? Efficiency? Equity? How does this play out in the comparison of the DMV and McDonalds presented by Wilson? What does the NCTC report on the national security bureaucracy and the reaction to it from Posner and Light demonstrate about how government agencies can be reformed? What are the differences between "police patrol" and "fire alarm" oversight, and which do you think would be the preferable form of oversight? Are the federal courts the "least dangerous branch?" What is the proper role of the Supreme Court in the American political process? Should they be responsive to political forces, as O'Brien discusses? What is the meaning of "judicial restraint" and "judicial activism"? Are they related to "strict constructionism"? Which approach to interpreting the Constitution, Scalia's textualism or Breyer's consequentialist approach, do you find more appealing? What role should the Senate play in the appointment and confirmation of judges? Should Congress play an active role in interpreting Court decisions, as Friedman discusses, or should it defer to the Court?

III. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

A. Campaigns and Elections – October 27-November 1

Chapter 8 in APT, 256-304.

V.O. Key, "The Voice of the People: An Echo," ED, 367-72.

Richard Parker, "Power to the Voters," ED, 373-81.

Louis Menand, "The Unpolitical Animal," ED, 382-90.

Williams, Keisling and Cox, "Voter Fraud or Voter Suppression?" ED, 391-408.

Discussion Section Questions for October 28-November 3: How do voters decide who to vote for? What does this view of voting behavior say about how we should interpret the results of elections? Do elections "send a message" or can we really tell much about what voters want from the outcome of elections? How do Key and Parker differ on this point? Which of the three theories of voting reviewed by Menand sounds the most convincing? Should political participation be encouraged as a "good in itself"? Why? Is voter fraud a bigger problem than voter suppression? Can one problem be addressed without making the other problem

worse?

B. Public Opinion – November 3

Chapters 5 in APT, 140-181.

George Gallup, “Polling the Public,” ED, 329-336.

Richard Morin, “Choice of Words,” ED, 337-41.

C. The Media – November 8

Chapter 6 in APT, 182-215.

Scheufele and Tewksbury, “Framing, Agenda Setting and Priming,” ED, 342-47.

Nagourney, McDaniel, and Prior, “The Impact of the New Media on American Politics,” ED, 348-66.

Discussion Section Questions for November 4-10: To what extent should political leaders listen to public opinion? What are some of the problems associated with interpreting the results of public opinion polls? How can question wording shape the results of polls? How did question wording influence the interpretation of President Clinton’s impeachment? Can you think of other examples how question wording influences the outcome of polls?

***** Second In Class Midterm Exam on Wednesday, November 10th *****
(exam will cover readings and lectures through November 3rd)

D. Political Parties – November 15

Chapter 7 in APT, 216-254.

Morris Fiorina, “The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics, ED,” 409-19.

James Sundquist, “Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government in the United States,” ED, 420-30.

Fiorina and Wilson, “Red Versus Blue America: Are We Polarized?,” ED, 444-61.

Discussion Section Questions for November 11-17: How as the “new media” changed coverage of politics? Is this good or bad for the political system? How have the media changed governing? Do you think they play too much of a role in politics? If so, how could this be changed? How to framing, priming, and agenda setting influence the news that we see? What are the major differences between the Democratic and Republican parties? Would our political system benefit from stronger parties? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of stronger parties? How has divided government affected our thinking about political parties? How does divided government affect the political system? Is “red and blue America” a myth?

E. Interest Groups – November 17

Chapter 9 in APT, 306-401.

Alexis de Tocqueville, “Political Association in the United States,” ED, 462-65.

Mancur Olson, “The Logic of Collective Action,” ED, 466-75.

Theda Skocpol, “Associations Without Members,” ED, 476-87.

Madison, Truman, and Rauch, “Was Madison Right?,” ED 488-510 (you should review *Federalist #10*).

Discussion Section Questions for November 18-24: What are the various strategies used by interest groups to influence politics (as described in the textbook). Which do you think is likely to be more effective? Which of these tactics are appropriate and which should be regulated? Truman describes some of the advantages of political association and organization, while Rauch describes the problems. Whose positions do you find

more compelling? Do interest groups reflect the collective interests of the nation? What are the implications of Olson's collective action problem (discussed in lecture and the text) for the representativeness of interest groups? Do all groups have their voices heard through the political process, as the pluralists would maintain, or are some groups unrepresented because of the logic of collective action? How can collective action problems be solved? How has the nature of group participation changed from the time of Tocqueville through the period the Skocpol examines?

IV. Public Policy

A. Civil Rights – November 22-24

Chapter 14 APT, 492-539.

Abraham Lincoln, "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions," ED, 127-33.

Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter From the Birmingham Jail," ED 134-41.

"Debating the Issues: Reparations for Slavery," on e-reserves.

Jonathan Rauch, "Objections to These Unions," ED, 593-601.

Huntington and Menand, "What Does it Mean to be American?" ED, 33-50.

**** Thanksgiving Break, November 25 and 26 ****

Discussion Section Questions for November 29 - December 3: What is the best means of achieving an integrated society? Describe the progress made in the area of civil rights in the past 45 years. What remains to be done? Do you support reparations for slavery? If you do oppose the idea, are your concerns on the merits of the argument, or more on practical issues? Lincoln and King take opposing views about the place of civil disobedience in trying to promote social change. Which do you find more convincing? If you think that civil disobedience can be appropriate, how does one decide where to draw the line between legitimate civil disobedience and lawless behavior? Do you think that gay marriage should be banned? If so, what do you think about Rauch's argument that gay marriage would not change the institution of marriage as much as previous changes have? Do you think that Huntington or Menand makes a more convincing case concerning recent immigration to the United States?

B. Economic Policy – November 29 - December 1

Chapter 15 in APT, 540-579.

Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," ED, 513-21.

Jim Holt, "The Human Factor," ED, 529-31.

Roger Scruton and Nurith Aizenman, "Regulating Risk," ED, 565-83.

Lomberg, Teague, and Navin, "Global Warming," ED, 532-45

Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Call for Federal Responsibility," ED, 546-50.

Herbert Hoover, "Against the Proposed New Deal," ED, 551-55.

Rowe and Silverstein, "The GDP Myth," ED, 556-64.

Discussion Section Questions December 6-10: To what extent should the federal government have responsibility for making sure that the economy is running smoothly? Is the government responsible for providing a "social safety net," as argued by Roosevelt? Should the market be allowed to operate freely, or is government regulation necessary? How does the "human factor" figure into government regulation? To what extent is it possible or desirable to "regulate risk"? Why should the debate over global warming be considered in a discussion about economic policy? What are the drawbacks of focusing on economic growth as a central economic goal?

C. Social Policy – December 6-8

Chapter 16 in APT, 580-615.

Gary Burtless, “Growing American Inequality,” ED, 584-92.

David John, “Providing Social Security Benefits in the Future,” ED, 602-15.

Krugman, Wells, Turner, and Hacker, “Health Care Reform,” ED, 616-37.

D. Foreign Policy and Summing it Up – December 13-15

Chapter 17 in APT, 616-655.

George Soros, “The Age of Open Society,” ED, 638-40.

Peter Sutherland, “Reality Check,” ED, 641-48.

Lustick, Gaffney, and The National Intelligence Estimate, “Foreign Policy: A War on Terror,” ED, 649-63.

Discussion Section Questions December 13-15: What different techniques does the federal government use to achieve its social policy goals? Is economic inequality a central problem that should be addressed through social policy? What should be done to reform Social Security, if anything? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the various proposals? Does the recent volatility in the stock market and the meltdown of the subprime mortgage market change your views (if you support some type of privatization)? What role should the government play in providing health care, if any? Should market forces play more of a role in health care? What is the proper role of the United States in the international community? Is economic and political globalization out of sync? Does economic globalization pose challenges to the United States more generally? How do Soros and Sutherland differ in their interpretations of the impact of globalization on poor countries? Which argument do you find more convincing? How serious a threat is global terror? Is it a “trap” that political leaders are using to further their own goals, or is it a grave threat that must be tackled head-on?

*** FINAL EXAM, Monday, December 20, 12:25-2:25 p.m., Location TBA ***