

American Political Development (POLS 3019)
Barnard College
Fall 2024

Professor: Katherine Krimmel

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Office hours: Wednesdays 12:30-2:30pm or by appointment

Class location: LL001 Milstein Center

Class time: Mondays 2:10-4:00pm

COURSE DESCRIPTION

American political institutions and public policies are unique in many ways relative to those of other western democracies, and are often inefficient or otherwise suboptimal. Nowhere has this been more evident than in recent debates over the healthcare system and, more specifically, the nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The field of American political development (APD) seeks to understand such puzzling patterns. Why do institutions and policies emerge, why do they take certain forms, when and why do some undergo major transformations, and what kinds of factors limit change? Why do certain institutions and policies *not* emerge? How have racial politics shaped the American state's development, and with what effects? How and why is the American system exceptional from an international perspective, and how does this impact policy? What can we learn about contemporary policies and institutions by examining their historical roots? Questions like these—big questions, aimed at major policies and large-scale change—drive the APD literature.

The APD canon spans American history, from the founding through the contemporary era, and addresses a wide range of topics. For the sake of coherence, our readings will focus largely on social welfare state development from the New Deal to the present, but students are free to analyze any issue area and time period in their research projects. We will also cover adjacent topics that speak to the question of citizens' relationship to government. We will discuss the major factors that contributed to the establishment and form of key policies, and how and why they have evolved over time. We will also discuss how these policies, in turn, have shaped citizens and institutions.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Readings and assignments are geared toward helping students achieve the following objectives:

1. Become familiar with the analytical tools of the American political development tradition and what they bring to bear on major transformations in American political life.
2. Think critically about social welfare policies as “outputs” of the political system, learning how and why major policies were established, whom they included and excluded, and how and why they changed over time.
3. Analyze social policies as “inputs” into the political system, considering how they shape citizens and institutions.
4. Identify an important and precise research puzzle, and use the tools of social science to come up with a plan for investigation.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your final grade will reflect the components described below.

Discussion participation	10%
Reading/discussion journal	20%
Research project	
Questions	ungraded
Puzzles (2x5%)	10%
Existing knowledge	20%
Presentation	10%
Final research proposal	30%

Reading/discussion journal and class participation

This course is a seminar, not a lecture, so careful reading and active participation will be key to its success. Attendance is mandatory, excused only in exceptional circumstances like illness, family emergency, or religious observance.

Journal

Students will keep a reading/discussion journal throughout the semester. Please create a Google document for your journal and share it with me. There should be an entry for every week with assigned reading. The first part of the entry should be completed before class, and students will have time at the end of class to complete the second part.

There is a template on Canvas for the journal. Please answer every question every week. As we will discuss in class, feel free to add a question if there's something you want to track over the course of the semester.

Each class will start with 1-2 students sharing their five reactions from their journal. Each student will do this once over the course of the semester. We will work out a schedule at our first meeting.

This journal is worth 20% of your final grade. Students will receive full credit to the extent that the journal is (1) completed on time; and (2) reflects strong effort to engage with the readings and the course. Each week, students will get a score of 3 (check-plus), 2 (check), 1 (check-minus), or 0 (not completed). Late entries will receive a maximum score of 1 (check-minus) because it's important for students to complete the first part of each entry before the discussion occurs. At the end of the semester, I will average each student's score over the 10 weeks in which we have assigned readings. An overall average of a 2 (check) will translate to an A.

A: 2.0-3.0
A-: 1.9-1.99
B+: 1.8-1.89
B: 1.7-1.79
B-: 1.6-1.69
C+: 1.5-1.59
C: 1.4-1.49
C-: 1.3-1.39
D: Below 1.3

Reading discussions

Reading discussions are the core of our class meetings. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings and think critically about them in preparation for class discussions. The purpose of grading participation is to encourage careful, thoughtful, and consistent reading. Students will come into the class with different degrees and kinds of experience with class-related materials. This is absolutely fine. No one is being graded on how "smart" their comments are; rather, the participation grade is based on the degree to which students are engaging with the readings. This is a learning environment, a place to make mistakes and work through ideas. I ask only that you complete the readings in good faith and come to class ready to engage and listen.

That said, I understand that there can be various barriers to class participation for some students. If participating in class will be consistently difficult for you for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact me and we can discuss alternative options for evaluation.

Cell phones must be silenced and placed out of sight (e.g, in a bag) during class. Laptops may only be used for taking notes or referencing readings. Other activities (e.g., internet browsing, email, games, etc.) are distracting to other students and the instructor. Use of

electronic devices in a manner that is distracting to others (including the instructor) will affect your participation grade.

Research Project

Each student will complete a series of assignments that culminate in an original research proposal and presentation. These assignments are (in shorthand): (1) Questions; (2) Puzzles; (3) Existing Knowledge; (4) Final Research Proposal; (5) Presentation. All assignments must be submitted electronically by the time of our class meeting on the day it's due. Late papers will receive a penalty of 3 points per day (including weekend days).

Questions. Prepare a list of 5-7 questions you have about American politics. Think of this as a list of genuine curiosities you have about the state of American politics. We will talk about how you could mold some of these questions into research puzzles. This assignment is ungraded.

Puzzles. Students will write up two puzzles. Each one should be approximately 1-2 pages, and will be worth 5% of your final grade. Take one of your questions (or come up with a new question if you like) and develop it more fully into a puzzle. A puzzle takes a question and explains why it's interesting and surprising in some way. We will discuss this in more detail in class. There are many ways in which something can be surprising. Are there things you would have expected to change that have been stagnant, or things you would have expected to be consistent that have changed? Are there certain policies you would expect to exist that don't, or policies you would not expect to exist that do? Why do we see Policy X at Time 2 but not Time 1, or in Place A but not Place B? These are all forms a puzzle can take.

Existing research. Choose one of your puzzles, and write a 7-8 page summary and evaluation of existing research relevant to explaining the puzzle. We will discuss this more in class. The evaluation should be specific to the fitness of this existing research for resolving your puzzle. Between the summary and evaluation, you'll explain what we know and what we *don't* know. This will help set up your research proposal.

Research proposal. Students will design an original research project meant to help explain their chosen puzzle, addressing shortcomings of existing research. You can think of this as a mock grant proposal. It can be ambitious, as you will not need to conduct this project yourself over the course of a semester, the way you would for a traditional research paper. But, it should be reasonable enough that you could imagine a researcher (or team of researchers) executing the project.

This proposal will incorporate revised versions of previous assignments. It should explain (1) the puzzle; (2) existing research; and (3) your proposed project. The project should specify the data you would use or collect, how you would analyze it, and what you would aim to learn. We will discuss this project more in class. The section explaining your proposed project should be 7-8 pages. The whole document (with the puzzle and existing research elements incorporated) should be 15-18 pages.

Presentation. Our last two meetings will be dedicated to research proposal presentations. Sign-ups will be on a first-come, first-serve basis. You will have 10-12 minutes to share your proposal with the class. Time yourself—I will cut you off at 12 minutes! Students are encouraged to use presentation slides. Email the slides to me at least one hour before class, so I can load them all up before we begin. Each presentation will be followed by a few minutes of Q&A.

For Seniors

All Seniors who have designated this course as the Colloquium to fulfill their Senior Capstone requirement must also complete the following:

1. Provide constructive criticism and feedback to your designated peer partner(s). You and your partner should hold meetings to discuss your research projects.
2. Attend at least one of the Senior overviews of the library and online resources hosted by the instructor or another member of the Political Science Department.
3. Generate a poster that summarizes your research question, argument, and findings. The poster will not be graded, but is required to receive a "Pass" for your Senior requirement.

POLICY ON USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

We may incorporate ChatGPT and other generative AI software during this course. Students will be informed about when, where, and how such tools are permitted to be used for class work and assignments, along with specific instructions for attribution. Outside of these approved uses, ChatGPT and other generative AI software are not permitted and must be specifically approved by the instructor. Any and all use of ChatGPT and other AI software at any stage of completing assignments for this course must be properly cited in your work so it is clear how you used it and for what purpose. Neglecting to do so may constitute a violation of the College's [Honor Code](#). If you have questions about what is permissible at any point in the semester, please reach out to me. Please also note that this policy applies only to my class, and it is your responsibility to check with each instructor if ever you are unsure about what constitutes academic honesty in their class.

BARNARD COLLEGE WELLNESS STATEMENT

It is important for undergraduates to recognize and identify the different pressures, burdens, and stressors you may be facing, whether personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. We as a community urge you to make yourself—your own health, sanity, and wellness—your priority throughout this term and your career here. Sleep, exercise, and eating well can all be a part of a healthy regimen to cope with stress. Resources exist to support you in several sectors of your life, and we encourage you to make use of them. Should you have any questions about navigating these resources, please visit these sites:

- <http://barnard.edu/primarycare>
- <http://barnard.edu/counseling>
- <http://barnard.edu/wellwoman/about>
- [Stressbusters Support Network](#)

BARNARD CENTER FOR ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES & DISABILITY SERVICES (CARDS)

Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities in accordance with college policy. For details, see the [CARDS webpage](#).

BARNARD HONOR CODE

Students are expected to comply with the Barnard Honor Code (<http://barnard.edu/dos/honorcode>) for all course requirements.

AFFORDABLE ACCESS TO COURSE TEXTS

All students deserve to be able to access course texts. The high costs of textbooks and other course materials prohibit access and perpetuate inequity, and Barnard librarians are partnering with students, faculty, and staff to increase access. By the first day of advance registration for each term, you should be able to view on CourseWorks information provided by your faculty about required texts (including ISBN or author, title, publisher and copyright date) and their prices. Once you have selected your classes, here are some cost-free methods for accessing course texts, recommended by the Barnard Library: find out if your faculty has placed the texts on reserve at Barnard Library or another Columbia library, and look for course texts using *CLIO* (library catalog), *Borrow Direct* (request books from partner libraries), *Interlibrary Loan* (request book chapters from any library), and *NYPL*. Students with financial need or insecurity can check items out from the FLIP lending libraries in the Barnard Library and Butler Library and can consult with the *Dean of Studies* and the *Financial Aid Office* about additional affordable alternatives for getting access to course texts. Talk with your librarian and visit the *Barnard Library Textbook Affordability guide* (library.barnard.edu/textbook-affordability) for more details.

COURSE TEXTS

Almost all of the materials for this course are available on Canvas or as electronic books through Clio. The exception listed below has been placed on reserve at Barnard Library. A few copies are also available in the [Barnard FLI Partnership Library](#). *If acquiring this text will be burdensome for you and/or there are no remaining copies at the Barnard FLI Partnership Library, please do not hesitate to contact me and we will find a solution together.*

Lerman, Amy and Vesla M. Weaver. 2014. *Arresting Citizenship: The Democratic Consequences of American Crime Control*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1 (9/9): Introduction and discussion of inclusiveness and productive discussion in our classroom

Week 2 (9/16): What is “American Political Development” (APD)? How can we use APD tools to identify and pursue puzzles in American politics?

- Reading assignment
 - *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*, Ed. Richard Vallely, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1-3 [Access through Clio]
- Additional assignment: Questions due

Week 3 (9/23): “The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time”

- Reading assignment
 - Kennedy, David M. 2009. “What the New Deal Did.” *Political Science Quarterly* 124(2): 251-268.
 - Katznelson, Ira. 2013. *Fear Itself: The New Deal and the Origins of Our Time*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co. Introduction, Chapters 1 and 7 [Canvas].

Week 4 (9/30): The G.I. Bill

- Reading assignment
 - Katznelson, Ira. 2005. *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: W.W. Norton. Preface and Chapter 5. [Canvas]
 - Canaday, Margot. 2003. “Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship under the 1944 G.I. Bill.” *Journal of American History* 90(3): 935-57. [Clio]
- Additional assignment: Puzzle assignment #1 due

Week 5 (10/7): Social Security

- Reading assignment
 - Campbell, Andrea Louise. 2005. *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Political Activism and the American Welfare State*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1-2, 5-6. [Book available electronically through Clio]
 - Mettler, Suzanne. 1999. “The Stratification of Social Citizenship: Gender and Federalism in the Formation of Old Age Insurance and Aid to Dependent Children.” *Journal of Policy History* 11: 31-58. [Canvas]

Week 6 (10/14): Homeownership

- Reading assignment
 - Thurston, Chloe. 2018. *At the Boundaries of Homeownership: Credit, Discrimination, and the American State*. Chapters 1-5. [Book available electronically through Clio]
- Additional assignment: Puzzle assignment #2 due

Week 7 (10/21): Debt relief

- Reading assignment
 - Zackin, Emily and Chloe Thurston. 2024. *The Political Development of American Debt Relief*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Selection TBD. [Access through Clio]

Week 8 (10/28): Policy Implementation

- Reading assignment
 - Herd, Pamela and Donald P. Moynihan. 2018. *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means*. Introduction and Chapter 1.
 - Lipsky, Michael. 1981. *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation. Part 1. [Book available electronically through Clio]

Week 9 (11/4): No class (election holiday)

Week 10 (11/11): Healthcare

- Reading assignment
 - Hacker, Jacob. *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle Over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Introduction. [Canvas]
 - Hacker, Jacob. 2010. "The Road to Somewhere: Why Health Reform Happened: Or Why Political Scientists Who Write about Public Policy Shouldn't Assume They Know How to Shape It." *Perspectives on Politics* 8(3): 861-876. [Canvas]
 - Herd, Pamela and Donald P. Moynihan. 2018. *Administrative Burden: Policymaking by Other Means*. Chapter 4. [Canvas]
- Additional assignment:
 - Existing Knowledge assignment due

Week 11 (11/18): The carceral state

- Reading assignment
 - Lerman, Amy and Vesla M. Weaver. 2014. *Arresting Citizenship: The Democratic Consequences of American Crime Control*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 4-9. [Book on reserve at library, not available electronically.]

Week 12 (11/25): The growth of the invisible welfare state

- Reading assignment
 - Mettler, Suzanne. 2011. *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Book available electronically through Clio]

Week 13 (12/4): Presentations

Week 14 (12/11): Presentations

- Research proposal assignment due