

Introduction to American Politics - W1201
Fall 2009

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Office Hours: Thursday 2:00-4:00, and by appointment

Teaching Assistants:

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Course Description

This course develops a context for understanding contemporary American politics both as participant-observers as well as students. Why do many Americans feel that the American political system is broken? Why does there seem to be a persistent, if not growing gap between the public's ideals and the performance of American political and civic institutions? The second goal of the course is to help students understand the craft of political science. What is political science? Why do political scientists ask the questions that they do? And, how do they go about answering these questions? Attempts to address these and other questions are the foundations for course readings, lecture and discussion. We will look at issues such as democracy, institutional performance, participation, and political change.

Course Requirements

Participation: Class participation is encouraged and required. The questions that we will be addressing are challenging ones that have engaged Americans and others for generations. There are no dumb questions in this class, but thoughtful answers from all of us. Students are required to register and attend a discussion section. Attendance and participation will be a part of the course grade.

Reading Assignments: Students are expected to read assignments prior to class and section. Class discussion will begin but not end with these readings.

In-class Debate: There will be one in-class debate during the semester (currently scheduled for October 14). Attendance is required in order to complete the written assignment.

Quizzes: Unannounced quizzes may be given if in the instructor's opinion, class participation and/or preparation is not satisfactory.

Exams: There will be a Midterm Exam that will cover the first half of the semester. The Final Exam will cover the entire semester, but will probably emphasize the second half of the semester. Both exams will cover lectures and readings.

Assignment due dates: All assignments are due *in-person* at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized one grade for each day they are late (including weekends). Exceptions to this policy must be cleared by the instructor **at least 3 days** prior to the due date.

Academic Honesty: A given. The Barnard College Honor Code, approved by the student body in 1912, states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by refraining from every form of dishonesty in our academic life. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any papers or books not authorized by the instructor in examinations, or to present oral work or written work which is not entirely our own, unless otherwise approved by the instructor. We consider it dishonest to remove without authorization, alter, or deface library and other academic materials. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

The letter as well as the spirit of this code applies to all students in this class.

Grade distribution	Percent of Total Grade
Class Participation	20
Attendance at section meetings in mandatory	
Empirical assignment	15
Instructions will be handed out in section	
In-class debate/ Writing Assignment	20
Midterm	20
Final Exam	25

Statement on Disability

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. Disabled students who need test or classroom accommodations must be registered in advance with their institution's Office of Disability Services.

Course Readings

Assigned books are available at Book Culture bookstore, 536 West 112th Street. Articles readings are available via CourseWorks, JSTOR or CLIO; e-books are available via CLIO; assigned books are on reserve at Barnard College Library.

Books (in order of use)

Stephen E. Frantzich and Howard R. Ernst, *The Political Science Toolbox* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009)

Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (Yale University Press, 2002)

John Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (University of Chicago Press, 1999)

Jennifer Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Course Schedule

Week 1: Course Introduction

September 9

Week 2: Current Approaches to the Study of American Politics

September 14, 16

Frantzich & Ernst: Introduction

Robert A. Dahl, "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest," *American Political Science Review* [hereafter *APSR*] 55:4 (1961), pp 763-772. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952525>

Barry R. Weingast, "Rational-Choice Institutionalism," in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002) PDF

Brian Glenn, "The Two Schools of American Political Development," *Political Studies Review* 2 (2), 153-65, 2004) PDF

Donald P. Green and Alan S. Gerber, "Reclaiming the Experimental Tradition in political Science" in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002) PDF

Week 3: Constitution

September 21, 23

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 1

Dahl, *How Democratic is the Constitution*, (Yale University Press, 2002). Chapters 1-4

John P. Roche, "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action," *APSR* 55:4 (December, 1961), pp. 799-816 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952528>

David Brian Robertson, "Madison's Opponents and Constitutional Design," *APSR* 99: 2 (May 2005), pp 225-243 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30038934>

Constitution in Practice

Barry Weingast, "Political Stability and Civil War: Institutions, Commitment, and American Democracy," in *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton University Press, 1998) PDF

Brian J. Gaines, "Popular Myths about Popular Vote-Electoral College Splits," *PS: Political Science and Politics* [hereafter *PS*] 34:1 (March 2001), pp. 70-75.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1350312>

Dahl, *How Democratic is the Constitution*, compare above with chapters 6 & 7.

No class – Monday, September 28

Week 4: Presidency**September 30; October 5, 7**

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 3

Presidential PowerRichard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (Simon and Schuster, 1990), Chapters 1 and 3 PDFArthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. PDFWilliam Leuchtenberg, "Waiting for Franklin D.," in *In the Shadow of FDR: From Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan* (Cornell University Press, 1983) PDFStudying the PresidencyGeorge C. Edwards, "Studying the Presidency," *The Presidency and the Political System* () pp 29-46 PDFStephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), Chapters 1-3 PDF**In class debate: October 7****Writing Assignment on Presidents Due: October 12****Weeks 5: Congress****October 12, 14**

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 2

Congress: Norms & StructureNelson Polsby, "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives," *APSR* 62: (1968) pp. 144-68. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1953331>Donald R. Matthews, "The Folkways of the United States Senate: Conformity to Group Norms and Legislative Effectiveness," *APSR* 53: (1959) pp. 1064-89
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952075>Samuel C. Patterson, "The Professional Staffs of Congressional Committees," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 15: (1970)22-37 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2391183>Roger H. Davidson, "The New Centralization on Capitol Hill," *Review of Politics* 50: (1988)345-64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407904>Congress: RepresentationRichard F. Fenno, Jr., "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration," *APSR* 71:3 (1977) pp 883-917. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1960097>Carol Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests* (Harvard University Press, 1993) Chapters 1, 2, 9, 10 PDF

Week 6: Supreme Court
Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 4

October 19, 21

Justin Crowe, The Forging of Judicial Autonomy: Political Entrepreneurship and the Reforms of William Howard Taft, *Journal of Politics* [hereafter *JOP*], 69:1 (February 2007), pp 73-87 PDF

Robert Dahl, "Decision-making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as a National Policymaker," *Emory Law Journal* 50:2 (2001), pp 563-82 PDF

Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth, "The Influence of Stare Decisis on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices," *American Journal of Political Science* [hereafter *AJPS*] 40 (1996):971-1003 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111738>

William Mishler and Reginald Sheehan, "The Supreme Court as a Countermajoritarian Institution? The Impact of Public Opinion on Supreme Court Decisions," *APSR* 87 (1993): 87-101. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2938958>

Week 7: Bureaucracy
Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 3

October 26

Michael Nelson, "A Short, Ironic History of American National Bureaucracy," *JOP* 44 (1982): 747-778. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2130516>

Samuel Kernell and Michael P. McDonald, "Congress and America's Political Development: the Transformation of the Post Office from Patronage to Service," *AJPS* 43: (1999) pp 792-811. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2991835>

Hugh Heclo, "Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment," in *The New American Political System*, ed. Anthony King, (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute), pp. 87-124 PDF

Midterm: Wednesday, October 28

No class: Monday, November 2

Week 8: Parties
Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 7

November 4, 9

Structure and Behavior

John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Chapters 1, 2, 6-9

APSA Committee on Political Parties, "A Report of the Committee on Political Parties. *APSR* (1950). Skim, but read especially "Summary of Conclusions and Proposals" http://www.apsanet.org/~pop/APSA_Report.htm#REPORT

Week 9: Realignment Theory and Voting Behavior**November 11, 16**

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 7 & 8

V.O. Key, Jr., "A Theory of Critical Elections," *JOP* 17 (1955), 3-18<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2126401>V.O. Key, "Secular Realignment and the Party System," *JOP* 21 (May, 1959): 198-210.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2127162>

Peter F. Nardulli, "Concept of a Critical Realignment Electoral Behavior, and Political Change,"

APSR 89 (Mar., 1995): 10-22 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083071>Larry M. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior 1952-1996" *AJPS* 44: (2000) pp 35-50.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2669291>**Week 10: Political Participation****November 18, 23**

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 8

Running for officeJames Bryce, "Why Great Men are Not Chosen President," *The American Commonwealth* PDFDavid T. Canon, "Sacrificial Lambs or Strategic Politicians? Political Amateurs in U.S. House Elections," *AJPS* 37: 4 (Nov., 1993), pp. 1119-1141<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111546>Jennifer Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). TBACitizen ParticipationRobert Putnam, "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS* 28 (1995) pp 664-683<http://www.jstor.org/stable/420517>Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman, "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation," *APSR* 89 (1995): 271-294<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082425>**Week 11: Public Opinion and the Media****November 25, 30; December 2**Public OpinionSusan Herbst, *Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics* (Chicago, 1993) TBAPhilip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter (New York: Free Press, 1964), 206-261. PDFJohn Zaller and Stanley Feldman, "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *AJPS* 36 (1992): 579-616.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111583>

The Media

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 6

Michael Schudson, "The News Media as Political Institutions," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 5: 249-269. Available via CLIO

Stephen Ansolabehere, Shanto Iyengar, Adam Simon, and Nicholas Valentino, "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *APSR* 88 (1994):829-838.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082710>

Markus Prior, "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout," *AJPS* 49 (2005):577-592
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3647733>

Week 12: Explaining Political Change**December 7, 9**

Samuel P. Huntington, "American Ideals versus American Institutions," *Political Science Quarterly*, 97:1 (Spring1982), pp. 1-37 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2149312>

David R. Mayhew, "Wars and American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics*, 3 (Sep., 2005): 473-493. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3689019>

Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (1921). <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/TURNER/>

James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (Yale University Press, 2003) Introduction and Chapter 15: Modern Morals PDF

Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" (1964) PDF

Week 13: Course conclusion**December 14**

FINAL EXAM – Wednesday, December 23rd (Tentative Date)