

Political Science W1201
Introduction to American Politics
Fall 2013

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Office Hours: T: 11-1 or by appointment
Class Location: 202 Altschul Hall (Barnard)
Class Time: MW 2:40-3:55

TA: Michael Schwam-Baird (ms4195@columbia.edu)
Sections – Thursdays – 9-9:50, 10-10:50 Lehman 201

TA: Matthew Saleh (mcs2222@columbia.edu)
Sections – Fridays – 10-10:50, 11-11:50 Lehman 201

Last Modified: September 2

Course Description

The American political system appears to be facing a crisis. But exactly what kind of crisis is it? Is it the kind of crisis that can be ameliorated with reforms or is it the kind that demands something more transformative? This course will be utilizing different conceptions of democracy to evaluate three critical aspects of democracy (the founding, the constitution and constitutionalism, and the development of political institutions over time), as they pertain to the United States. Overarching themes include: What does it mean for a country to be democratic? What are the different facets of democracy? What are the inherent tensions within a democratic state? Can democracy evolve or devolve over time? What is the importance, if any, of democracy? The goal of the class is to not only illuminate the complexities of the American political system but to also think critically about how governance in the United States is perpetuated and negotiated.

Course Structure, Requirements and Grading

With few exceptions, each class will include lecture and discussion. Reading assignments must be completed before each class begins. Regular attendance, keeping up with assignments and class participation is required, and will enhance your (and my) enjoyment of the material. There is one mid-term and one final.

Requirements are as follows:

Attendance and Participation:	10%
Homework Assignment (3 articles on Congress):	20%
Mid-Term (12-15 pages)	30%
Final (15-20 pages)	40%

Class Participation:

An overview of the readings for the week will be covered at the beginning of each class. The rest of the class time will focus on interrogating the broader questions and themes that are our focus for the semester. You are expected to read the assignments for class, participate in class and sections, and contribute thoughtful and informed questions and comments to the discussion. Students share a responsibility in ensuring that class time is used productively. Remember, this class will succeed only to the extent that you participate.

Course Policy:

- Attendance for class and section is required
- Late papers will be penalized in a timely fashion
- Disruptive classroom behavior will not be tolerated
- Laptop Policy – If you are going to bring a laptop to class, please sit in the back. It can be a distraction to those around you.
- If you are facing **any** difficulties in this course, please contact me immediately.
- Bring the assigned readings to class
- **You must keep a copy of each of the assignments you hand in.**
- Participation: Because much of the class will be probing, dissecting and analyzing the different debates surrounding controversial subjects, it is absolutely crucial that everybody actively participates.

Readings

Course books are available at Columbia University Bookstore. Books will also be available at Barnard Library Reserve.

Electronic Articles (CourseWorks and Internet)

Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*

Federalist Papers

Daniel Lazare, *The Frozen Republic*

Alan Abramowitz, *The Polarized Public*

Statement on Academic Honesty

In this class, we will be analyzing the thoughts, arguments and evidence of others. This work will be critical in helping you to develop your own ideas. Plagiarism occurs when you present someone else's ideas, arguments, or evidence as your own without attribution or acknowledgement. Plagiarism occurs in (but is not limited to) the following instances: copying or paraphrasing someone else's writing without acknowledgement; using someone else's facts or ideas without acknowledgement; handing in someone else's work, or work that you have handed in for credit for another course.

SCHEDULE:

Class #1 (9/4): Introduction

- Arundhati Roy, “What Have We Done to Democracy?,” *The Nation*

SECTION ONE – American Founding: Republicanism and Liberalism

Q: How democratic was the United States initially?

Class #2 (9/9): U.S. before the U.S.

- Jack Greene, *Peripheries and Center*, p. 8-42
- Gordon Wood, *American Revolution*, p. 3-74

Class #3 (9/11): U.S. under the Articles of Confederation

- Gordon Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p. 46-75, 306-342
- Gordon Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p. 393-429

Class #4 (9/16): The Constitution-Making Process, Part 1

- Jon Elster, “Arguing and Bargaining in Two Constituent Assemblies,” p. 2-78

Class #5 (9/18): The Constitution-Making Process, Part 2

- Charles Roll, “We, Some of the People, Apportionment in the Thirteen State Conventions Ratifying the Constitution,” p. 21-40
- Bruce Ackerman, *We the People, Vol. 2, Transformations*, p. 34-39
- Frederick Douglass, “The Meaning of July Fourth to the Negro?”
- William Lloyd Garrison, “Address of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society”

Class #6 (9/23): Federalists, Part 1

- Federalist Papers - #1, 3, 6, 10, 23, 37, 39

Class #7 (9/25): Federalists, Part 2

- Federalist Papers – 47, 48, 49, 51, 57, 62, 70, 73, 78, 84

Class #8 (9/30): Anti-Federalists, Part 1

- Anti-federalist Papers- Brutus #1, 3, 4, 11, 15
- Letter from the federal farmer (Maryland) - 2, 4, 5

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus00.htm>

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/fedfar00.htm>

Class #9 (10/2): Debate/Review

- Isaac Kramnick, “Editor’s Introduction to the Federalist Papers” – p. 40-75

Class #10 (10/7): MID TERM PAPER IS DUE

SECTION TWO – Constitutionalism

Q: Has the constitution and our understanding of it helped or hindered democracy?

Q: What are the temporal dimensions of democracy?

Class #11 (10/9): Constitutionalism – Part 1

- Stephen Holmes, “Precommitment and the Paradox of Democracy,” p. 134-177
- Joyce Appleby, “Heirs and the Disinherited,” p. 798-813

Class #12 (10/14): Constitutionalism, Part 2a

- Daniel Lazare, *The Frozen Republic – How the Constitution is Paralyzing Democracy*, p.1-9, 86-162

Class #13 (10/16): Constitutionalism, Part 2b

- Daniel Lazare, *The Frozen Republic – How the Constitution is Paralyzing Democracy*, p.163-211, 285-310

Class #14 (10/21): Constitutionalism Part 3

- Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, p. 1-72

Class #15 (10/23): Constitutionalism – Part 3b

- Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?*, p. 73-162

Class #16 (10/28): Review

- Christopher Hayes, *Twilight of the Elites*, p. 1-20

SECTION THREE – Historical Development of Institutions

Q: Is there a problem facing democracy today?

Q: If there is a problem, what should be done?

Q: To what degree does the founding and/or historical development of political institutions relate to the current problems American democracy?

Class #17 (10/30): Presidency, Part 1

- *Federalist Papers* 8
- “Cato” Letter V

http://www.constitution.org/afp/cato_05.htm

- Juan Linz, *The Failure of Presidential Democracy*, p. 3-22
- Arthur Schlesinger, *The Imperial Presidency*, p. vii-x, p. 177-207
- Charlie Savage, *Takeover*, p. 228-249
- Michael Desch, “The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Liberal Tradition and Obama’s Counterterrorism Policy,” in *PS*, p. 425-429

Class #18 (11/6): Presidency, Part 2

- Stephen Skowronek, “The Imperial Presidency Thesis Revisited: George W. Bush at the Point of No Return”
- Stephen Holmes, “Apocalypse Now?” *The Nation*
- James Traub, “The End of American Intervention,” *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 2012
- David Cole, “After September 11: What We Still Don’t Know,” in *New York Review of Books*, September 29, 2011

Class #19 (11/11): Courts, Part 1

- Alexander Bickel, *The Least Dangerous Branch*, p. 1-33
- *Federalist Papers* 78
- Ronald Dworkin, “What the Court really Said,” *New York Review Of Books*, Vol. 51, no. 13, August 12, 2004
- Justice Robert Jackson’s Majority Opinion in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette*, 319 U.S. 624 (1933)

<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase.pl?navby=CASE&court=US&vol=319&page=624>

Class #20 (11/13): Courts, Part 2

- Larry Kramer, *Popular Constitutionalism*, p. 227-248
- Michael Klarman, *From Jim Crow to Civil Rights*, p. 3-7, 443-468
- Justice Robert Jackson’s Dissenting Opinion in *United States v. Korematsu*, 323 U.S. 214 (1944)

<http://caselaw.lp.findlaw.com/scripts/getcase/pl?court=us&vol=323&invol=214>

Class #21 (11/18): Congress: Appleby/Holmes & Dahl

- George Packer, “The Empty Chamber” in *The New Yorker*

- The Economist, “A Study in Paralysis”
- Sam Wang, “*The Great Gerrymander of 2012*” *New York Times*
- Paul Krugman, “A Dangerous Dysfunction” *New York Times*
- APSA Task Force, “American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality”

Class #22 (11/20): Congress: Dahl, Part 2

- Alan Abramowitz, *The Polarized Public*, p. xi - 144

Class #23 (11/25): Congress: Lazare

- Jonathan Rauch, *Demosclerosis*, p. 121-158
- Ezra Klein, “Let’s Talk,” *New Yorker*
- Lawrence Lessig, “How to Get our Democracy Back” in *The Nation*
- Lawrence Jacobs and Desmond King, “America’s Political Crisis: The Unsustainable State in a Time of Unraveling”

Class #24 (11/27): Putting it all together, Part 1

- James Fallows, “How America Can Rise Again” in *The Atlantic*
- Fareed Zakaria, “Are America’s Best Days Behind Us?” in *Time*
- Joseph Nye, “Zakaria’s World” in *Time*

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT IS DUE: 3 articles about Congress (1 article from a Lazarian perspective, 1 article from a Dahlian perspective and 1 article from a Appleby/Holmes perspective)

Class #25 (12/2): Putting it all together, Part 2

- Ruth Milkman, Stephanie Luce and Penny Lewis, *Changing the Subject: A Bottom-Up Account of Occupy Wall Street in New York City*
- Gordon Lafer, “Why Occupy Wall Street Has Left Washington Behind,” in *The Nation*
- Anne Applebaum, “Is the Global Occupy Movement Undermining Democracy rather than Strengthening it?,” in *Slate.com*
- Frances Fox Piven and Lorrainen Minnite, “Movements Need Politicians – and Vice Versa” in *The Nation*

Class #26 (12/4): Homework Handout

- Go over homework articles

Class #27 (12/9): Review