



POL 386Y1Y

U.S. Government and Politics

2020-2021

Instructor: Dr. Ryan Hurl

Meeting Code: LEC 0101

Lecture Times: Monday 12- 2pm

Location: BL 325

Claude T. Bissell Building

Office: Sidney Smith 3033

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Office Hours: Mondays, 3-4pm or by appointment

Course Description



Well, it has been quite a year.

Quite a few years, in fact.

The United States, over the past half decade, has gone through some of the most bizarre political events in its entire history— beginning with the unexpected rise and electoral triumph of Donald Trump, and continuing with unprecedented disruption of the covid-crisis, and the very much precedented breakdown of order and the rise of quite literal partisan warfare.

What are we to make of all of this?

This course will give you an opportunity to enjoy the spectacle of American political theatre, while at the same time helping you achieve a deeper understanding of the ideas, institutions, and interests that shape American political life. To achieve this, you will have to move beyond the day to day political coverage found in mainstream journalism, or the endless stream of invective issuing from social media. We will learn about the basic structure of American political history, not out of historical curiosity, but because we cannot understand the American present without understanding the American past. We will learn a great deal about American constitutionalism and American law. We will discuss some of the most contentious political issues in American politics: racism, religion, environmentalism, inequality, immigration, and so on. This course will help you to develop your ability to write and think about these issues, using some of the tools of political science. At the same time, and just as importantly, we will develop our ability to critically analyze the claims of political science.

Our discussion of the USA will be open, contentious, controversial, but hopefully enjoyable. By the conclusion of the course, you will have developed a better understanding of the most powerful nation in the world.

Key Course Objectives

- Students will understand the structure of the American Constitution, and will be able

explain the purposes behind the major features of the American constitutional order: the separation of powers, bi-cameralism, federalism, electoral institutions, enumerated powers, the federal judiciary, the federal executive, and the Bill of Rights.

- Students will understand the major stages in American political development: the Revolutionary Era, The Jacksonian Era, The Civil War-Reconstruction Era, The Progressive Era, The New Deal-Great Society Era, and the Era of Divided Government
- Students will understand how federalism has changed over the course of American history
- Students will be able to explain how the American party system operates, and how the major political ideas that animate the parties have changed over time
- Students will understand the major factors that shape American elections and the choices of American voters.
- Students will be able to explain the law-making process, and the changing institutional features of the House of Representatives and the Senate
- Students will be able to explain the role played by the President in the political system, and the way in which the executive branch has evolved into the “administrative state”
- Students will be able to explain the role of interest groups in the American political process
- Students will be able to assess the ways American public opinion is “exceptional” or unusual, and the difficulties involved in measuring public opinion

Lectures and Discussion

I hope you understand that delivering the course this year is going to be particularly challenging.

My plan is to structure the course as follows:

The “asynchronous” element: a pre-recorded lecture of approximately 1 hour in length. I will do my best to post this lecture on-line by 5pm Fridays.

The “synchronous” element: We will use the official lecture time to discuss the readings, the pre-recorded lecture, the whole clusterfrack of 2020, and so on.

The FIRST hour will be devoted to the questions and concerns of those who are attending “in-person.” On-line participants can still listen in if they like.

The SECOND hour of official lecture time will be focussed on the questions and concerns of our on-line students.

In order for this course to work, I am counting on you (the students) to be prepared to engage in discussion during the official lecture time.

Quercus

Course resources and materials are available online through Quercus, accessible via the University of Toronto's Learning Portal (<https://portal.utoronto.ca/>)

You are expected to check the course site on Quercus on a regular basis.

You must have a valid UTORid account to access Quercus

It is your responsibility to obtain a UTORid if they do not already have one.

Information and assistance on setting up a UTORid account is available at Information Commons at Robarts Library

<http://help.ic.utoronto.ca/>

Email Communication

You should try to raise substantive, course related questions during class, tutorials, and office hours. I am almost always available to talk after class, and I can make special appointments if you cannot make my regular office hours. You can also send your questions to me by email, but try to think of email as a last resort, not the primary way to raise questions...

Facebook Page

https://www.facebook.com/usgovernmentandpolitics/?ref=aymt_homepage_panel

I post links to articles that I find interesting and/or relevant to the course on this Facebook page.

Course Requirements

Final Exam: 35% *This exam will take place during the exam period in April/May*

It will be an open-book, take-home examination, which will cover the material from the entire year.

Essay Assignment

The essay assignment will have multiple stages: literature review, research design, rough draft, final draft

Literature Review (7.5%) DUE FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9th, 5pm You will be expected to share your literature review with your research group and the class—though of course the grade will not be divulged.)

The “literature review” will consist of a critical analysis of at least one book and/or three scholarly articles on your topic.

Length: 3-5 pages, double-spaced, 12 point font.

Research Outline: 7.5% DUE FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20th, 5pm

Rough Draft: 10% DUE FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5th, 5pm

*The rough draft of your paper must be a **COMPLETE** version of your paper, including footnotes and bibliography.*

The Rough Draft of the Paper must be submitted to turn it in. NO HARD COPIES WILL BE ACCEPTED

Length: Approximately 10-15 pages (double spaced, 12 point, not including bibliography)

Final Draft: 30% DUE FRIDAY, MARCH 26th, 5pm

BOTH THE ROUGH DRAFT AND FINAL DRAFT SHOULD BE SUBMITTED TO TURNITIN.

IF YOU DO NOT WANT TO USE TURNITIN FOR WHATEVER WEIRD REASON, LET ME KNOW

Late Penalties: All assignments will be penalized 3 percentage points for every day they are late, up to two full letter grades.

Class/ Research Group Participation: 10% (5%/semester)

Students can demonstrate class participation **by attending class, preparing questions for discussion in class, and making use of office hours to discuss course material.**

Attendance will be taken, but you will not be penalized for missing a small number of sessions (e.g. 1-2)

Research Group Participation: All students will be members of at least one “research group.” These groups will consist of 8-10 students who are interested in broadly similar themes (e.g. “Race and American Political Development,” “The Presidency and the Administrative State,” “Comparative Public Policy: Canada and the United States.” Etc.)

Your participation grade will be based in part on your contributions to your research group (e.g. sharing your written work, contributions to group discussions, etc.)

You can also collaborate with all or some of your research group on a collective, subject to the following:

1. Each individual must contribute 10 pages of written work to the project; the distinct contributions of individuals must be clearly identified.
2. Individuals will be graded based upon their own contributions to the project.
3. Depending upon the nature of the project, the “research design” stage of the assignment may have to be altered. For instance, if the basic research design of the project can be explained in 2-3 pages, it may be necessary for some members to submit a second book review/literature review.

If you choose to work on a collaborative project, you need to get started asap

Grade “Clarifications”

If you wish additional clarifications on your grades, you must do the following:

- a) ***Submit a written request within one week of receiving the grade; the request should explain your questions and concerns, and can be submitted by email***

- b) *Your ta will respond to your request, and if you still seek further clarification, forward your initial request, along with the ta's response, to the instructor (Dr. Hurl)*

Accessibility

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or Accessibility Services <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>

PLEASE DISCUSS YOUR ACCESSIBILITY RELATED ISSUES WITH DR. HURL AS SOON AS POSSIBLE! (email communications are fine...)

Notice of Collection of Medical Information

The University of Toronto respects your privacy. The information on medical certificates is collected pursuant to section 2(14) of the University of Toronto Act, 1971. It is collected for the purpose of administering accommodations for academic purposes based on medical grounds. The department will maintain a record of all medical certificates received. At all times it will be protected in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

If you have questions, please refer to www.utoronto.ca/privacy or contact the University's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Office at 416-946-5835. Address: Room 201, McMurrich Bldg., 12 Queen's Park Crescent, Toronto, ON, M5S 1A1.

TURNITIN!

I am required by the university to include the following statement regarding turnitin.com:

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the

University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site."

You have the right to choose NOT to allow your paper to be submitted to turnitin.com. If you choose to exercise this right, you **must** provide an annotated bibliography, and you may be required to undergo an oral examination based upon your paper. Should you elect not to send your paper to turnitin.com, please inform your teaching assistant during the first tutorial.

Plagiarism—Don't Do It.

If you are caught plagiarizing, you will receive an "F" for the paper, an "F" for the course, and numerous other punishments too hideous to recount. **You are responsible for making sure you understand what constitutes plagiarism.** In particular, this means that you must properly footnote your sources, in addition to avoiding the more obvious types of plagiarism. If you have any doubts about whether something constitutes plagiarism, don't do it. Your teaching assistants and I can answer your questions regarding proper footnoting/citation practices. Please consult us if you have any concerns.

For further information on academic integrity: <http://academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/>



The Look I get when I see a high plagiarism score on Turnitin.

Don't end up in my "basket of deplorables": understand what plagiarism is, and don't do it.

What can I do to succeed in this course?

Attend the lectures and be an active participant

You should use the lecture to ask questions—about the lecture itself, about the readings, about the assignments, about anything you can think of. I strongly advise that you take notes using paper/pen/pencil—recent studies suggest that this improves your ability to retain information. While I do not ban laptops, I ask as a courtesy that you refrain from watching videos, checking Facebook, playing Grand Theft Auto, etc.

- **Begin working on the research project as soon as possible.** This should be easy, as you will be given some specific instructions on how to begin the project.
- **Make use of Office Hours.** If there are issues in the readings or lectures that you do not understand, then you should make every effort to consult with Dr. Hurl during office hours.

- **Do Some Additional Reading.** If you are entirely unfamiliar with American politics and American political history, it would probably be a good idea to do some additional reading. The following books are both short and informative, and all are available on-line.

Donald Critchlow, *American Political History: A New Introduction*. Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2015 (available on-line through the U of T library)

Morton Keller, *America's Three Regimes*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. (available on-line through the U of T library)

Office Hours

Dr. Hurl will hold weekly office hours. (Monday afternoon, 4-5pm, Sidney smith 3033 or by appointment)

You can come in person, or you can also attend office hours “on-line.”

I strongly advise that you make use of the office hours, early and often. Ask me about the readings, ask me about the lectures, ask me about the essay assignment—anything you can think of.

The Writing Centres : Use Them!

This course will help you develop your ability to write a grammatically correct, thematically coherent, and logically compelling essay. However, I strongly encourage you to work with your college's writing centre. <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science>

Please note: individual appointments can be hard to come by at the end of the semester; try to schedule your appointments as early as possible.

(Personal note: as an undergraduate, I took ALL of my essays to the writing centre before submitting them. Not only did this help to improve my writing—it also helped me to avoid procrastinating.)

REQUIRED TEXTS

(In an attempt to use as little paper as possible, I would like you to consider using electronic versions of the readings for the course.)

Michael Barone, *How America's Political Parties Change (and how they don't)*. Encounter Books: New York, 2019

https://www.amazon.ca/Americas-Political-Parties-Change-They-ebook/dp/B07PB5177M/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=Michael+Barone&qid=1600040045&sr=8-1

Benjamin Ginsberg, *Presidential Government*. Yale Press: New Haven, 2016. (available on-line through U of T library)

Benjamin Ginsberg and Kathryn Wagner-Hill, *Congress: The First Branch*. Yale University Press: New Haven, 2019 (available on-line through U of T website.)

Michael Greve's *The Constitution: Understanding America's Founding Document*.

https://www.amazon.ca/Constitution-Understanding-Americas-Founding-Capitalism-ebook/dp/B00DCWGX2/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&keywords=Michael+Greve&qid=1599938493&sr=8-2

Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized*. Avid Reader Press: New York, 2020

https://www.amazon.ca/Why-Were-Polarized-Ezra-Klein-ebook/dp/B07TRNVTZQ/ref=tmm_kin_swatch_0?encoding=UTF8&qid=1600040100&sr=8-1

Publius (Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, James Madison) *The Federalist Papers*. Ed. Clinton Rossiter. New York: New American Library, 1964

https://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp

Other readings will be available on Quercus in pdf form (under Course Materials)

In some cases, links to on-line articles are provided.

Please note that the course assumes that you have at least SOME background in American history.

If you do not, I highly recommend that you consult the books by Critchlow and Keller mentioned above (*American Political History: A Brief Introduction* and *America's Three Regimes*.)

Lectures and Readings

Week 1 /September 14^h: *Political Science and American Politics in 2020: An Introduction to Advanced Trump Studies*

Week 2/September 21st *From the Revolution to the Constitution: American Politics and the Problem of Faction*

Federalist Papers #1-9 #10, 47-51

Greve, chapters 1- 4 (“Introduction,” “Constitutional Politics,” “Constitutional Principles and Structure,” “Competition.”)

Sven Steinmo, “The United States: Strong Nation, Weak State.” Pp 149-77 (recommended)

Sven Steinmo “Evolutionary Narratives.” (recommended)

Week 3 September 28th Congress and the Presidency: The Theoretical Basis of the Separation of Powers

Presidential Government, Chapter One, “What is an Executive, and Why do we need one?”

Presidential Government, Chapter Two, “The Constitutional Foundations of Presidential Power.”

Congress, Chapter One, “Congress: the First Branch.”

Week 4 October 5th Critical Junctures, Federalism and American Political Development: Revolution- Civil War and Reconstruction- New Deal

Greve, chapters 5-8 (“Federalism,” “Constitutional Rights and Structure,” “Judicial Review,” “Slavery and the Second Founding.”)

Key cases:

McCulloch v. Maryland, Dred Scott v. Sanford, The Civil Rights Cases, The New Deal Cases

(October 12th—Thanksgiving Holiday)

Week 5 October 19th Federalism, Race, and American Political Development: From the Great Society to the 21st Century

Greve, chapters 9-11

Ta-Nihisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations.”

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Robert Lieberman, “Legacies of Slavery? Race and Historical Causation in American Political Development.”

Weeks 6/October 26th Democrats and Republicans: Introducing the USA’s peculiar parties

Michael Barone, *How America’s Political Parties Change (and how they don’t)*. Encounter Books: New York, 2019

Weeks 7 November 2nd The Divided States of America: Polarization and Politics in the USA

Ezra Klein, *Why we are Polarized*. Avid Reader Press: New York, 2020

(November 9th Reading Week)

Week 8 November 16th *The Future of American Politics after 2020*

Presidential Government, Chapter 4, “Presidential Elections.”

Congress, Chapter 3, “Congressional Elections.”

Week 9 November 23rd Separate Institutions, Shared Powers: The Evolution of Congress and The Presidency

Presidential Government,

Congress, Chapter 2 “A Brief History of Congress.”

Congress, Chapter 4 “Political Parties and the Organization of Congress.”

Week 10 November 30th Congress, The President, and the Legislative Process

Presidential Government, Chapter 5 “The Executive Branch”

Presidential Government, Chapter 6 “The President, the Congress, and Domestic Policy.”

Congress, Chapter 5, “The Legislative Process.”

Week 11 November 28th (same subject continued)

Readings TBA

Week 12. The Executive Unbound: Unilateral Presidential Power in the 21st Century

Presidential Government, Chapter 7 “Presidential Policy Tools”