

POL492/POL2392: TOPICS IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS: AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
WINTER 2024

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Schedule: Thursday 11:00am-1:00pm

Office Hours: Tues. 2:00pm-4:00pm (SS 3065) & by appointment (Zoom)

Course Description

American Political Development (APD) is both a substantive and a theoretical inquiry. As a subject of inquiry, APD concerns the full sweep of US politics and political history—from civic status to social policy, from before the Founding to the present. As a theoretical inquiry, APD emphasizes the historical construction of politics and the decisive role played by temporal processes in the course of political change, institutional (in)stability, and state formation. This course explores both the substance and the theory of APD, using the second as a lens through which the first can be analyzed and interpreted. We begin by examining the methodologies, mechanisms, and patterns of APD, before turning to synoptic accounts of political development and then working through broad eras of political development. Throughout we will focus on questions of race, democracy, and inclusion/exclusion that both animate the American past and structure its present.

Course Objectives

This course is intended to:

- provide students with an understanding of key themes in and approaches to American Political Development;
- expose students to multiple methods of political analysis, with an emphasis on the relationship and tensions between qualitative and quantitative methods; and
- develop written and oral communication skills through regular classroom discussions and a range of writing assignments.

Course Texts

- Karen Orren & Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2004) [digitally available via UofT Library]
- Jeffrey K. Tulis & Nicole Mellow, *Legacies of Losing in American Politics* (University of Chicago Press, 2018) [digitally available via UofT Library]
- Suzanne Mettler & Robert C. Lieberman, *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy* (St. Martin's Press, 2020)

All other readings will be made available on the course website.

Marking Scheme

- **Engagement: 25%**

- Engagement is intended to gauge your involvement in and contribution to the course. The most significant components are attendance and participation. You are expected to attend class each week for the entirety of the two hour period and to behave both professionally and respectfully. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend class, you should contact me ahead of time. Life happens, things come up. It's better to be in touch with me than to have me wonder where you are. Participation can take many forms: making a comment, asking a question, contributing to the class chat if/when the class is online, listening attentively and respectfully when your classmates are speaking, and a number of other overt ways of taking part in the weekly class meetings. When it comes to participation, quality is at least as important as quantity. In other words, what matters isn't necessarily how much you say. A short but incisive question can be as valuable as an extended reflection on a topic that arises in discussion. At the same time, participation isn't just talking; it is contributing constructively to the topic under consideration in a manner that demonstrates you've been listening to what your classmates have said. Beyond participation in class, engagement is also reflected in showing up for office hours when necessary, emailing to ask a question about the material or an assignment, or (again) any number of less overt ways of engaging with the course material. If at any point in the course you have questions about this component of the final mark, don't hesitate to contact me.

- **Discussion Boards: 10%**

- Each week of the term, there will be a discussion board on the course website where you can respond to the readings, ask questions, and/or engage with what your classmates have to say. While I provide discussion questions intended to guide your reading and thinking, what you say is completely up to you! All I want to see is some meaningful engagement with the content for that week. You are expected to make a contribution 8 times over the course of the term. That means you can take 3 weeks "off" and still get full credit. Contributions should be at least one well-developed paragraph and are to be submitted the evening before class.

- **Oral Assessment: 15%**

- During Week 6, you will sit for an approximately 30-minute meeting with me during which you will answer a set of questions about the course material, the relationship(s) between and among assigned readings, and your assessment(s) of the themes and arguments we've encountered to that point. The questions will be selected from a list circulated in advance; during the assessment, you will be able to "veto" one question with no penalty. The assessment will be open-book and open-note, meaning that you will have access to any of the course readings and any preparatory notes or resources you create. Following the assessment, you will submit a written statement of up to 750 words in which you reflect on your performance, identify how in hindsight you would improve or alter any responses you gave, and include any information or analysis you think would have improved your answer. The in-person component is worth 13% while the written reflection is worth 2%.

- **Book Review: 15% (*due March 22*)**

- You are to select a book to review related to the topic(s) for one week between Week 6-12. Your selection can be from the lists of books made available by me (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) or of your own choosing. Either way, your selection must be approved by me no later than March 1. If you have any questions or would like suggestions for a title based on a topic you are interested in, you should feel free to message me or drop into office hours to discuss it. The review should be approximately 1,200 words and feature both (1) an adequate summary of the book and (2) critical engagement with its argument, analysis, and/or significance. Examples have been added to the Files folder (see "Sample Book Reviews") indicating the expected tone, structure, and content.

- **Final Project: 35%** (*due date TBA*)

Marking Rubric

Percentage	Letter	Grade Description
90-100	A+	Excellent: Strong evidence of original thinking; good organization; capacity to analyze and synthesize; superior grasp of subject matter with sound critical evaluations; evidence of extensive knowledge base.
85-89	A	
80-84	A-	
77-79	B+	Good: Evidence of grasp of subject matter; some evidence of critical capacity and analytic ability; reasonable understanding of relevant issues; evidence of familiarity with literature.
73-76	B	
70-72	B-	
67-69	C+	Adequate: Student who is profiting from his/her university experience; understanding of the subject matter; ability to develop solutions to simple problems in the material.
63-66	C	
60-62	C-	
57-59	D+	Marginal: Some evidence of familiarity with subject matter and some evidence that critical and analytic skills have been developed.
53-56	D	
50-52	D-	
0-49	F	Inadequate: Little evidence of even superficial understanding of subject matter; weakness in critical and analytic skills; with limited or irrelevant use of literature.

For further information on grading, please see the University of Toronto Faculty of Arts & Sciences [Grading Policies](#).

COURSE POLICES

Academic Integrity

The University of Toronto treats cases of plagiarism very seriously. The *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters* outlines the behaviours that constitute academic dishonesty and the procedures for addressing academic offenses. If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behaviour or research and citation methods, you should seek information from your instructor or other university resources. (See <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/resourcesforstudents.html>.)

Plagiarism

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool 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 tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).

** Note: the University's plagiarism detection tool is integrated into the Quercus assignment submission system. After submitting an assignment, you will receive a percentage "score" showing how much non-original material the assignment includes. You should feel free to use this score as a guide for making revisions to your assignments prior to the submission deadline.*

Accessibility

The University provides academic accommodations for students with disabilities in accordance with the terms of the Ontario Human Rights Code. For information on services and resources, see <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>.

Late Penalty Policy

For assignments submitted after the due date, a penalty of 2% per day of lateness will be assessed. For assignments due over the course of the term (e.g., weekly discussion board posts), it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the minimum number are submitted before the conclusion of the term.

Re-Marking Policy

If you believe an assignment or exam has been incorrectly graded, there is the opportunity for re-marking. To initiate this process, you must submit a brief written statement outlining why you believe you deserve a higher mark. This statement should be submitted no sooner than 2 but no more than 7 days after the assignment or exam is returned. Your assignment or exam will then be remarked in full and the new mark, whether higher or lower than the original, will be final.

RESOURCES

The University of Toronto has many resources to help you succeed in your academic pursuits.

If you are feeling overwhelmed or distressed, help is available. Please contact or visit your college registrar's office. To find your college registrar, go here <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/newstudents/nextsteps/contact>.

You may not know about the wide range of excellent **writing** resources on campus. These include:

- **College writing centres:** <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/arts-and-science/>. The teaching approach of the college writing centres is described at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-centres/learning/>.
- **Writing at the University of Toronto:** <http://writing.utoronto.ca>.
- More than 60 advice files on all aspects of academic writing are available at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca>. A complete list of printable PDF versions are listed at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/student-pdfs/>.
- You may also wish to refer to “**How Not to Plagiarize**” and other resources on documentation format and methods of integrating sources; these are listed in the section at <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/using-sources/>.
- The University of Toronto also has an excellent **Writing Plus** workshop series, described at <http://writing.utoronto.ca/writing-plus/>.
- Information about the **English Language Learning** program (ELL) is available at <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell>. One of ELL's programs is the **Communication Café**, which meets weekly at five different times and locations for the first seven weeks of each term for practice with oral skills like class discussion and presentations. ELL also sponsors an online program called **Reading eWriting**, which helps students engage course readings more effectively.

For a primer on sources and citation, see <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/citing>

COURSE CALENDAR

Week 1 (Jan. 11): What is American Political Development?

- Suzanne Mettler & Richard Valelly, “Introduction: The Distinctiveness and Necessity of American Political Development” (2016)
- Robert Lieberman et al., “The Trump Presidency and American Democracy: A Historical and Comparative Analysis” (2018)

Week 2 (Jan. 18): Politics in/through/over Time

- Orren & Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (2004):
 - Ch. 1: “The Historical Construction of Politics”
 - Ch. 3: “The Institutional Turn: Rethinking Order and Change over Time”
- Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time*, “Introduction: Placing Politics in Time” (2004)

Week 3 (Jan. 25): Defining Political Development and Explaining Political Change

- Orren & Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development*, “Political Development: The Definition” (ch. 4)
- Brian J. Glenn, “The Two School of American Political Development” (2004)
- Robert C. Lieberman, “Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change” (2002)
- Adam Sheingate, “Institutional Dynamics and American Political Development” (2014)
- *Recommended:*
 - Paul Pierson, “Not Just What, but *When*: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes” (2000)
 - Robert Jervis, “Timing and Interaction in Politics: A Comment on Pierson” (2000)
 - Katherine Thelen, “Timing and Temporality in the Analysis of Institutional Evolution and Change” (2000)
 - Amy Bridges, “Path Dependence, Sequence, History, Theory” (2000)

Week 4 (Feb. 1): Synoptic Accounts—Liberalism, Losers, & Sin

- David F. Ericson, “Liberalism and American Political Development” (2015)
- Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America” (1993)
- Tulis & Mellow, *Legacies of Losing in American Politics*, “Political Failure, and Success” (ch. 1)
- James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History*, “Introduction: A Nation with the Soul of a Church” (2008)
- *Recommended:*
 - James T. Kloppenberg, “In Retrospect: Louis Hartz’s *The Liberal Tradition in America*” (2001)

- J. David Greenstone, "Political Culture and American Political Development: Liberty, Union, and the Liberal Bipolarity," *Studies in American Political Development* 1 (1986):1-49

Week 5 (Feb. 8): Regimes, Orders, and Political Time

- Stephen Skowronek, "Notes on the Presidency in the Political Order" (1986)
- Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal* (2011), "Presidential Leadership in Political Time" (ch. 2)
- Andrew J. Polsky, "Partisan Regimes in American Politics" (2011)
- Desmond King & Rogers M. Smith, "Racial Orders in American Political Development" (2005)

Week 6 (Feb. 15): The Founding

**** Oral Assessment conducted this week***

- David Brian Robertson, "Madison's Opponents and Constitutional Design" (2005)
- Max Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (2003)
 - Ch. 2: "The Elusive Meaning of the Debate over Ratification"
 - Ch. 3: "European States, American Contexts"
 - Ch. 4: "The Ideological Response to State Expansion"
- Connor M. Ewing, "Publius' Proleptic Constitution" (2024)

**** Feb. 20-24: Family Day & Reading Week—University Closed ****

Week 7 (Feb. 29): The (Contested) Early American State

- Tulis & Mellow, *Legacies of Losing in American Politics*, "Founding: The Anti-Federal Appropriation" (ch. 2)
- William Novak, "Introduction: Governance, Police, and American Liberal Mythology," in *The People's Welfare: Law and Regulation in Nineteenth Century America* (2000)
- *Recommended*: Frank Towers, "The Threat of Consolidation: States' Rights and American Discourses of Nation and Empire in the Nineteenth Century" (2019)

Week 8 (Mar. 7): The State

- Max Edling, *A Revolution in Favor of Government: Origins of the U.S. Constitution and the Making of the American State* (2003), "Conclusion: The Constitution, the Federalists, and the American State"
- William Novak, "The Myth of the Weak American State" (2008)
- Brian Balogh, *A Government Out of Sight: The Mystery of National Authority in Nineteenth-Century America* (2007), "Introduction: Why Look Back?"
- *Recommended*: Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research"

Week 9 (Mar. 14): From the Founding to Reconstruction (and Beyond)

- Mettler & Lieberman, *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy*:
 - Ch. 2: “Polarization Wreaks Havoc in the 1790s”
 - Ch. 3: “Democratic Disintegration in the 1850s”
 - Ch. 4: “Backsliding in the 1890s”
- Tulis & Mellow, *Legacies of Losing in American Politics*, “Reconstruction: Andrew Johnson’s Politics of Obstruction” (ch. 3)

Week 10 (Mar. 21): The New Deal (and Beyond)

*** Book review due by Friday, March 22.**

- Mettler & Lieberman, *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy*, “Executive Aggrandizement in the 1930s” (ch. 5)
- Sidney M. Milkis, “Ideas, Institutions, and the New Deal Constitutional Order” (2014)
- Robert C. Lieberman & John S. Lapinski, “American Federalism: Race and the Administration of Welfare” (2001)
- Tulis & Mellow, *Legacies of Losing in American Politics*, “New Deal: Barry Goldwater’s Politics of Integrity” (ch. 4)
- *Recommended*:
 - David Brian Robertson, “The Bias of American Federalism: The Limits of Welfare-State Development in the Progressive Era” (1989)
 - Ira Katznelson, [Lecture on book *Fear Itself* at Politics & Prose](#)

Week 11 (Mar. 29): Nixon, Neoliberalism, & the Origins of the American Present

- Mettler & Lieberman, *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy*, “The Weaponized Presidency in the 1970s” (ch. 6)
- Timothy Weaver, “Market Privilege: The Place of Neoliberalism in American Political Development” (2021)
- Watch: [“Where Did Neoliberalism Come From and How Did It Become So Influential?”](#) (interview with Gary Gerstle)
- Listen: [“What is the Submerged State?”](#) (interview with Suzanne Mettler)
 - *Optional further reading*:
 - Suzanne Mettler, *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy* (2011) (chaps. 1 & 2)
 - Suzanne Mettler, [“Our Hidden Government Benefits”](#)

Week 12 (Apr. 5): Conclusion

- Mettler & Lieberman, *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy*,
 - Ch. 7: “At All Costs: How the Four Threats Endanger Democracy”
 - Ch. 8: “Dangerous Convergence”
- Tulis & Mellow, *Legacies of Losing in American Politics*, “Legacies of Loss in American Politics” (ch. 5)