
POSC 122: Politics in America: Liberty and Equality* in CMC 306
Mondays and Wednesdays, 11:10–12:20, Fridays, 12–1

Spring 2022

Brian Harrison, Ph.D., bharrison3@carleton.edu

Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays, 12:30–1:30pm in Willis Hall, Room 414

“The future will not belong to those who sit on the sidelines. The future will not belong to the cynics. The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”
–Senator Paul Wellstone (MN)

Purpose: This course serves as an introduction to the systematic and scientific study of American politics, political institutions, and political actors. Students will be introduced to the basic institutions of American government, especially as established in the Constitution, and with an introduction to currents of thought among social scientists about the workings of U.S. politics and political actors. This course familiarizes students with innovative as well as classic approaches to studying U.S. government. In the end, each student will have a solid grounding in our national political institutions and processes, sharper reading and writing skills, and insight into approaching politics critically and analytically. As a result of this course, students will be able to:

Overall Course Objectives

- Cultivate an appreciation for and attention to American politics as a habit in everyday life
- Feel like a more informed citizen of the United States and of the world
- Develop a deeper understanding of political science as a discipline and understand how political scientists perform their work

Specific Learning Objectives

- Clearly communicate the importance of American politics in American life through both verbal and written assignments
- Critically analyze biased political media sources, one-sided political analyses, and/or partisan reasoning
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to the study of American political institutions and actors

*NOTE: All course materials including but not limited to class notes, lectures, handouts, and presentations are the copyrighted materials of the professor. The copying and sale of any such materials will subject the involved parties to the provisions of the Federal Copyright Act. This syllabus does not constitute a binding contract and any aspect of the course, including but not limited to assignments, readings, or requirements, may be changed at the discretion of the professor for any reason and at any time.

Classroom expectations

Pronouns and Identity: My pronouns are he/him/his. I will happily call you by whatever name and gender pronouns you want me to use and will ensure everyone else does as well. If you feel more comfortable sharing that information with me privately, I am happy to speak with you in a confidential setting. In all cases, I am committed to making this class an intellectually-inclusive space where we respect the diversity of every student. Your intellectual development and your skills as a critical thinker and writer remain my pre-eminent concerns.

Mutual respect: I highly value class discussion and interaction. Learning from you is one of the joys of my job and I regard it as an integral part of the learning experience. I look forward to hearing your thoughts about how the course material informs our understanding of current events.

Although I will spend some of our class time lecturing, we will have many dialogues, both in class and online. In these discussions, you are encouraged to use your personal experiences and perspectives as well as your understanding of the course material and current events. Let's commit ourselves to treating our colleagues—especially the ones whose ideas are very different from our own—as treasured, even beloved colleagues. Let's keep classroom discussions to ourselves and not disparage one another to others outside the class for things expressed here. Direct attacks or insults toward anyone inside or outside the class based on their identity, including (but not limited to) race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, national origin, sexual orientation, religious affiliation (or lack of one), ideology, political party affiliation, or national background is not permitted. This is not an exhaustive list. Violations of these rules will be reflected in your grade and, if they continue, may result in disciplinary action by the College.

Attendance and Participation: Attendance and participation are essential in this course. Each class meeting will be different, with different goals, activities, and outcomes. One of the key components is the opportunity for you to demonstrate your ongoing mastery of the material. Your learning depends on your attentive involvement in class activities and including taking notes, listening carefully to the ideas of your classmates, engaging others in discussion and debate, and reading assigned materials in advance of class discussion.

One of my primary goals is to empower students to claim their own education. I emphasize discussion and limit the number (and length) of my lectures. This discussion-based format means that you, along with your classmates, bear a lot of responsibility for the success of the class. You must hold each other accountable for the claims that you make and the ideas you express. And you must make sure that you come to class prepared with some thoughts/questions so that we can have respectful and productive discussions about the material.

Academic Integrity: It is assumed that a student is the author of all course work (quizzes, problem sets, online contributions, tests, papers, lab work, etc.) that they submit, whether for a grade or not, and that the work has not been submitted for credit in another class without the instructor's written permission. Images, ideas, data, audio clips, or phrases borrowed from others should be fully identified by standard procedures for making such acknowledgment. All permitted collaboration with others must still be acknowledged. It is recommended that all students consult the College's [Writing Across the Curriculum website](#) for additional guidance on plagiarism and how to avoid plagiarism in their writing.

An act of academic dishonesty is a serious offense in a college community. By seeking credit for work that is not their own, a student takes unfair advantage of fellow students—who accept their limitations—and of their professors who trust their work. Dishonesty in academic work, particularly in the form of plagiarism, cheating, or prohibited collaboration, defeats the process of self-discovery that is the heart of a liberal education. Persons establish their integrity and personality as they learn to distinguish what is significantly their own from what belongs to others and as they learn to value their own work, including its limitations, in relation to the work of others. Scholars should be generous and welcoming in acknowledging the work of other scholars: their work makes ours possible too.

At Carleton College, an act of academic dishonesty is therefore regarded as conflicting with the work and purpose of the entire College and not merely as a private matter between the student and an instructor; all cases involving such dishonesty are referred for appropriate action to the Academic Standing Committee (ASC) via the Associate Dean of Students or the Associate Dean of the College. Please visit https://apps.carleton.edu/handbook/academics/?policy_id=21359 for more information.

Grading: More than anything, I value fairness in grading. I want you to know why you earned the grade that you did. If you don't, please ask! In an effort to be fair to those who complete assignments on time, I generally do not accept late papers/assignments for credit without advanced approval; explicit instructions from OAR; or a true emergency. Of course, I will make special arrangements to accept late assignments if you experience the death of a family member or if you are seriously ill. In the event of an emergency, please email me as soon as is practical and we'll make arrangements. As a matter of policy, please assume all assignments are due on the date listed in the syllabus without exception. You are strongly encouraged to save/print one copy of all papers for your own records before handing them in and to print drafts as you write and/or to make frequent backups in multiple locations. "Lost paper," "the printer didn't work" and "computer crash" claims will not be considered if you are unable to produce immediately an advanced draft of your paper.

If you believe your grade is inaccurate, please wait at least 24 hours before contesting it. Then write a brief letter explaining why you believe a mistake was made in grading your assignment. After I have received and read the letter, we will

schedule an appointment to discuss the matter; however, if you ask for a paper to be reevaluated, I reserve the right to reevaluate the entire contents of the assignment, and your grade can go up or go down as a result. Whenever possible, I encourage you to ask questions and clarifications about course assignments *before* turning them in.

Campus Resources:

Disability services: Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Office of Accessibility Resources (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please email OAR@carleton.edu or call Sam Thayer ('10), Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources (x4464), to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Gould Library: Library staff can help you find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. You can make an appointment with a librarian, get help via chat 24/7 from any page on the library's website, email, or call. The Library building has lots of great study spaces too! For more information and hours, visit the Gould Library website at carleton.edu/library.

Student Well-Being: Your health and well-being should always be your first priority. At Carleton, there are a wide-array of resources to support students. It is important to recognize stressors you may be facing, whether they are personal, emotional, physical, financial, mental, or academic. Sleep, exercise, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you flourish at Carleton. For more information, check out Student Health and Counseling (SHAC), the Office of Health Promotion, or the Office of the Chaplain. For information on how to support mental health, visit this site full of good resources.

The Writing Center: The Writing Center is a space with peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the writing center website. You can reserve specific times for conferences by using their online appointment system.

Speech Coaching: A speech coach can help you practice and prepare for class presentations, comps talks, participation in class discussions, and speech-related events unrelated to coursework. The speech coach can work with you on tailoring your content for a particular audience, organization, clarity, persuasive impact, body language and eye contact, and dealing with stage fright. To request a meeting, visit the Speech Coaching website.

Title IX: Carleton is committed to fostering an environment free of sexual misconduct. Please be aware all Carleton faculty and staff members, except for Chaplains and SHAC staff, are “responsible employees.” Responsible employees are required to share any information they have regarding incidents of sexual misconduct with the Title IX Coordinator. Carleton’s goal is to ensure campus community members are aware of all the options available and have access to the resources they need. If you have questions, please contact Laura Riehle-Merrill, Carleton’s Title IX Coordinator, or visit the Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response website: <https://www.carleton.edu/sexual-misconduct/>

Growth Mindset: Recognize that we ALL are learning, that we ALL make mistakes, that ALL of us say silly, uninformed, controversial, and rash things at one time or another. Engaging with your classmates who have views different from your own keeps *you* sharp. You should treat all with respect and appreciation even when you vigorously disagree with their arguments. I urge you to adopt a growth mindset for all Carleton courses.

- Recognize that failure and disappointment frequently occur when we take on new intellectual challenges and develop new skills. Old skills and knowledge almost certainly won’t be fully sufficient for your new endeavors.
- Feel free to seek new and stronger scholarly evidence for your arguments in the face of such disappointment
- Empower yourself to be an active facilitator of your education
 - Talk to your professors to understand their points of view and remember that we’re often wrong ourselves!
 - Seek out the support of colleagues and trusted friends to read drafts of your papers. Ask questions and listen to the answers
 - Make appointments with the staff in the [Academic Support Center](#) to get help with your work.
 - These steps aren’t indicators of weakness; they’re indicators of strength
- Develop structures for yourself so that you do not continually repeat prior writing errors so you train yourself to look for them and to self-correct
- Embrace an attitude of “progress, not perfection” rather than what writing scholars derisively call a one and done
- Treat yourself with kindness when feedback you receive doesn’t turn out to be what you thought. View this kind of feedback as an opportunity to grow

In short, **KEEP TRYING.**

Assessment Plan: There are required elements of assessment for this course. Please read them all carefully.

1. **Midterm exam (30%):**

The midterm is an in-class, closed book exam.

2. **Synthesis & analysis papers (5 papers, 5% each; 25% in total)**

On Moodle (and on Magnify), there are 8 assignments throughout the term that will be released every Monday during class. Each prompt will be an activity and a short reaction paper that includes some element of that week's readings. All papers and assignments will be due at 12:30pm on Friday.

3. **Final exam (30%):**

The final exam is a take-home, open-book exam. It is cumulative but emphasizes material from the second half of the course.

4. **Participation and engagement (15%)** include engagement in class and other in-class activities.

Required Books (Both available in the bookstore and on reserve in Gould Library):

- Kernell, Samuel, Gary C. Jacobson, Thad Kousser, and Lynn Vavrek, and Timothy R. Johnson. 2021. The Logic of American Politics (10th Edition). Washington, D.C.: CQ Press.
- Kernell, Samuel & Steven S. Smith. 2018. Principles and Practice of American Politics (7th Edition). Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

Readings not in the Kernell, Jacobson, Kousser, & Vavrek book (*Logic*) or the Kernell & Smith book (*Principles & Practice*) will be made available on Moodle.

Key dates:

Friday, April 29 at 12:30pm: Midterm exam in-class

Monday, June 6 at 5pm: Take-home final exam due via email
(bharrison3@carleton.edu)

Course Syllabus

Week 1: Introductions and expectations

Monday, March 28

Syllabus, introductions

- (Read in class): Miller, Jennifer. 2022. "Good Talk." *Washington Post Magazine*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/magazine/2022/03/16/college-students-have-become-fearful-expressing-their-views-new-civil-dialogue-movement-may-restore-healthy-debate/>

Wednesday, March 30

Epistemology, The Role of "Facts"

- Uscinski, Joseph E. & Ryden W. Butler. 2013. The Epistemology of Fact Checking, *Critical Review*, 25:2, 162-180
- Amazeen, Michelle A. 2015. Revisiting the Epistemology of Fact-Checking, *Critical Review*, 27:1, 1-22

Friday, April 1

The Logic of Governance and Collective Action

- Chapter 1, Logic
- Reading 1-1, Principles & Practice: Mancur Olson, Jr. from The Logic of Collective Action.
- Reading 1-2, Principles & Practice: Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons.
- **LISTEN**: "How to Change the World." *Hidden Brain*, 50 minutes. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/hidden-brain/id1028908750?i=1000554762196>

Week 2: Basics of American Politics & The Study of Politics

Monday, April 4

The Constitution

- Chapter 2, Logic
- Reading 2-1, Principles & Practice: James Madison, "Federalist 10."
- Reading 2-2, Principles & Practice: James Madison, "Federalist 51."
- Reading 2-3, Principles & Practice: Samuel Kernell, "The True Principles of Republican Government."

Wednesday, April 6

Federalism

- Chapter 3, Logic
- Reading 3-1, Principles & Practice: Donald F. Kettl, "Federalism: Sorting Out Who Does What."
- Reading 3-2, Principles & Practice: Thad Kousser, "How America's 'Devolution Revolution' Reshaped Its Federalism."

Friday, April 8

Does the Status Quo still work for us?

- Declaration of Independence (Logic, Appendix 2)
- The Constitution (Logic, Appendix 3)
- Baker, Kevin. 2017. "Bluxit: A Modest Proposal for Separating Blue States from Red." *The New Republic*. <https://newrepublic.com/article/140948/bluxit-blue-states-exit-trump-red-america>
- **LISTEN:** "U.S. Democracy Is At Risk of Failing, According to 64% of Americans." 14 minutes. *The NPR Politics Podcast*, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-npr-politics-podcast/id1057255460?i=1000546826790>

Week 3: The American Presidency

Monday, April 11

- Chapter 7, Logic
- Reading 7-1, Principles & Practice: Richard E. Neustadt. From *Presidential Power*.
- Reading 7-2, Principles & Practice: Samuel Kernell, From *Going Public*.

Wednesday, April 13

- Moe, Terry M., and William G. Howell. 1999. "Unilateral action and presidential power: A theory." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 29.4: 850-873.
- **LISTEN:** "The 232 Year Evolution of The Presidency." *American POTUS*, 40 minutes. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/american-potus/id1521885124?i=1000529361688>.

Friday, April 15

- Prokop, Andrew. 2014. "How Barack Obama is Expanding Presidential Power- and What it Means for the Future." *Vox*, <https://www.vox.com/2014/9/9/5964421/obama-lawsuit-republicans-abuse-of-power>
- Montgomery, David. 2020. "The Abnormal President." *Washington Post Magazine*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/lifestyle/magazine/trump-presidential-norm-breaking-list/>
- Fisher, L., & Adler, D. G. (1998). The war powers resolution: Time to say goodbye. *Political Science Quarterly*, 113 (1), 1-20.

Week 4: Congress and the Legislative Process

Monday, April 18

- Chapter 6, Logic
- Reading 6-1, Principles & Practice: Steven S. Smith, “Congress, the Troubled Institution.”
- Reading 6-2, Principles & Practice: Sarah A. Binder, “Legislating in Polarized Times.”

Tuesday, April 19, 7pm: Northfield City Council meeting

Wednesday, April 20

- McCubbins, M. D., & Schwartz, T. 1984. Congressional oversight overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms. *American Journal of Political Science*, 165-179.
- Binder, S. Lawrence, E. D., & Smith, S. S. (2002). Tracking the Filibuster, 1917 to 1996. *American Politics Research*, 30(4), 406-422.
- **LISTEN**: “What Differences Do Women Make in Congress (with Michele Swers)?” *Understanding Congress*. 26 minutes.

Friday, April 22:

- Binder, Sarah. 2015. The dysfunctional congress. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18, 85-101.
- Berlatsky, Noah. 2016. “Everybody Hates Congress. So Why Do Congressmen Almost Always Get Re-elected?” *The Week*, <https://theweek.com/articles/615133/everybody-hates-congress-why-congressmen-almost-always-reelected>
- **LISTEN**: “Should We Expand the Members of the House of Representatives? (with Yuval Levin).” *Understanding Congress*. 23 minutes.

Week 5: The Judiciary, Civil Liberties, and Civil Rights

Monday, April 25

- Chapter 9, Logic.
- Reading 9-1, Principles & Practice: Antonin Scalia. From *A Matter of Interpretation: Federal Courts and the Law*.
- Reading 9-2, Principles & Practice: Steven Breyer. From *Active Liberty*.

Wednesday, April 27

- Chapter 4 and 5, Logic
- Reading 4-1, Principles & Practice: Rebekah Herrick, “Public Opinion and Minority Interests.”
- Reading 4-2, Principles & Practice: Justin Levitt, from *New State Voting Laws: Barriers to the Ballot?*
- Reading 5-1, Principles & Practice: Jonathan Rauch, “In Defense of Prejudice: Why Incendiary Speech Must be Protected.”

Friday, April 29:

MIDTERM EXAM in class

Midterm Break: April 30–May 2

Week 6: Political Parties, Partisanship, and Polarization

Wednesday, May 4

- Chapter 12, Logic
- Reading 12–1, Principles & Practice. John Aldrich. From *Why Parties?*
- Reading 12–2, Principles & Practice. Lee Drutman. “Partisanship.”
- Reading 12–3, Principles & Practice. Morris P. Fiorina. “Parties as Problem Solvers.”

Friday, May 6

- Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, Sean J. Westwood. 2019. “The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22:1, 129–146
- Kane, John V, Lilliana Mason, and Julie Wronski. 2021. “Who’s at the Party? Group Sentiments, Knowledge, and Partisan Identity.” *The Journal of Politics* 83.4: 1783–1799.
- **LISTEN:** Why Jan. 6th Was Not a Turning Point,” *FiveThirtyEight Politics*. 54 minutes. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/fivethirtyeight-politics/id1077418457?i=100054695506>

Week 7: Public Opinion

Monday, May 9

- Chapter 10, Logic
- Reading 10–1, Principles & Practice. Herbert Asher. “Analyzing and Interpreting Polls.”
- Reading 10–2, Principles & Practice. Morris P. Fiorina. From *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*.
- Reading 10–3, Principles & Practice. Alan I. Abramowitz, “The Polarized Electorate.”

Wednesday, May 11

- Taber, Charles S. and Milton Lodge. 2006. “Motivated skepticism in the Evaluation of Political Beliefs.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(3): 755–769.
- Mason, Lilliana. 2015. “I disrespectfully agree”: The differential effects of partisan sorting on social and issue polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59 (1), 128–145.
- **LISTEN:** “Both Things Can Be True.” *Hidden Brain*, <https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/both-things-can-be-true/>

Friday, May 13

- Mason, Lilliana, Julie Wronski, and John V. Kane. 2021. “Activating Animus: The Uniquely Social Roots of Trump Support.” *American Political Science Review*, 115: 1508–1516.
- Reading 11–3, Principles & Practice. Michael Schudson. “America’s Ignorant Voters.”
- **LISTEN:** “The Age of ‘Mega-Identity Politics,’” *Vox Conversations*; <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-age-of-mega-identity-politics/id1081584611?i=1000410268072>

Week 8: Elections and Media

Monday, May 16

- Chapter 11, Logic
- Reading 11–1, Principles & Practice. Popkin, Samuel. From *The Reasoning Voter*.
- Reading 11–2, Principles & Practice. Jacobson, Gary C. “No Compromise: The Electoral Origins of Legislative Gridlock.”
- Lind, Dara. 2015. “19 Maps & Charts That Explain Voting Rights in America,” *Vox*, <https://www.vox.com/2015/8/6/9107183/voting-rights-map-chart>

Wednesday, May 18

Chapter 14, Logic

- Nelson, Thomas E., Rosalee A. Clawson, & Zoe M. Oxley. 1997. “Media Framing of a Civil Liberties conflict and its Effect on Tolerance.” *American Political Science Review*, 91(3): 567–583.
- Reading 14–1, Principles & Practice. Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow. “Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election.”

Friday, May 20

- Dwoskin, Elizabeth. 2021. “Misinformation on Facebook got Six Times More Clicks than Factual News during the 2020 Election, Study Says.” *Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2021/09/03/facebook-misinformation-nyu-study/>
- Thompson, Stuart A. 2022. “Election Falsehoods Surged on Podcasts Before Capital Riots, Researchers Find.” <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/04/technology/apple-google-spotify-podcast-election-misinformation.html>
- **LISTEN:** “What Does It Take to Combat Misinformation?,” *The NPR Politics Podcast*. 13 minutes. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/the-npr-politics-podcast/id1057255460?i=1000546450245>

Week 9: The Politics of Identity and Inequality

Monday, May 23

- White, Ismail K., Chryl N. Laird, and Troy D. Allen. 2014. "Selling Out?: The Politics of Navigating Conflicts Between Racial Group Interest and Self-Interest." *American Political Science Review* 108(4): 783-800.
- Dawson, Michael C. 2001. *Black Visions: The Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1.

Wednesday, May 25

- Gay, Claudine. 2002. Spirals of trust? The effect of descriptive representation on the relationship between citizens and their government." *American Journal of Political Science*, 4: 717-732.
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. "The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration," *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/10/the-black-family-in-the-age-of-mass-incarceration/403246/>
- **LISTEN:** "Changing Behavior, Not Beliefs." *Hidden Brain*, 49 minutes. <https://hiddenbrain.org/podcast/changing-behavior-not-beliefs/>

Friday, May 27

- Harrison, Brian F. & Melissa R. Michelson. 2016. "More than a Game: Football Fans and Marriage Equality." *PS: Political Science and Politics*.
- Hunter, Marcus Anthony. 2010. "All the Gays are White and all the Blacks are Straight: Black Gay Men, Identity, and Community." *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 7 (2): 81-92.
- Walsh, Katherine Cramer. 2012. "Putting Inequality in its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 106(3): 517-532.

Week 10: Wrap up, final exam preparations

Monday, May 30: Chapter 15, Logic

Wednesday, June 1 (Last Day of Class): Final exam review. Ask questions, I answer them! I also provide the prompt for the take-home final exam.

FINAL EXAM (take-home) due via e-mail by Monday, June 6 at 5pm

Thursday-Friday, June 2-3: Reading Days

Saturday-Monday, June 4-6: Exam days

Wednesday, June 8: **Senior** grades due at 8:30am

Wednesday, June 15: All grades due at 8:30am
