

Political Science 296: Political Ideology

Capstone Seminar
Fall Semester 2014
Clark University

Jefferson 400
Wednesdays, 9 AM - Noon
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Description

It is customary in discussions of politics to categorize people's views as liberal or conservative, left-wing or right-wing – or even at times to describe views as extreme or radical. What do these terms mean? And how have the meanings we assign to them changed over time? In any society, many once “extreme” ideas eventually become an accepted part of political discourse, and many widely held views are eventually discarded by most people.

One way to define ideologies is to state that they are packages of views on discrete political subjects. It is debatable whether different views should be sorted in any particular way – for instance, why we should be able to infer anything about someone's views on abortion or the environment based on their views about taxes or defense policy. Indeed, many people – perhaps most people – do not rigorously sort their ideas in such a way, or view themselves or their elected officials solely in ideological terms. Ideologies, then, are constructions – they are ways in which politicians, philosophers, and other elites have sought to organize the decisions we and our government face.

In this class we will consider the ways in which ideology is measured and defined in American politics, through consideration of political philosophy, public opinion research, congressional politics, political parties, and the American media. We will pay particular attention in this class to contemporary concerns about political polarization. Many recent discussions of American politics have alleged that the Democratic and Republican parties are more ideologically distinct than they once were, and have attributed a variety of ills to this, including the failure of government to pass important legislation and the growing public cynicism Americans have about politics. Depending on which sources you read, you will see this polarization presented as a consequence of changes in American citizens' views, of changes in the media, or of changes in how campaigns are run. We will consider each of these explanations.

This is a capstone seminar. I presume that you come to the class with substantial prior coursework in American politics and with some acquaintance with political theory and political science research methods. The goal of this course is to help you develop your own ideas about the relationship between ideology and politics, and to help you construct a major research project on a topic related to the role of ideology in American politics.

Readings

The following books are required for the course and are available for purchase at the campus bookstore. These books will also be on reserve at Goddard Library. Any other assigned materials will be distributed in class or posted on the class moodle site.

- Abramowitz, Alan. 2013. *The Polarized Public? Why American Government is so Dysfunctional*. New York: Longman.
- Berry, Jeffrey, and Sarah Sobieraj. 2014. *The Outrage Industry*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Fiorina, Morris. 2009. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*. New York: Longman.
- Kabaservice, Geoffrey. 2012. *Rule and Ruin*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McCarty, Nolan, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Noel, Hans. 2014. *Political Ideologies and Political Parties*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Theriault, Sean. 2008. *Party Polarization in Congress*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Some Thoughts on the Organization of the Class

Capstone seminars are designed to provide you with an opportunity to put all of the things you've learned in your American politics courses at Clark together, and to use that background to develop your own research project. This means that you have more of a role in running this course than is the case in other classes, and the degree to which this class is a success depends on how much effort you put in. I have structured the class rather loosely; we have a lot of reading, but you and your classmates will be in charge of deciding how we discuss the readings and how we organize our class sessions. It is imperative that you do the reading, that you do the weekly discussion questions, and that you come to class prepared to be an active participant.

The semester is structured so as to help you get started early on your research paper. For the first three weeks I will try to work through a number of different concepts and theoretical approaches to the study of political ideology. Some of this will be review to you, some will not. The goal during these first weeks will be to present a wide array of potential topics to you, and to help provide us with a common vocabulary for the weeks that follow. By the fourth week you will have a term project in mind and I will seek to match your research interests to the subject matter of the remaining weeks of the class – by having you facilitate discussion of material related to your paper, or by otherwise drawing upon your interests as the class goes on. In order to do this, I will need regular feedback from you on how your research is going or on ideas you have that might be of use in the class. So not only should you participate in class, but you should keep in touch with me outside of class hours, by stopping by during office hours or by emailing me when you have questions or comments.

As many of you know, this class is closely related to my own research interests. I am happy to discuss my own work with you during the course. For the most part, though, you should see me as someone who can help you construct your own research projects. I have used many of the data sources the class draws upon and have drawn on many of the books we are reading here in my own work. During our discussions about research strategies I am happy to work with each of you to discuss where to find information and what to do with it once you've found it.

Finally, I do want to note that I am not a fan of three hour, once-a-week courses. Three hours is far too long for most people to keep a sustained focus on one subject. As you'll notice in the weekly schedule, we will often break the class time into two or three discrete sections. If you are the discussion facilitator for a given week, you will not have to run the discussion for the whole class. We will also make sure to spend part of each class session discussing ways of doing research on the week's topic.

Requirements and Grading

The primary piece of work in this class will be a research paper of approximately 25 double-spaced pages on a topic of your choice. The topic should be related to the course material and should draw upon the course material, but it should also entail a substantial amount of independent research.

The research paper will have several components. It should include a clear research question and set of hypotheses; a literature review; a response to your research question; and an explanation of the normative consequences of your project. We will work through each of these components in class. The paper's literature review should include at least 8-10 sources, including (depending on your question), primary sources, books, scholarly articles, or news accounts. In your final paper you must cite these sources correctly and include a bibliography. The nature of the response to the question will be dictated by the nature of the question itself; some of you may ask questions that require the collection of quantitative data, some may ask questions that can be answered through a set of interviews, and others may ask questions that lend themselves to one or more case studies. When you develop your research question, you should do so with a basic understanding of the material you will need to gather in order to answer it.

You should begin work on your paper early in the semester. There are several deadlines you will need to keep in mind. Your proposal, which will include a one-page discussion of your question and strategy for answering it, and a preliminary list of resources, will be due September 17. A rough draft – which will include a complete literature review and the beginnings of an effort to answer your research question – will be due October 22. During the four weeks beginning October 22, each of you will give a twenty minute presentation of your research to the class, and each of you will be responsible for providing a ten minute critique of someone else's presentation and research project. The final project will be due on the last day of the final exam period.

Overall, your research project will comprise 40 percent of your grade. Most of the grade will cover the final project, but I will also take into account your responsibility in meeting deadlines and the quality of your presentation and your critique.

In addition to your research paper and its components, you will have the following graded assignments:

Weekly discussion questions (Weeks 5-10, 12-13): Every Tuesday by 9:00 you are expected to post a brief set of questions or comments regarding the week's reading on the class moodle page. The discussion facilitator and I will use these to help guide discussion each week. These discussion questions will be a part of your participation grade.

Participation, attendance, and effort: I expect you to be in class every week, and to be prepared to discuss the readings. This is a small class, so any absences will be noted. Participation (including the discussion questions) will comprise 10 percent of your grade.

Discussion Facilitation (Weeks 5-10, 12-13): Once during the semester you will lead an hour-long class discussion of the week's readings. Where possible, I will try to schedule you to facilitate a discussion related to your research paper. In order to effectively lead the class discussion, you will need to think through your classmates' moodle posts for the week; post your own ideas about discussion on line and help your classmates to think before class about the things you would like to cover; and use your own research and your own ideas to guide discussion. You should also consult with me – in person or by email – about your ideas for the discussion. This will also comprise 10 percent of your grade.

Short Assignments (Weeks 1-4): During the first four weeks of the class, you will be asked to complete four short papers (three pages or so); the specific questions for these are listed below in the class schedule. These are mainly a means of helping you apply abstract ideas about ideology to real-life situations, and we will use these to structure class discussions. You should have these completed by the beginning of class, and you should be prepared to discuss them in class. Your grade for these will be based mostly on your effort. These four assignments are worth five percent of your grade each, for a cumulative total of 20 percent.

Workshop Papers (Weeks 11, 14): During the semester we will have two in-class workshops to discuss current events; the first of these will concern the 2014 election and the second will concern the relationship between ideology and normative beliefs about what is right and wrong. For each of the workshops, I will expect you to prepare a five page paper that will entail some outside research. These papers may, depending on the topic of your research paper, also give you a chance to reflect on the relationship between your research and other matters we are considering in class. Each of these papers will be worth 10 percent of your grade.

In general, I am willing to accept late assignments; for each, your grade will be dropped one grade per weekday (not per class day, since we meet once a week). For instance, an "A" paper will be dropped to an A- if it is one day late, to a B+ if it is two days late, etcetera. I frown upon emailed assignments – when you do this, you're basically telling me that you don't have the time

to print something out but expect that I do. With that said, special arrangements can be made if you are simply unable to come to campus for some reason but you should contact me about those arrangements before sending your paper.

I do not use moodle to keep track of grades, but I will use it for other purposes throughout the semester.

Like most Clark courses, this class is worth four credit hours. That means that I expect you to commit approximately twelve hours of your time to the class each week, or 180 hours for the full semester. In addition to the three hours of class time per week, you should expect that the reading will take you four to five hours per week, the writing assignments or exam preparation will take an average of one hour per week, and the research projects will take an average of three hours per week. The amount of time you spend on each of these activities will, of course, vary from one week to the next.

Summary

Assignment	Due Date(s)	Percent of Grade	Goal
Research Paper	Proposal, week 4 Draft, week 9 Final Paper, exam period	40	Synthesizing your American politics coursework
Participation & Discussion Questions	Weeks 5-10, 12, 13	10	Participation
Discussion Facilitation	Weeks 5-10, 12, 13	10	Connecting class material to your research
Short Assignments (4)	Weeks 1-4	20	Basic understanding of course concepts
Workshop Papers (2)	Weeks 11, 14	20	Applying course material to contemporary issues

Web Resources

I teach many courses that require students to keep track of current political events. I expect the same will be true in this class, but the specific issues you wish to follow will be determined by the subject you address in your research paper. I encourage you to consult the syllabi for my other American politics electives for detailed lists of good websites and blogs covering congressional politics, public opinion, campaigns, party and interest group activities, and campaign finance. You can find all of these on the “teaching” page of my website.

You also will want to keep track of developments in the 2014 elections, both for the purposes of your research and for the purposes of our assignment due the day following the election. Some good sites to consult in following the election include

- *Politico* (www.politico.com), *Roll Call* (www.rollcall.com), *the Hill* (thehill.com), and *National Journal* (nationaljournal.com): These are all “Washington insider” on line magazines that provide detailed coverage of campaigns and federal politics.
- Larry Sabato’s Crystal Ball (<http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/>) and Real Clear Politics (www.realclearpolitics.com): Probably the two best sites for election handicapping. These sites provide expert predictions about election results, along with some news coverage aggregation and polling data. These are not necessarily the sites that politicians themselves use, but they are the best sites that do not charge a subscription fee.
- Blue Mass Group (bluemassgroup.com) and Red Mass Group (redmassgroup.com): There are statewide elections going on in Massachusetts, too. These sites compile a lot of chatter from activists on both sides. Blue Mass Group often includes posts from the candidates themselves or their campaign teams. On occasion both sites (but more often Red Mass Group) also have commentary on Worcester politics.
- The *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*: I shouldn’t have to say this, but you should also read the newspaper. Free copies of the *New York Times* are available outside of the dining hall. Both papers require a subscription in order to access content; you can get a free subscription to both that enables you to access up to 10 or 20 articles per month. Both papers have on line columns or blogs that focus on political analysis; the Post runs *The Monkey Cage* (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/>) which is a collection of pieces by political scientists and has a frequent focus on ideology; the Times recently created *The Upshot* (<http://www.nytimes.com/upshot>) as a competitor to the *Monkey Cage*.

In addition to the *Monkey Cage*, there are a number of good political science blogs that touch upon the issues we will cover on this class. These include

- Mischiefs of Faction (www.mischiefsoffaction.com): Perhaps the best blog focused on partisanship and election rules.
- Mass Politics Profs (<http://www.masspoliticsprofs.com/>): Should include some of the best analysis of Massachusetts elections this year.
- VoteView (www.voteview.com): Run by the creators of the congressional ideology ratings we’ll be looking at. This blog includes discussions of how to measure ideology and links to downloadable data on ideology measurements.
- Polls and Votes (www.pollsandvotes.com): Run by MIT polling expert Charles Franklin, this is one the best sites to consult for discussions of how ideology is measured in public opinion surveys.

Academic Honesty

Finally, as you should be aware by now, the work you do in this course must be entirely your own. To be sure we all have the same understanding of academic integrity as it pertains to this course, here is what the Academic Advising *Blue Book* (p. 22) has to say on the subject:

Academic integrity is highly valued at Clark. Research, scholarship and teaching are possible only in an environment characterized by honesty and mutual trust. Academic integrity requires that your work be your own. Because of the damage that violations of academic integrity do to the intellectual climate of the University, they must be treated with the utmost seriousness and appropriate sanctions must be imposed. The maintenance of high standards of academic integrity is the concern of every member of the University community.

Plagiarism refers to the presentation of someone else's work as one's own, without proper citation of references and sources, whether or not the work has been previously published. Submitting work obtained from a professional term paper writer or company is plagiarism. Claims of ignorance about the rules of attribution, or of unintentional error are not a defense against a finding of plagiarism.

Suspected plagiarism cases will be referred to the Dean's office. If you are in doubt about whether you have provided adequate citation or used others' work properly, please talk with me before handing your paper in!

Schedule

1. August 27: Open discussion: What is ideology?

Reading: None

Assignment: Ask three people (family members, friends, etc.) to describe their political views. In asking them, do *not* use ideological terms (liberal, conservative, left, right). Summarize what they have said.

2. September 3: Ideology as a Theoretical Construct

Readings: (Note: Please do the readings in the order listed below)

John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, Lecture 1 (“First Principles”). New York: Columbia University Press, 1996, pp. 5-46 (Available on the class moodle site).

Michael Oakeshott, “On Being Conservative” and “Talking Politics.” In *Rationalism and Politics* (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Press), pp. 407-461 (Available on the class moodle site).

Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, ch. 1. New York, Verso, 1991, pp. 1-32 (Available on the class moodle site).

Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, ch. 1, 6. New York: Harper Collins, 1955, pp. 3-34, 145-177. (Available on the class moodle site).

Seymour Martin Lipset, “Why no Socialism in the United States?” In Seweryn Bialer and Sophie Sluzar, eds., *Sources of Contemporary Radicalism* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1977), pp. 31-47, 140-150 only (Available on the class moodle site).

Optional: Watch Slavoj Žižek, *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology*, on Netflix. We will watch the first 10 minutes or so in class.

Assignment: Consider a contemporary issue of political conflict in the United States. What do these viewpoints say about different opinions on this issue? To what extent do these views correspond with the stances of the nation’s two parties?

3. September 10: Measuring Mass Ideology

Readings:

Robert E. Lane, *Political Ideology*, ch. 25-27. New York: Free Press, 1962, pp. 413-477. (Available on the class moodle site).

Philip Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964, pp. 268-301. (This is available on line in a lot of places if you search on the title. One such place is

http://ftp.voteview.com/The_Nature_of_Belief_Systems_in_Mass_Publics_Converse_1964.pdf)

Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes, *The American Voter*, ch. 9 ("Attitude Structure and Ideology"). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960, pp. 188-215. (Available on the class moodle site).

John Hibbing, Kevin Smith, and John Alford, *Predisposed: Liberals, Conservatives, and the Biology of Political Differences*, ch. 1-2. New York: Routledge, 2014, pp. 1-56. (Available on the class moodle site).

Assignment: Consider your interview subjects from week 1. For each,

- a) How would you define their views in a liberal/conservative framework?
- b) Have their views changed over time? Why?
- c) What does this change (or lack thereof) suggest about which of this week's readings are correct?

4. September 17: Spatial Theory

Readings:

Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*

Donald Stokes, "Spatial Models of Party Competition." *American Political Science Review* 57/2 (1963), 368-377. (available on JSTOR)

Assignment: Construct three different explanations of spatial competition, using three different sorts of political venues. Explain how the competition here would work, then discuss how realistic your theory is.

Research Paper Proposals Due

5. September 24: Political Polarization I

Reading: Fiorina, *Culture War*

Facilitated Discussion

6. October 1: Political Polarization II

Reading: Abramowitz, *The Polarized Public*

Facilitated Discussion

7. October 8: Ideology in Congress

Reading: Theriault, *Party Polarization in Congress*

Facilitated Discussion

8. October 15: Ideology and Political Parties
Reading: Noel, *Political Ideologies and Political Parties*
Facilitated Discussion
9. October 22: How we got here I
Reading: Kabaservice, *Rule and Ruin*
Facilitated Discussion
Research Paper Rough Draft Due
Research Paper Presentations
10. October 29: How we got here II
Reading: McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal, *Polarized America*
Facilitated Discussion
Research Paper Presentations
11. November 5: Workshop 1—Ideology and the 2014 Election
12. November 12: Ideology and the Media
Reading: Berry and Sobieraj, *The Outrage Industry*
Facilitated Discussion
Research Paper Presentations
13. November 19: Comparing the US to other countries
Readings:
Christopher Cochrane, “The Structure and Dynamics of Public Opinion” and
James Farney, “Canadian Populism in the Era of the United Right” in
James Farney and David Rayside, *Conservatism in Canada* (University of
Toronto Press, 2013, pp. 21-58). Available on the class Moodle page.
Peter Mair, “Left-Right Orientations,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political
Behavior*, ed. Russell Dalton and Hans-Dieter Klingemann (New York:
Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 206-222 (Available on the class
moodle site).
Other readings TBA (Maybe)
Facilitated Discussion
Research Paper Presentations
14. December 3: Workshop 2 – Norms and ideology

December 16: Research Paper due, 1:00 PM