

Political Science 170: American Political Thought and Behavior
Fall Semester 2021
Clark University

Jefferson 133
Monday and Thursday, 2:50-4:05
Professor Robert Boatright
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Course Description, Format, and Purpose:

This course explores factors that shape Americans' political values, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations of government. It explores how our partisan orientations are formed and how they relate to contemporary conceptions of liberalism and conservatism in America. We will devote particular attention to how partisanship and ideology change and how attitudes about race and gender relate to partisanship and ideology.

This course is organized around two major questions: What do Americans have in common that makes us different from the people of other nations? And what is the nature of the things that divide us? As to the first question, there is a long history of “American exceptionalism,” an argument that has often been used by those who wish to highlight America’s founding principles, its social mobility, its history of immigration, and its role in encouraging the establishment of democracy in other countries during the twentieth century. Of course, it could also be argued that part of American exceptionalism is the unresolved legacy of slavery and racial injustice that was very much part of the country’s founding. And events of the past decade, including the declining role of America in world affairs and the onset of a populist movement that seems remarkably similar to movements in other countries has caused some to question whether American politics is really all that unique. In this course we will evaluate claims about American exceptionalism and we will inquire into whether these claims still have relevance in today’s world.

Second, we will explore the sources of disagreement in American politics. Democracy cannot exist without disagreement; indeed, one purpose of democratic institutions is to structure conflict in order to clarify what it was that divides us. At least four possibilities present themselves: political ideology, race, region of the country, and social class. We will explore the relationships between these divisions in American political thought, and we will inquire into how these division structure Americans’ political behavior. It is easy in today’s polarized political climate to cast everything as a conflict between liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans. Our readings suggest that there are many persistent dichotomies that can be identified within the American polity, but these dichotomies do not suggest that disagreement is necessarily harmful or that disagreements are necessarily rooted in our identities.

The class will proceed chronologically: we will spend the first half of the semester considering landmark works in American political thought from the late eighteenth century up to the mid-twentieth century. The development of political science as a quantitative science in the 1950s gave us, for the first time, the ability to measure many of the claims about Americans that had been made throughout our country's history. Accordingly, we will turn in the second half of the course to discussing ways in which political ideology has been measured and some of the major efforts to understand the relationship between political ideology, race, partisanship, and moral values.

This class is, then, neither a comprehensive survey of American political thought nor a full introduction to the field of political behavior. Rather, it is an effort to help you think about the link between ideas about what America is and the ways in which American citizens practice politics. One goal of this class is, however, to acquaint you with some of the classic works of American thought – works which had a profound effect on Americans of past centuries but are often ignored today. A second goal is to help you think about what ideological concepts such as liberalism, conservatism, or progressivism have historically meant to Americans, and how these terms are used and misused today.

Requirements

Class Participation: The most important requirement for this class is your attendance and participation. In order to succeed in this class, you must show up for class, and you should come prepared to discuss the readings. I will take attendance at each class.

Feel free to ask questions about aspects of the readings you do not understand. The level of the readings varies quite a bit; most require little background knowledge, but a few presume knowledge of statistics or of particular aspects of American political history. You do not need to have a thorough understanding of everything in the readings, and I do not expect you to understand the more complex statistical work we will encounter, but I will expect you to understand the main points in the readings and to ask about aspects you do not understand. Class attendance and participation will comprise 10 percent of your final grade.

Online Discussion: At least once a week, you will be required to post your thoughts on the readings on Moodle. I will provide a discussion prompt; you will be responsible for responding to this prompt and for responding to at least one other student's post. This will give us an opportunity to explore the course material outside of class, for you to gain some insight into what your classmates are getting out of the reading, and for me to learn more about what aspects of the course readings are of most interest to you. I will use these responses to structure our classes, so you should be prepared to be called upon to explain your ideas to the class. Online participation will be worth thirty percent of your class grade.

Essays: You will write three 5-7 page essays during the semester. These essays will give you an opportunity to explore the authors we read in greater depth, to apply the concepts from the readings to contemporary problems, and/or to explore differences among the various authors. Each of these essays will be worth 20 percent of your grade.

Summary: Class Requirements and Percent Contribution to Final Grade

Requirement	Percent Contribution to Grade	Objective
Class participation	10%	Participation
Online discussion	30%	Basic understanding of course material
Essays (3)	60% (20% each)	Ability to think normatively about the course material and use course material to understand contemporary issues

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 two hours per week, and the collaborative projects will take an average of two hours per week. The amount of time you spend on each of these activities will, of course, vary from one week to the next.

Required Texts:

The following texts are on sale through the online bookstore. All other readings will be available on the class moodle site or through the web links listed below.

- Brewer, Mark D., and Jeffrey M. Stonecash. 2015. *Polarization and the Politics of Personal Responsibility*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. 1994 [1903]. *The Souls of Black Folk*. Mineola, NY: Dover Thrift Books.
- Freeden, Michael. 2003. *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kinder, Donald R., and Nathan P. Kalmoe. 2017. *Neither Liberal nor Conservative: Ideological Innocence in the American Public*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Philpot, Tasha S. 2017. *Conservative but not Republican*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

COVID-19 Protocols

This class will be conducted in compliance with the Healthy Clark COVID guidelines, available at <https://www.clarku.edu/healthy-clark-covid-plan/>. I encourage you to familiarize yourself with these guidelines. It is my hope that we will be able to conduct this class entirely in person. We do, however, have the ability to pivot if need be, or to allow you to attend by zoom if circumstances require it. If you have any of the symptoms associated with COVID, please do not attend class. If you're able to give me a few hours' notice I will make sure you can attend remotely. As of right now I am planning to conduct office hours in person, at the times listed on the syllabus. I am also happy to meet with you by zoom, however, and I should be able to work out a time outside of my regular office hours.

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!

Course Schedule:

I. A Quick Tour of American Political Thought, 1776-1976

Monday August 23: Introduction to the Course

George Washington's Farewell Address (1796)

Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852)

Susan B. Anthony, "Is it a Crime for a Citizen of the United States to Vote?" (1872). .

Thursday August 26: Federalist Papers, Session 1: Making the case for an American republic

Federalist # 1-5

Monday August 30: Federalist Papers, Session 2: Hamilton and Madison

Federalist #15, 23, 84, 85 (Hamilton)

Federalist #10, 51, 55 (Madison)

Thursday September 2: The Anti-Federalist response

Federal Farmer #1, 2

Brutus #1, 4

Monday September 6: No Class (Labor Day)

Thursday September 9:

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 1, Part I, Ch. 2-4;

Vol. 1, Part II, Ch. 1-4

Monday September 13:

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vol. 2, Part II (all)

John Adams, letter to Thomas Jefferson, December 16, 1816.

Wednesday September 15: Essay #1 due

Thursday September 16: No Class (Yom Kippur)

Monday September 20 and Thursday September 23:

W.E.B. DuBois, *Souls of Black Folk*

Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, ch. 14 ("Atlanta Exposition Address").

Frederick Douglass, "Self Made Men" (1872)

Monday September 27 and Monday October 4: Progressivism

Theodore Dreiser, *Sister Carrie*, ch. 1

Theodore Dreiser, *The Financier*, ch. 1

David Graham Phillips, "The Treason of the Senate"

Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, Book X, ch. 4 ("How Modern Civilization May Decline," pp. 527-544).

Herbert Croly, *The Promise of American Life*, ch. 5

Theodore Roosevelt, Speech at Osawatomie, KS, August 31, 1910.

Thursday September 30: No Class

Thursday October 7: the 1950s: Pluralism, Behaviorism, and the "end of ideology"

Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (Oxford University Press, 1953), ch. 1-2.

Daniel Bell, *The End of Ideology* (Free Press, 1962), ch. 1, 12.

Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* (Norton, 1969), ch. 3.

Monday October 11: No Class (Midterm Break)

Thursday October 14: the 1960s: Liberals, Conservatives, and Civil Rights in the 1960s

Debate between William F. Buckley and James Baldwin, June 14, 1965

Monday October 18: *Essay #2 Due*

II. American Political Thought and Contemporary Political Ideologies

Monday October 18 and Thursday October 21: The Concept of Ideology

Michael Freeden, *Ideology: A Very Short Introduction*

Weeks 8-9: Symbolic vs. operational ideology

Monday October 25:

Philip Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics"

Thursday October 28, Monday November 1, and Thursday November 4:

Kinder and Kalmoe, *Neither Liberal nor Conservative*

Weeks 10-11: Race, Partisanship, Ideology, and "Linked Fate"

Monday November 8, Thursday November 11, and Monday, November 15:

Tasha Philpot, *Conservative but not Republican*

Thursday November 18: Is “Linked Fate” only a construct for African-Americans?
Michael Dawson, *Behind the Mule* (Princeton University Press, 1994), ch. 4.
Jane Junn and Natalie Masuoka, “Asian-American Identity: Shared Racial Status and Political Context” (*Perspectives on Politics* 6/4, December 2008, pp. 729-40).
John A. Garcia, “Latino Public Opinion” (In *Understanding Public Opinion*, ed. Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox, Congressional Quarterly Press, 2010).
Ashley Jardina, *White Identity Politics* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), ch. 2.

Weeks 12-13: Ideology, Values, and Genetics

Monday November 22, Monday November 29, and Thursday December 2:
Brewer and Stonecash, *Polarization and the Politics of Personal Responsibility*
John Hibbing, Kevin Smith, and John Alford, “Differences in Negativity Bias Underlie Variations in Political Ideology” (*Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 37: 297-307 (2014)).

Thursday November 25: No Class (Thanksgiving)

December 6: Where is America Headed?

Barack Obama, Speech at Osawatomie, Kansas, December 6, 2011.
Richard Rorty, “Looking Backwards from the Year 2096” (in Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, Penguin Books, 1999, pp. 243-251).
Patrick Deneen, *Why Liberalism Failed* (Yale University Press, 2018), preface and introduction.

December 14: Essay #3 Due