

American Politics and Government
GOVT 151
Fall 2016
PAC 004
Monday and Wednesday
10:50-12:10

Professor Logan Dancey

Office: PAC 102

Office hours: Mon. & Wed., 4:15 – 5 p.m.; Tues., 2-3 p.m.; and by appointment

Office phone: 860-685-3416

E-mail: ldancey@wesleyan.edu (please include GOVT 151 in the subject line)

Course Overview

This course is an introduction to American politics. We will cover both key elements of the U.S. political system and important debates about the nature of American democracy. Along with discussion of the three major branches of government, topics will include questions about the causes and consequences of political polarization, the role public opinion plays in American democracy, and the extent to which the U.S. system is truly democratic. No prerequisites are required to take this course.

Course Objectives

At the end of this course students will:

- 1) Have a better understanding of the central elements of the U.S. political system.
- 2) Have a better understanding of the enduring and contemporary debates in the study of American politics.
- 3) Be better able to evaluate complex issues and arguments.
- 4) Be able to more effectively convey their arguments in writing.

Course Structure

This course will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. Students are expected to finish the required readings for each class session and come ready to engage in a critical discussion of the arguments and evidence presented in the readings.

Required Books

Dahl, Robert. 2003. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kernell, Samuel and Steven S. Smith, ed. 2016. *Principles and Practice of American Politics, 6th Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press.

Campbell, Andrea. 2014. *Trapped in America's Safety Net: One Family's Struggle*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Course Website

You can access the course website through moodle.wesleyan.edu. Please check the course website regularly (i.e. at least twice a week).

Assignments

Short Paper #1 (17.5% of grade): A 4-6 page paper analyzing an aspect of the American constitutional system is due Oct. 5 by 11:59 p.m. More information will be provided on Sept. 21.

Midterm (17.5% of grade): There will be one midterm exam in this course (Oct. 19), which will cover the readings through March 3. The in-class exam will be closed-book, closed-note and consist of short answer and essay questions. A study guide will be passed out Oct. 12.

Short Paper #2 (22.5% of grade): A 4-6 page paper based on course readings and concepts is due on Nov. 17. More information will be provided by Nov. 2.

Final (22.5% of grade): There will be a final exam from 2-5 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 15. The exam will be closed-book, closed-note and consist of short answer and essay questions. At least one of the essay questions will be cumulative. You will receive a study guide for the exam.

Participation (10% of grade): You are expected to attend and participate in class. I will take attendance beginning Sept. 19. Two unexcused absence will not affect your participation grade. A third unexcused absence will result in a one-letter-grade reduction in your participation grade. Four unexcused absences will result in a two-letter-grade reduction and after five unexcused absences you will receive no higher than a D for your participation grade.

You can also lose participation points for disruptive behavior (e.g., sleeping, using a laptop for non-course related purposes, texting) or failing to participate in class.

I do not expect every person to have something to say every day, but semi-regular participation that indicates engagement with the course material is expected.

Debate Days (5% of grade): There will be six debate days over the course of the semester where two groups of 3 students will debate a subject for the first 20 minutes of class. I will provide the topics and some supplemental readings that students can use for the debate.

Moodle postings (5% of grade): Five times over the course of the semester you are required to post a short (1-2 paragraph) reaction to a reading. You are only allowed to make one posting per class period. The post should describe the aspect of the reading you found most interesting and pose a follow-up question you have based on the reading. **Postings are due no later than 10:30 a.m. the day of the class for which the reading is assigned.** I leave it up to you to decide which five days to make a post. I encourage you to post when you find a reading particularly compelling, frustrating, or thought-provoking. Each post is worth up to 1 point (for 5 points total).

Key Dates

Oct 5: Short Paper #1 due by 11:59 p.m.
Oct. 19: Midterm exam
Nov. 17: Short Paper #2 due by 11:59 p.m.
Dec. 15: Final exam, 2-5 p.m.

Late Assignments

Late papers will lose 2/3 of a letter grade for each day that they are late (e.g., a B+ becomes a B- if it is one day late). **An assignment is considered one day late if it is submitted more than 10 minutes after the specified deadline. After 24 hours an assignment becomes two days late, after 48 hours it becomes three days late, and so on. Assignments over five days late will not be accepted.** Exams must be taken during the time scheduled. **Makeup exams will only be granted in rare cases (e.g., a documented medical emergency).**

Contacting the Instructor

I encourage you to contact me with questions and concerns about the course content and assignments. Please refer to me as Professor Dancey in all correspondence. In general, if you have a clarification question you can reach me over e-mail or on my office phone. Questions about course material, grades, or how to structure your papers are best dealt with in office hours. If my office hours do not work for you because of your class schedule, work schedule, or another important commitment, I am also available by appointment. I cannot guarantee that if you e-mail me shortly before an assignment is due that I will be able to answer your questions, so please make sure and e-mail me early if you have a time-specific question.

Contested Grades

If you wish to contest a grade you must submit a written explanation of why you believe the grade is inaccurate. You must wait 24 hours from the time the assignment is returned before you submit the written explanation. I will not discuss grades until 24 hours after the assignment is passed back. If you ask me to reevaluate your grade then I reserve the right to either raise or lower your grade based on my reevaluation. This policy is meant to address disagreements with my assessment of your work. It does not pertain to calculation errors on my part. If you believe I have made a mistake adding up points, converting your points to a percentage, etc. you can let me know immediately, and I will be happy to correct any mistakes.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section

504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible.

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Technology in the Classroom

You may use laptops, iPads, etc. in class for note taking purposes only. Refrain from using these devices for Facebook, instant messenger, e-mail checking, or anything else that may distract you, your fellow students, or me. It is obvious when someone is using his or her laptop for non-class related activities. Research suggests laptops in the classroom may hinder learning (see, for example, <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/the-case-for-banning-laptops-in-the-classroom>), and I reserve the right to ask students to put laptops away if they are becoming a distraction. Using laptops for non-course related purposes may result in a lower participation grade.

Academic Integrity

I take plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct seriously. I strongly encourage you to review this website:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html>

Suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Board. I expect students to follow the Wesleyan honor code, which can be found here:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/honorboard/honorcode.html>

Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 states that no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity. See

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/inclusion/titleix/titleix.html> for more information.

Course Schedule:¹

Readings noted with an asterisk (*) are from required books. The rest of the material can be found on Moodle or by going to the url listed next to the reading.

The Kernell and Smith edited volume is abbreviated as K&S.

Sept. 5—Introductions

Sept. 7—Institutions

- *Olson, Mancur. "Designing Institutions." Chapter 1-1 in K&S.
- *Hardin, Garrett. "The Tragedy of the Commons." Chapter 1-2 in K&S.
- Ackerman, Bruce. 2013. "Reviving Democratic Citizenship?" *Politics & Society* 41(2): 309-317.

Sept. 12—Culture

- Hartz, Louis. *The Liberal Tradition in America* (excerpt)
- Smith, Rogers M. "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America" (Excerpt).
- Schildkraut, Deborah. 2014. "Boundaries of American Identity: Evolving Understandings of 'US.'" *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17: 441-60.

Sept. 14—Constitution

- U.S. Constitution
- *Brutus. "Anti-Federalist #3." Chapter 2-1 in K&S.
- *Madison. "Federalist #10." Chapter 2-2 in K&S.
- *Madison. "Federalist #51." Chapter 2-3 in K&S.

Sept. 19—Revising the Constitution?

- *Dahl, Robert. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Chapters 1-3.
- Kernell, Samuel. "The True Principles of Republican Government": Reassessing James Madison's Political Science. Chapter 2-4 in K&

¹ I reserve the right to make modifications to the course schedule during the semester. If I make changes I will both announce them in class and on the website.

Sept. 21—Revising the Constitution?

- *Dahl, Robert. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* Chapters 4-8.
- Lane, Eric and Michael Oreskes. 2007. *The Genius of America: How the Constitution Saved our Country—and Why it Can Again* (Excerpt).
- **Debate Day #1: Should we abolish the Electoral College?**

Sept. 26—Federalism

- Madison, Federalist #39.
- *Rauch, Jonathan. “A Separate Peace.” Chapter 3-2 in K&S.
- *Kousser, Thad. “How America’s ‘Devolution Revolution’ Reshaped Its Federalism.” Chapter 3-3 in K&S.
- Gulasekaram, Pratheepan, and Karthick Ramakrishnan. 2015. “Forget Border Walls and Mass Deportations. The Real Changes in Immigration Policy Are Happening in the States.” *Washington Post*, Sept. 24: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/09/24/forget-border-walls-and-mass-deportations-the-real-changes-in-immigration-policy-are-happening-in-the-states/>

Sept. 28—Civil Liberties

- Re-read Bill of Rights (first 10 Amendments to Constitution)
- *Sunstein, Cass R. *Republic.com 2.0* (Excerpt). Chapter 5-1 in K&S.
- Friedersdorf, Conor. 2015. “The New Intolerance of Student Activism.” *The Atlantic*, Nov. 9: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/the-new-intolerance-of-student-activism-at-yale/414810/>
- Cobb, Jelani. 2015. “Race and the Free-Speech Diversion.” *The New Yorker*, Nov. 10: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/race-and-the-free-speech-diversion>
- Friedersdorf, Conor. 2015. “Free Speech is No Diversion.” *The Atlantic*, Nov. 12: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/11/race-and-the-anti-free-speech-diversion/415254/>
- Hanlon, Aaron R. 2016. “The ‘Free Speech’ Charade.” *New Republic*, May 17: <https://newrepublic.com/article/133531/free-speech-charade>
- Poushter, Jacob. 2015. “40% of Millennials OK with Limiting Speech Offensive to Minorities.” *Pew Research Center*, Nov. 20: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/20/40-of-millennials-ok-with-limiting-speech-offensive-to-minorities/>

- **Debate Day #2: Is freedom of speech under threat on college campuses?**

Oct. 3—Civil Rights

- Review 14th Amendment to the Constitution
- King Jr., Martin Luther. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail."
- Smith, Rogers M., Desmond S. King, and Philip A. Klinkner. 2016. "Challenging History: Barack Obama & American Racial Politics." *Daedalus*, 140(2): 121-135.
- Howe, Amy. 2014. "Divided Court Upholds Michigan's Ban on Affirmative Action: In Plain English." *Scotusblog*, April 23: <http://www.scotusblog.com/2013/10/argument-review-races-role-on-campus-in-society/>
- *Schuetz v. Bamm (Excerpts)*. Chapter 4-1 in K&S.

Oct. 5—Paper #1 Due by 11:59 p.m.

Oct. 10—President

- Howell, William G. *Power Without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. Excerpt
- Klein, Ezra. 2014. "The Green Lantern Theory of the Presidency, explained." *Vox.com*, May 20: <http://www.vox.com/2014/5/20/5732208/the-green-lantern-theory-of-the-presidency-explained>
- Ehrenfreund, Max. 2014. "Your Complete Guide to Obama's Immigration Executive Action." *Washington Post*, Nov. 20: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2014/11/19/your-complete-guide-to-obamas-immigration-order/>.
- Liptak, Adam and Michael D. Shear. 2016. "Supreme Court Tie Blocks Obama Immigration Plan." *New York Times*, June 23: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/24/us/supreme-court-immigration-obama-dapa.html>
- **Debate Day #3: Should Obama have passed an executive order on immigration or waited for Congress to act?**

Oct. 12—Congress

- *Smith, Steven S. "Congress, The Troubled Institution." Chapter 6-1 in K&S.
- *Binder, Sarah A. "The Politics of Legislative Stalemate." Chapter 6-2 in K&S.

- *Jacobson, Gary C. “No Compromise: The Electoral Origins of Legislative Gridlock.” Chapter 11-2 in K&S.

Oct. 17—Supreme Court

- *Scalia, Antonin. *A Matter of Interpretation: Federal Courts and the Law* (Excerpt). Chapter 9-1 in K&S.
- *Breyer, Stephen. *Active Liberty* (Excerpt). Chapter 9-2 in K&S.
- **Roe v. Wade*. Chapter 5-2 in K&S.

Oct. 19—Midterm Exam

Oct. 24—No Class; Fall Break

Oct. 26—Elections

- Sides, John, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck. 2016. “The Electoral Landscape of 2016.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 667(1): 50-71.
- McElwee, Sean. 2015. “Why Non-Voters Matter.” *The Atlantic*, Sept. 15: <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/why-non-voters-matter/405250/>
- **Debate Day #4: Should the United States implement compulsory voting?**

Oct. 31—Parties

- Coleman, John J. 2014. “The Standards of Responsible Parties.” Chapter 30 in *CQ Press Guide to Political Parties*.
- Noel, Hans. 2016. “Ideological Factions in the Republican and Democratic Parties.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 667(1): 166-188.
- Skuldt, Amanda. 2016. “Could a Third-Party Candidate win the U.S. Presidency? That’s Very Unlikely.” *Washington Post*, Aug. 2: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/08/02/could-a-third-party-candidate-win-the-u-s-presidency-very-unlikely/>
- **Debate Day #5: Would American politics be improved by the presence of a strong third party?**

Nov. 2—Public opinion

- *Asher, Herbert. "Analyzing and Interpreting Polls." Chapter 10-1 of K&S.
- *Fiorina, Morris. *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America* (Excerpt). Chapter 10-3 of K&S.
- *Abramowitz, Alan. *The Polarized Electorate*. Chapter 10-4 in K&S.

Nov. 7—Partisanship and Voting Behavior

- Norpoth, Helmut. 2014. "Partisanship in General Elections." In *CQ Press Guide to US Political Parties*.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 2016. "The Obama Legacy and the Future of Partisan Conflict." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 667: 72-91.

Nov. 9— Election Recap

- We'll talk about the results on the 2016 elections and what's next for American politics

Nov. 14—Interest Groups/Lobbying

- Watch Frontline documentary "Obama's Deal":
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/obamasdeal/view/>
- *Schattschneider, E.E. "The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System." Chapter 13-1 in K&S.
- *Hall, Richard L. and Richard Anderson. "Issue Advertising and Legislative Advocacy in Health Politics." Chapter 13-2 in K&S.

Nov. 16—Campaign Finance

- La Raja, Raymond. 2013. "Why Super PACs: How the American Party System Outgrew the Campaign Finance System." *The Forum* 10(4): 91-104.
- "Do We Really Need Campaign Finance Reform?" 2016. *Time Magazine*, Jan. 19:
<http://time.com/4182502/campaign-finance-reform/>
- ***Debate Day #6: Should we pass a Constitutional amendment to restrict campaign spending?***

Nov. 17—Paper #2 Due by 11:59 p.m.

Nov. 21—Media

- *Hamilton, James T. 2005. "The Market and the Media." Chapter 14-1 in K&S.
- *Iyengar, Shanto and Kyu S. Han. 2009. "Red Media, Blue Media: Evidence of Ideological Selectivity in Media Use." Chapter 14-2 in K&S.
- Mitchell, Amy, Jesse Holcomb, and Rachel Wiesel. 2016. "Election 2016: Campaigns as a Direct Source of News." *Pew Research Center*.

Nov. 23—No class; Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 28—Social Policy I

- **Trapped in America's Safety Net* (pp. ix-56)
- Levin, Yunal. 2011. "Beyond the Welfare State." *National Affairs*:
<http://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/beyond-the-welfare-state>

Nov. 30—Social Policy II

- **Trapped in America's Safety Net* (pp. 57-131)
- "A Better Way. Our Vision for a Confident America" House Republicans.
<http://abetterway.speaker.gov/assets/pdf/ABetterWay-Poverty-PolicyPaper.pdf>

Dec. 5—Foreign Policy

- Wittkopf, Eugene R. and Christopher Jones. *American Foreign Policy: Pattern and Process*. Introduction.
- Goldberg, Jeffrey. 2016. "The Obama Doctrine." *The Atlantic*, April:
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/04/the-obama-doctrine/471525/>.

Dec. 7—Current Events

- Readings TBD

Thursday, Dec. 15 (2-5 p.m.): Final exam