

Government 3**The American Political System****Fall 2022**

Professor: Dean Lacy

Classes: Rockefeller 001
(2) M W F 2:10-3:15
x-period: Th 1:30-2:10Office Hours: Weds 1-2pm or by appt
116 Silsby Hall**Description**

This course examines the American political system, but it is about much more than American politics. The course develops a framework for understanding politics generally through the motivations of political actors, their choices, and the rules that constrain them. The course is organized to explore *ten problems of politics* and how American government addresses them:

- (1) collective action
- (2) federalism, or the relationship between local and central governments
- (3) rights and liberties, especially of outnumbered or minority groups
- (4) aggregation of individual preferences into collective choices
- (5) organization and powers of the legislature
- (6) selection and powers of the executive branch
- (7) administration of laws
- (8) interpretation of laws and dispute resolution
- (9) revenue collection and distribution
- (10) relationship with other states, defense, and war

Each week the class schedule will be:

Monday: General theories of the problem
 Wednesday: How US government attempts to solve the problem
 Friday: Discussion of the problem focused on papers submitted by students
 (every student will choose two weeks to submit discussion papers)

American national, state, and local governments will serve as case studies. We will examine the Constitution and other institutions of American politics. We will study American political behavior as expressed through public opinion, elections, parties, interest groups, and the media. We'll end by putting the pieces together to understand how economic policy, the budget, social policy, and foreign policy. The course does not require prior knowledge of American politics.

Learning Objectives

The primary purpose of this course is to equip students to understand politics and forms of government generally. Students will learn foundational theories of political behavior, or what

people believe and how they act politically. Students will also learn the key theories of political institutions, or the norms, rules, laws, and processes that determine political outcomes.

The second purpose of this course is to teach students the historical context and distinguishing features of the American political system. Students will read and understand the motivations behind the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, US Constitution, and key statutes and court decisions. Students will learn the laws and formal rules as well as the incentives, expectations, and history that shape the presidency, Congress, courts, and bureaucracy, and state and local government. We will also study the informal inputs into US government, including political parties, interest groups, public opinion, and the media.

Reading

[BC] Bianco, William T., and David Canon. 2021. [*American Politics Today. Full 7th ed.*](#) ISBN: 978-0-393-53958-5. I recommend the Ebook with InQuizitive. The paperback copy is also fine but more expensive. I will have a copy on reserve in the library.

Additional reading will be posted on Canvas

Course Requirements and Grading

Two Reaction Papers (max 750 words, or 3 double-spaced pages)	1 st :	20% of grade
Due by 9am on two class days of your choice	2 nd :	25%
First Test, Wednesday, October 12		20%
Second Test, Monday, November 7		25%
Class attendance, participation, and quizzes		10%

Class Format, Recording, and Discussion

We will meet 3 days/week, usually Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. I will use x-hours only for the occasional make-up class and exam reviews.

Mondays and Wednesdays are lectures, but I encourage questions. Fridays are for discussions organized around the papers submitted by students. Every student will choose two weeks to submit a discussion paper to Canvas by 9am the day of class. Everyone should read the discussion papers before class. Everyone should be prepared to contribute to a discussion about all of the questions on the syllabus for that week.

You may not record the class. I want this to class to be an open forum for students to discuss ideas without concerns about being recorded. It is important that all ideas can be discussed freely. At times I will ask you to brainstorm and offer ideas that you may not endorse. I will also ask you to defend ideas that you might not hold. I will ask you to read material that does not reflect my own

views. I will say things in class that I do not agree with in order to stimulate discussion and present all sides. Remember to debate ideas, not people. We are all here to learn from each other.

Contacting Me

You should feel free to talk to me about the course or assignments. I will generally hold office hours on Wednesdays, 1-2pm, but please notify me if you would like to meet during office hours. You may also call my direct line at 603-717-2944. If you contact me by email, put “Gov 3” as the subject. I get so many emails that I usually do not reply to them. But, I will check my email almost every day, sort it by subject, and respond to all of those with “Gov 3” as the subject. If I do not reply within 2 days, either give me a call or resend the message. I may have missed your email.

Dartmouth’s Academic Honor Principle.

Read Dartmouth’s Academic Honor Principle:

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/judicialaffairs/honor/index.html>

Also read this resource on properly citing sources:

<http://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/materials/sources-and-citations-dartmouth>).

Accessibility Needs

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related academic adjustments and services for this course are encouraged to see me privately as early in the term as possible. Students requiring disability-related academic adjustments and services must consult the [Student Accessibility Services office](#) (Carson Hall, Suite 125, 646-9900). Once SAS has authorized services, students must show the originally signed SAS Services and Consent Form and/or a letter on SAS letterhead to their professor. As a first step, if students have questions about whether they qualify to receive academic adjustments and services, they should contact the SAS office. All inquiries and discussions will remain confidential.

Student Wellness

The academic environment at Dartmouth is challenging, our terms are intensive, and classes are not the only demanding part of your life. There are a number of resources available to you on campus to support your wellness, including your undergraduate dean (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/>), Counseling and Human Development (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~chd/>), and the Student Wellness Center (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/>).

Religious Observances

Some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. If you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please meet with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Additional Support

Academic Skills Center (<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~acskills/>)

The Academic Skills Center is open to the entire Dartmouth community.

Here are some common reasons why you might visit the ASC

- You're getting B's but you want to get A's
- You don't feel comfortable talking in class
- You're attending class regularly but you feel like you're missing important points
- You feel like you're a slow reader
- You're having trouble completing tests in the allotted time
- You're spending hours studying for foreign language but still not “getting it”
- You feel like you don't have enough time to get everything done
- You're not sure how to take notes
- You want to sign up for a tutor or study group
- You're not sure if you should get tested for a learning disability

The Research Center for Writing, and Information Technology (RWiT <http://writing-speech.dartmouth.edu/learning/support-writing-research-and-composing-technology/rwit>)

Located in [Berry 183](#), RWiT is a free service dedicated to helping members of the Dartmouth community develop more effective strategies for generating and organizing their ideas, finding and evaluating research sources, and presenting and revising compositions in a variety of media. Through informal dialogue, RWiT tutors assist writers in developing better compositions and more effective composing strategies. A collaboration between the Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, the Library, and Academic Computing, RWiT brings together faculty, administrators, staff, and students to focus on the art and science of composition.

Dartmouth College Library (<http://library.dartmouth.edu/>)

Dartmouth College Library A key to successful research is the use of reliable, high-quality information sources. While some information can be found on the open web, the best place to start your research is at the Library's Research Guides, researchguides.dartmouth.edu/guides. These research guides have categorized and organized the library's key resources - including books, databases, scholarly articles, and data sources - for your convenience. The Library's [website](#) also has information on useful research tools and services. In addition to the online information, a librarian has been assigned to this class to answer research questions, help you find appropriate resources, and assist with search techniques. Please contact your subject librarian (<http://researchguides.dartmouth.edu/subjectlibrarians>) for specialized help.

Class Schedule

Week Topic

1 Collective Action and the Foundations of (American) Politics

BC, Chs. 1, 2, 8, 10

Declaration of Independence (back of BC)

Articles of Confederation (back of BC)

Federalist 10 and 51 (back of BC)

2 Federalism

BC, Ch. 3

US Constitution and Amendments (back of BC)

Papers due Friday (pick one)

Should the government require all people to wear virus-resistant masks indoors until the COVID-19 pandemic subsides?

Should the government require all people to be vaccinated against COVID-19?

Should the US adopt one nationwide law governing (pick one: abortion, who can own an assault rifle, legalized marijuana, vaccine requirements against COVID-19) or should each state make its own law?

Should states redistribute revenues across school districts to make local public school funding more equitable?

3 Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Read and watch [“5 of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Most Memorable Speeches”](#)

BC, Chs. 3, 4

Riker, William H. 1988. *Liberalism Against Populism*, Chs. 1 & 10.

Papers Due Fri, Jan 21: (pick one)

Should the government ban the display of the Confederate flag, Nazi flag, or any white supremacist symbols?

Should the government (local, state, or federal) prohibit teaching Critical Race Theory in K-12 public schools?

Should social media companies (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) or other private businesses be allowed to deny service to individuals who post messages or symbols that express (pick one: violence, racism, sexism, misinformation)?

4 Aggregation of Preferences: The Public and the Media

BC, Chs. 6, 7

Allport, Gordon, 1929. The Composition of Political Attitudes. *American Journal of Sociology* 35(2, Sep):220-38.

Appelbaum, B. and Gebeloff, R., 2012. Even critics of safety net increasingly depend on it. *The New York Times*, 11.

First Test: Wednesday, October 12

5 Elections and Congress

BC, Chs 9, 11

Papers Due: (pick one)

Should the US adopt proportional representation for elections to the House of Representatives?

Should members of Congress be term-limited (if so, how many terms)?

Should the filibuster be eliminated in the Senate?

6 Executive Branch and Bureaucracy

BC, Chs. 12, 13

Wilson, J.Q. and Kelling, G.L. 1982. Broken windows. *Atlantic Monthly* 249 (3): 29-38.

Read list of [US presidents](#) (yes, Wikipedia has a good list), focusing on:

Name, years in office, political party

Read [Presidential Inaugural Addresses](#) by:

George Washington 1789

Thomas Jefferson 1801

Abraham Lincoln 1865

Franklin Roosevelt 1933, 1937

John F. Kennedy 1961

Ronald Reagan 1981

Barack Obama 2009

*Read the table at the bottom of the page with word counts

Papers: Due Friday (pick one)

Should the Electoral College be replaced by a national popular vote for president?

Should the US adopt a parliamentary system of government?

Should all executive orders be subject to approval by Congress?

7 Judiciary

BC, Ch. 14

Federalist 78

Papers, Due Friday (pick one)

Should Supreme Court justices be appointed to 12-year terms?

Should Supreme Court justices have to retire at age 75?

Should the Supreme Court be expanded to 15 members?

8 Domestic Policy and the Budget

BC, Chs. 15, 16

Papers Due Friday, (pick one)

Should the US adopt Medicare for all, or a national, single-payer health care system?

Should the US (pick one: make all college education free, make college education free at all state universities, impose tuition caps on private universities as a condition of keeping endowments tax exempt)?

Should the US adopt a constitutional amendment requiring a balanced budget or adopt a pay-as-you-go budget?

Second Test: Monday, November 7

9 Foreign Policy
BC, Ch. 17

Papers Due Friday

Should the US have kept or reinstate a significant military presence in Afghanistan?

Should the US impose economic sanctions on Iran if it advances a nuclear program?

Should the US commit to defend Taiwan if it declares independence from the PRC?

Should the US withdraw all troops and bases that are outside of the United States or its territories?

10 Conclusion