

American Politics and the 2016 Presidential Election

Yale-NUS College
AY 2016-17, Semester 1



Instructor Information

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Why You Should Take This Class: Course Mission and Learning Goals

This is an unusual year in American politics. Election years are often interesting, but this one is especially fascinating and perplexing to many observers. This course provides students with a broader historical and theoretical context from which to appreciate the current moment in American politics. Throughout, the course weaves in a comparative perspective, investigating the similarities and differences between United States and other political systems. Importantly, students will be relied upon to stay up-to-date with current events especially regarding the presidential election, and to bring that information into the class. Specific learning goals include the following:

1. You will gain insight into underlying ideologies, institutions, and interests in American politics, helping you to interpret contemporary dynamics.
2. You will learn to identify anomalies and deviations with reference to institutions, historical patterns, and power dynamics in American politics and compare American political processes to those of other states, in particular other democracies.

3. You will be equipped to differentiate the roles and responsibilities of the primary actors in the US system and understand distinctive traits of the US system compared to other polities.
4. You will better understand how the 2016 presidential election both departs from and is the continuation of pre-existing trends in American presidential and party politics.

As a course contributing to Yale-NUS' social sciences program and to the PPE major, this class also has the following more general learning goals:

1. You will become a more informed and skeptical *consumer* of political information. You will *analyze* and *critique*, distinguish between observation and explanation, separate causes and effects, unpack the mechanisms behind causal relationships, bound or contextualize theory, and assess the practical applicability of different arguments. You will further develop your capacity to dissect, critique, and make intelligent causal claims.
2. You will become a more thoughtful, careful, and creative *communicator* of political argumentation. You will be given tools, and opportunities to practice, both oral and written communication. You will practice how to create arguments on political issues of interest to you. You will write a thoughtful political analysis of a current issue in American or comparative politics.

This is interesting material and I am excited to explore it with you. If you have any questions about anything at all, please email or come see me at office hours!

Who Should Take This Class: Everyone!

This course is designed for anyone who is motivated to take it. There are no prerequisites except for Comparative Social Institutions; the only requirement is that you are interested in achieving at least some (if not all) of the learning goals listed above. No prior knowledge of American political institutions is necessary and you do not need to have taken other politics courses. My job is to make this information accessible and interesting to all – I will work with you as a class and individually to make sure we are all getting as much out of the class as possible, regardless of differing academic backgrounds. However, *do note* that this course relies on students doing significant readings, especially early in the semester, and taking initiative to stay up-to-date with 2016 presidential campaign, election analysis, and relevant current events.

Of course, because the class is about understanding and analyzing politics, it may be particularly appealing if you are considering a career in government, the non-for profit community, consulting, academia, law, business, or education. These professions frequently value the ability to summarize, analyze, and conduct political analysis. This is also a useful course for students considering an advanced degree in social science or related disciplines. But primarily, this is a course designed for students who want to better understand American politics and discuss the 2016 election in a structured, informed setting.

What You Will Do In This Class: Assessment & Learning Activities

The following assignments are designed to help you achieve the learning goals listed above and chart your progress during the semester. You will notice there are many different types of assessment in this course. The goal is to give students with diverse prior experiences and talents multiple formats in which to consolidate and demonstrate their learning in the course. You will also notice that no one assessment mechanism can destroy your grade. Put differently: you should view these as learning opportunities not deal-breaking, stress-inducing calamities. With more assignments come more opportunities to practice new skills and improve your learning, and your grade, throughout the course. More information on each assignment will be given in class at the appropriate time during the semester. If you have any questions or concerns raise them during class or come see me.

Active Reading Rubrics -- 5%

For each reading we do (not including the textbooks *American Anomaly* and *Logic of American Politics*) I would like you to fill out a short (truly) Active Reading Rubric, which I will provide separately. This assignment is not designed to make sure you read every word of every article. On the contrary, it is designed to help you read effectively, read with purpose, and give you an incentive to do all your reading as efficiently as possible (as opposed to spending a lot of time with just one article and neglecting the others). By completing these rubrics before class we will also be able to have more productive, detailed conversations about the reading during class. These rubrics also provide a participation opportunity for students who might have difficulty contributing verbally in seminar. (This is a pass/ fail assignment.)

Participation -- 20%

Your verbal and listening contribution to seminar discussion. See participation assessment rubric.

In addition to in-class participation, throughout the class we will create a compendium of articles and analysis (podcasts, tv broadcasts, etc.) pertaining to the 2016 Presidential Election for the Yale-NUS Library. Here is the link:

<http://americanpolitics2016.courses.yale-nus.edu.sg>

Students will be evaluated on the quantity of their contributions and the quality of their annotations. More details to follow. This is a good opportunity for students who might have difficulty contributing verbally in seminar. You can offer a brief summary, a response, connect a new article to something we have read in class, or summarize with a causal diagram. I've posted an example post but do not let my example constrain you. Everyone should do at least five posts.

Discussion Leader -- 10%

You will pick one or two seminars in which to lead discussion. For that week, you will do an additional reading and present it to the class.

Analytical Writing: the 2016 Presidential Election and American Political Ideology -- 15%

This 2,500 to 3,000 word essay should respond to the following question: *Is the 2016 presidential election really a major departure from and threat to America's founding political ideals*

and democracy? You will send the essays to your course-mates and me for consideration two days before the 10th class, and we will then discuss the different arguments in class and use the discussion to generate questions for subsequent classes and final papers. Students who wish can revise their papers subsequent to the class discussion if they wish. More instructions and specifics to follow. Late papers will be deducted 1/3rd a letter grade for every 12 hours of lateness.

Two Mid-Term In-Class Assessments - 12.5% each, 25% total

These will be non-cumulative content/knowledge assessments allowing you to demonstrate understanding of the reading and discussions from prior weeks. Questions will ask you to define and explain the significance of different terms, briefly discuss the relevance of key themes, and summarize debates in the literature.

Final In-Class Exam (OR Final Research Paper) - 25%

For your final assessment you have two choices.

Option One: You can take a multi-hour in-class cumulative final exam which will involve a mix of short and long-format in-class essays analyzing and extending course content. The in-class exam is almost surely going to be a less demanding option and is the best option for most students as a method of consolidating knowledge, demonstrating mastery of course material, and finishing the course.

Option Two: You can write a final research paper on a topic we will develop together. The paper should be no longer than 6,000 words and well researched. This is a more demanding option, and not recommended for most students. However, I recognize that some students may have an interest in a particular US political issue or institution (or something you want to look at in a comparative perspective) and this gives you the opportunity to explore a topic in depth. The essay option might be appealing, for example, to students who want to use it as an exploratory exercise for their Capstone or have a polished research/analytical document of use on the job-market or for grad school applications. Essays will most likely pertain to the 2016 presidential election or other recent elections, but could potentially investigate a particular policy issue, unpacking the relative impact of ideas, institutions, and ideas on a range of policy dynamics, e.g. health care, supreme court nominees, campaign finance, the government reaction to the subprime housing crisis, Occupy Wall Street, affirmative action in higher education. If you choose the paper we will work on the topic and requirements together. *You should notify me by Class 15 if you want to pursue the essay option.*

Tips for Successful Performance in the Course

Review Assignments - and This Syllabus - Carefully

Make sure you know what is expected of you and what the goals of a given assignment are well before it is due, and if you are at all confused seek clarification from me as soon as possible. Save yourself the frustration of spending hours completing an assignment that is different from the one you are supposed to be doing!

Read With Purpose

This is a reading-intensive class. You are not going to be able to read every sentence or dig into every concept. *I would rather you read 75% of all assigned chapters/articles than 100% of only half of the readings.* I will foreshadow for you what I most want you to get from the readings, and then you can read with purpose, searching for specific information and arguments. Also, *do the readings in the order they are listed* – it’s intentional.

Participate in Class Actively, Creatively, and Respectfully

Discussion is an essential part of the class. Showing up is important, but not nearly enough. You are expected to engage the readings thoughtfully (with the help of the Active Reading Rubrics) and to participate actively (see the Participation Grading Rubric). Discussion is your opportunity to clarify and critique readings and make sure you get the most out of the material. In addition to *participating* actively, I expect you to *listen* actively. I encourage heated debate, but let’s keep it clean!

Don’t Compromise Your Integrity

In my experience most students compromise their integrity after they’ve made a poor decision – essentially laying a bad decision over a bad decision. Maybe they didn’t give themselves enough time to prepare for an exam, or didn’t do the reading necessary to write a good paper, or they overcommitted on extra-curriculars and didn’t give themselves enough time for school work. Copying someone else’s work, or using sloppy bibliographical techniques, or lying about whether you’ve submitted work is never a strong option. If you didn’t give yourself enough time to do work with integrity, accept the fact that your grade is likely to suffer somewhat as a result, learn from the experience, and make stronger choices the next time around. If you want help strategizing for success, talk to me or your many other resources on campus (peers, Writer’s Center, faculty advisors, Wellness). For assistance in research and citation protocol see: <http://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/citation/>

Help Me Help You

If something about the course doesn’t work for you let me know so we can manage these issues together. I welcome feedback and enjoy speaking with students outside of class during visiting hours or by appointment!

American Politics and 2016 Election Resources

The Debates (US Dates)

- Sept. 26 – Presidential Debate
- Oct. 4 – Vice Presidential Debate
- Oct. 9 – Presidential Debate
- Oct. 19 – Presidential Debate
- Nov. 8 – Election Day

News and Current Events Analysis

- New York Times -- I find these especially useful:
<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate> <http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/category/current-events>
- Washington Post
- The Atlantic
- The Economist
- The New Yorker
- FiveThirtyEight
- National Public Radio (podcasts and web site)
- BBC (podcasts and web site)
- National Journal
- VOX
- New Republic (progressive news coverage/analysis)
- Mother Jones (progressive news coverage/analysis)
- The Weekly Standard (conservative coverage/analysis)
- National Review (conservative coverage/analysis)
- Politifact (see especially www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter)

Election Predictions

- FiveThirtyEight
- Center for Politics Crystal Ball

Academic and Historical Analysis/Context

- Monkey Cage
- Backstory with the History Guys
- Brookings Institution

Think Tanks/ Analysis (but often with political agenda)

- National Bureau of Economic Research
- New America Foundation
- Aspen Institute
- Brookings Institution
- The Heritage Foundation (conservative leaning)
- Cato Institute (conservative)
- American Enterprise Institute (neo-conservative)
- Center for American Progress (progressive/liberal)
- Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (progressive)
- Open Society Foundation (liberal)

- Commonwealth Fund (esp. on health care)

Foreign Policy Resources

- Foreign Affairs
- Foreign Policy
- Counsel on Foreign Relations
- RAND Institute

Podcasts

- National Public Radio (podcasts and web site. I like The Diane Rehm Show Friday News Roundups among many others)
- BBC (podcasts and web site)
- Backstory with the History Guys
- Keeping It 1600 (with former Obama advisors Jon Favreau and Dan Pfeiffer)
- Amy Goodman at DemocracyNow
- The Weeds from Vox
- Amicus (on the Supreme Court, by Dahlia Litwick of Slate)
- More Perfect (on Supreme Court from the folks of Radiolab)
- We the People (from Jeffrey Rosen of the National Constitution Center)
- Political Junkie (Ken Rudin)
- Whistle Stop (historical lens)

Movies and Television (notice a trend?)

- The West Wing
- PBS American Experience Series
- The Candidate
- The Contender
- Wag the Dog
- The West Wing
- The American President
- Primary Colors
- Bullworth
- The West Wing
- Samantha Bee, John Stewart, John Oliver...
- The War Room
- Journeys with George
- The West Wing

Weekly Reading and Discussion Schedule

Part 1: Why and How We Will Study American Politics

August 8: Why and How We Will Study American Politics

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What is politics?
- What is America?
- Why we study American politics (even outside the US)?
- How will we study AP? (historical, comparative, social scientific perspectives)

Readings:

- American Anomaly, ix-xxviii (Preface, Chart 1, Chart 2)
How does Smith study and understand American politics?
- Logic of American Politics, xx-36 (Preface, Note to Students, Chapter 1)
How do the authors conceptualize the role of institutions and history?
What is the framework they use to study and understand American politics?

August 11: American Politics and the 2016 Presidential Election

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- The 2016 election and why it has everyone doubting what they know about AP.
- What questions should guide our study of AP to understand how transformative/anomalous or not election really is?

Readings:

Below are a variety of articles all on the theme of "What is so strange/different about the 2016 presidential election?" The goal in reading these is not to understand every nuance or memorize any details. Rather, read these to identify underlying principles, assumptions, theses embedded in these arguments which will animate our study of American politics. I've put an asterisk (*) next to the articles I think you all should read but I strongly encourage you pick a number of others to skim or read as well. They are mostly short articles in plain, non-academic style and should not take too much time to get through.

On the 2016 Election in General:

- * David Karol, "U.S. Presidential Election 2016," Political Insight (September 2015): 24-27. (Saved)
- * Thomas Friedman, "Who Are We" http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/17/opinion/who-are-we.html?_r=0 (Saved)
- * Ezra Klein, "Sanders, Trump, and Cruz all want dramatic changes to the US government. Clinton doesn't." www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/3/29/11323770/sanders-clinton-trump-cruz-tax-plans
- * Nate Silver, "How I Acted Like A Pundit And Screwed Up On Donald Trump" fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-i-acted-like-a-pundit-and-screwed-up-on-donald-trump/ (saved) (You don't need to understand the stats/ you can skim the math.)
- * Ezra Klein, "After Brexit and Trump, its time to stop trusting our guts and start trusting the polls" www.vox.com/2016/6/24/12022858/brexit-trump

- * NY Times Room for Debate, "Is Tyranny Around the Corner?"
www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2016/05/12/is-tyranny-around-the-corner

On Trump:

- * Robert Kagan, This is How Fascism Comes to America, Washington Post, May 18, 2016.
- * Sullivan, "America Has Never Been So Ripe for Tyranny" NY Magazine.
<http://nymag.com/daily/intelligencer/2016/04/america-tyranny-donald-trump.html>
(Saved) (You can also read or listen to a follow-up interview with Sullivan here:
http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2016/05/andrew_sullivan_thanks_donald_trump_may_defeat_hillary_clinton.html)
- * Michael Gerson, Trump is the Demagogue That Our Founding Fathers Feared,
https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trump-is-the-demagogue-that-our-founding-fathers-feared/2016/03/10/58584278-e6df-11e5-b0fd-073d5930a7b7_story.html
- * Robert Kagan, "Would Checks and Balances Stop Trump? Don't Bet On It"
- * Ezra Klein, "Donald Trump and the destruction of America's political norms"
www.vox.com/2016/6/7/11872834/donald-trump-norms (saved)
- Ezra Klein, The Rise of Donald Trump is a Terrifying Moment in American Politics,
<http://www.vox.com/2016/2/10/10956978/donald-trump-terrifying> (saved).
- * George Will, If Trump Wins the Nomination, Prepare for the End of the Conservative Party" https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/a-conservative-party-jeopardized-by-trump/2015/12/23/3335339c-a8e2-11e5-8058-480b572b4aae_story.html?tid=a_inl
- * Robert Kagan, "Trump is the GOP's Frankenstein Monster. Now He's Strong Enough to Destroy the Party," https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/trump-is-the-gops-frankenstein-monster-now-hes-strong-enough-to-destroy-the-party/2016/02/25/3e443f28-dbc1-11e5-925f-1d10062cc82d_story.html
- Ed Smith, "Donald Trump and the Age of Rage,"
www.newstatesman.com/world/2016/04/donald-trump-and-age-rage
- George Saunders, "Who are All These Trump Supporters?"
www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/07/11/george-saunders-goes-to-trump-rallies

On Bernie:

- * Brooks, "Livin' Bernie Sanders's Danish Dream"
www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/opinion/livin-bernie-sanderss-danish-dream.html
- "Is the US Ready for a Socialist President?" <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/feb/06/bernie-sanders-america-ready-for-socialist-president>
- * Tim Murphy, "How Bernie Sanders Learned to be a Real Politician"
<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/05/young-bernie-sanders-liberty-union-vermont> (Saved)
- "Bernie Sanders' Radical Past,"
www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2016/02/bernie_sanders_radical_past_would_haunt_him_in_a_general_election.html (Saved)
- * Bernie Sanders, Democratic Socialist Capitalist,
www.nytimes.com/2015/10/20/upshot/bernie-sanders-democratic-socialist-capitalist.html (saved)
- * Ezra Klein, "Why Bernie Sanders Isn't a Democrat"
www.vox.com/2015/11/23/9781330/bernie-sanders-democrat (saved)
- * Ezra Klein, "Bernie Sanders didn't play the inside game, and it both helped and hurt him"
www.vox.com/2016/5/26/11782650/bernie-sanders-democratic-establishment (saved)
- Jeff Stein, www.vox.com/2016/2/5/10923304/bernie-sanders-general-election

Part 2: Aspirations and Underpinnings -- Cultural, Legal, Institutional

August 15: Foundational Ideas and Early Documents

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What were the founding principles and aspirations of American democracy?
- What are the underlying fears behind American democracy?

Readings:

- Edmund Burke, "Speech to the Constituents of Bristol"
- John Locke, "Second Treatise of Government: Of the Beginning of Political Society" Risk of majority tyranny.
- Declaration of Independence;
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html
- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 2 The Constitution pp. 38-57.
- Required for Discussion Leaders, Recommended for Others: Hardin, "Why a Constitutions?" in *The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism* 1989.

August 18: The US Constitution and Bill of Rights

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What were the founding principles and aspirations of American democracy?
- What are the underlying fears animating American democracy?

Readings:

- American Anomaly, Ch. 2 The US Constitution
- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 2 The Constitution pp. 58-79.
- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 5 Civil Liberties pp. 174-180 and skim the rest of the chapter.

Strongly Recommended -- Primary Sources: Note, you will have read summaries of these in the Logic chapter already, so don't get overwrought about the amount of reading. These are also relatively short passages. Read them *with purpose*, looking for the main themes and motivations behind these foundational documents. Get the feeling of the documents.

- *The Federalist*: 10 (<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm>).
- *The Federalist* 51 (<http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa51.htm>).
- *The Anti-Federalist* -- Brutus #1, #3 (a rebuttal to Federalist Papers 10);
<http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus01.htm>;
<http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus03.htm>;
- *The Anti-Federalist* -- Centinel 1 (a rebuttal to Federalist Papers 51);
<http://www.constitution.org/afp/centin01.htm>
- The Bill of Rights and Constitutional Amendments -
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/billofrights>. Note this web site allows you to read the text of the amendments but also has links to scholarly commentary, which I recommend.

August 22: Liberal Democracy as Enduring National Identity?

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- Is there an American national political identity?
- What holds the country together – political institutions, social institutions/customs, economic structures?
- What are ‘American Values’? Are there American Values?
- For this class we read arguments that say Yes! Equality, Liberty, Individual Freedom as the glue that binds the US together.
- Are there contradictions and complications embedded within these touch-stones? How are they on view in the election?

Readings:

- Anomaly, 3-16 (Chapter 1, The American Nation, State, and Regime)
- Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* – everyone should read “Origin of the Anglo-Americans, and the Importance of this Origin in Relation to their Future Condition” and “The Social State of the Anglo-Americans” (pp 39-59 and 100-132). I highly recommend reading other sections for a fascinating and incisive account of America in 1831, esp. “Why Democratic Nations Show a More Ardent and Enduring Love of Equality than of Liberty (I)”, “Of Individualism in Democratic Counties (II)”, “That the Americans Combat the Effects of Individualism by Free Institutions (IV)”, “Of the Use Which the Americans Make of Public Associations in Civil Life (V)”, “Of the Relation Between Public Associations and the Newspapers (VI)”, and “Relation of Civil to Political Associations (VII)”. You can read portions online here with different page numbers:
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/toc_indx.html
- Required for Discussion Leaders, Recommended for Others: Wolfe, "Nobody Here But Us Liberals" - <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/03/books/review/nobody-here-but-us-liberals.html> -- on Louis Hartz and the argument that there is an enduring ideological consensus in AP. Once you’ve read Wolfe’s overview and understand Hartz’ main arguments, then read Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1955, 1991): “The Concept of a Liberal Society” pp 3-32, and “The New Whiggery” pp. 202-228.
- Charles Murray, *Trumpism and Shattering of American Creed*, Wall Street Journal.
- Trump speech in North Carolina August 2016.
- Michelle Obama, speech at Democratic National Convention, July 2016.

August 25: Or maybe not...? Inherent Philosophical Tensions and Ascriptive Hierarchies

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- Are there inherent tension between freedom and equality?
- How big is the gap between the founding ideals and the realities of American politics? Does it mean the liberal democratic mission has failed?

Readings:

- Rogers Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” *The American Political Science Review* (September 1993): 549-566.

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, "The Case for Reparations," *The Atlantic*, May 21, 2014. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>
- Required for Discussion Leaders -- Theodore, Recommended for Others: Samuel Huntington, "American Ideals versus American Institutions: IvI Gap" in Serow, Shannon, Ladd.
- Optional but Recommended: James Hunter, "The Enduring Culture War" in Serow and Ladd.

Part 3: Formal Governance Structures and Institutions

August 29: Federalism, Separation of Powers, and the Continuing Debate Over Centralization in American Government

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What are the institutions shaping American politics? How do they create different outcomes than we would see in other democratic systems?

Readings:

- American Anomaly, Ch. 3 Federalism
- American Anomaly, Ch. 4 Separation of Powers
- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 3 Federalism
- Required for Discussion Leaders – Regina and Yuxua, Recommended for Others: Jonathan Rauch, "A Separate Peace" *Atlantic Monthly*, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2007/04/a-separate-peace/305679/
- Primary Source Extra: Search the web for text and analysis of the following Supreme Court cases:
 - o *McCulloch v. Maryland* - Regina to Read
 - http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/antebellum/landmark_mcculloch.html
 - <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supremecourt/text/17/316>
 - o *United States v. Lopez* - Yixuan to Read
 - http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/future/landmark_us.html
 - <https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/93-1260.ZO.html>
 - o Other Case Coverage:
 - <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/Politics-Voices/2015/0708/Same-sex-marriage-and-federalism-Miles-s-Law-wins-again>
 - http://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/28/magazine/whats-at-stake-in-the-supreme-courts-gay-marriage-case.html?_r=0

September 1: In-Class Assessment and Free Time.

September 5: No Class – use the time for reading, thinking, and writing.

By noon on September 6 circulate your essay and two articles to the class.

September 8: Discussion of Essays. Does the 2016 Presidential Election represent a fundamental violation of, departure from, and/or threat to America’s founding ideals and underlying institutions?

- Details for this assignment provided separately.
- Essay should be sent to entire class two days prior to class.

September 15: The Congress

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- Bicameralism in the US system versus other models elsewhere.
- How US-style bicameralism interacts with partisanship and the two-party system.
- How much is congressional process shaped by written rules versus unstated norms.

Readings:

- Smith, *The American Anomaly*, 89-105.
- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 6 – Congress.
- Optional short/non-academic articles:
 - o Olympia Snowe, "Why I'm Leaving the Senate" Washington Post. (Saved) This is very short.
 - o Rohde, "In 2012, America's Greatest Economic Weakness Was Its Government" www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/12/in-2012-americas-greatest-economic-weakness-was-its-government/266702/
 - o "Republicans refuse to budge following Garland nomination to Supreme Court" <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/powerpost/wp/2016/03/16/republicans-refuse-to-budge-following-garland-nomination-to-supreme-court/>
 - o "Harry Reid says unlike the GOP, Senate Democrats never held up a Supreme Court nomination" www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2016/mar/20/harry-reid/harry-reid-says-unlike-gop-senate-democrats-never-/
 - o George Packer, The Empty Chamber, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2010/08/09/the-empty-chamber
- Required for Discussion Leaders, Recommended for Others:
 - o Qi Siang reads -- Barbara Sinclair, The 60 Vote Senate (Saved)
 - o Joshua reads -- Barbara Sinclair, "What's Wrong With Congress?" www.bu.edu/law/journals-archive/bulr/volume89n2/documents/sinclair.pdf (Saved)

--- Recess Week ---

*** Presidential Debate – Sept. 26 US Time ***

September 26: The Supreme Court

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- How can an unelected supreme court decide so much? Or does it?
- How does the Supreme Court interact with, reflect, and move public opinion?

Readings:

- Smith, *The American Anomaly*, The Judiciary, pp. 91-102.

- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 9 – The Federal Judiciary.
- Required for Discussion Leaders, Recommended for Others:
 - o Wan Ting, Read this snapshot of *Brown v. Board of Education* and then Gerald Rosenberg, "Substituting Symbol for Substance: What Did Brown Really Accomplish?" PS: *Political Science and Politics* (April 2004)
- Recommended while crafting, walking, eating dinner: Podcast -- Backstory with the History Guys, "Above the Fray?" -- podcast on the court: <http://backstoryradio.org/shows/above-the-fray/>
- Optional Extra Primary Sources:
 - o Federalist Papers #78: <http://www.constitution.org/fed/federa78.htm>
 - o *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*
 - o *Lawrence v. Texas*
 - o *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/08-205.ZS.html>

September 29: The Presidency, pt. 1: Introduction: Powers, Persuasion, and Historical Change

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What are the president's official and unofficial/unanticipated powers?
- What are the president's advantages and disadvantages over policy versus congress?

Readings:

- The Logic of American Politics, Ch. 7 – The Presidency
- Neustadt, "Presidential Power," and "The Power to Persuade" (in Kernell and Smith and Serow)
- Howell, "Power Without Persuasion" (Saved)

October 3: The Presidency, pt 2: The American Presidency in Comparative Perspective

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What are the differences and relative advantages of presidential versus parliamentary systems?
- Is America unique for being a lasting and relatively stable presidential system? If so, why might that be the case?

Readings:

- American Anomaly, Ch. 5 – The Executive Branch: The Presidency and Bureaucracy
- Juan Linz, Presidentialism and Parliamentaryism:
http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNABJ524.pdf
- Required for Discussion Leaders – Sytse and Liam, Recommended for Others: Do some research online to understand the different selection process, powers, and responsibilities of Singapore's president and prime minister. Be prepared to explain how this compares to the US presidency. Here are some web sites to get started with:
 - <http://www.istana.gov.sg/roles-and-responsibilities>
 - <https://www.parliament.gov.sg/organisation-structure>
 - <http://news.asiaone.com/News/AsiaOne+News/Singapore/Story/A1Story20110611-283594.html>

October 6: The Fourth Estate, Social Media, and Impact on Political Values/ Culture

NOTE: In-class Content Assessment INCLUDING readings assigned for this week.

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- How does the US media system function in politics? How differently now than in the past? With what implications for elections and other outcomes?
- Is social media strengthening or undermining American democracy? What impact does filtering have on American on politics?
- What are the implications of having a free press that is dominated by private, for profit, and competitive corporations?
- Singapore and the US have very different levels of government control of the media and expression. With what impact on politics and elections?

Readings:

- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 14 – The News Media
- Robert Putnam, “Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America,” *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Dec 1995), pp. 664-683.
- Required for Discussion Leaders, Recommended for Others:
 - o Helena, “The Internet is Making Us Stupid (<http://www.salon.com/2007/11/07/sunstein/>) and then Sunstein, Republic 2.0
- Recommended extras:
 - o Dan Gillmor, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*, Introduction and Ch. 1.
 - o Recommended: <https://markmanson.net/crazy-world>

Part 4: Elections, Voting, Parties, and Interest Groups

October 10: Voting, Campaigns, Elections -- Legal Structures, Overview of Key Players

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- How do elections work in the US? Who controls the process and the outcome? How do voting rules impact electoral outcomes?
- What is this crazy electoral college business?

Readings:

- American Anomaly, Ch. 9 – Voting and Elections
- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 11 – Voting, Campaigns, and Elections
- Optional: American Anomaly, Ch. 8 – Conventional and Unconventional Participation

October 13: Political Parties

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- Different causes and outcomes of multiparty v. two party systems v. single party systems.
- What kinds of parties dominate political life in different countries and why?
- Why has the US had two strong parties for so long?

Readings:

- American Anomaly, ch. 10 – Political Parties
- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 12 – Political Parties
- Required for Discussion Leaders, Recommended for Others:
 - o Timothy, Morris P. Fiorina, "Parties as Problem Solvers," 626-639.
 - o Lionel: Richard Hofstadter, *The Idea of a Party System: The Rise of Legitimate Opposition in the United States, 1780-1840* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1969): 40-74.
- Optional: Sidney M. Milkis, Jesse H. Rhodes and Emily J. Charnock, "What Happened to Post-Partisanship? Barack Obama and the New American Party System" *Perspectives on Politics*, 2012.

October 17: Party Polarization

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What is polarization? What has led to polarization? Is it really a bad thing?
- If the US is no longer so centrist, can it still have a stable two-party system with high-functioning balance of power?

Readings:

- Freakonomics Radio Podcast, "Ten Ideas to Make Politics Less Rotten" – listen and identify 1) How is politics supposedly rotten? 2) Why is polarization to blame? 3) What factors – institutions, interests, ideas – contribute to polarization? 4) What ideas could be used to roll back polarization? 5) Should we roll back polarization?
- David Wasserman, "The Political Process Isn't Rigged – It Has Much Bigger Problems" *FiveThirtyEight*: fivethirtyeight.com/features/the-political-process-isnt-rigged-it-has-much-bigger-problems/
- Excerpt from Morris P. Fiorina, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 481-491. in Kernell and Smith eds.
- Excerpt from Alan Abramowitz, "The Polarized Electorate" in Kernell and Smith eds.
- Required for Discussion Leaders, Recommended for Others:
 - o Qi Hang: Excerpt from James Q. Wilson, "How Divided Are We?," 492-503. in Kernell and Smith eds.
 - o Patrick: Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002): 24-52.
- Optional:
 - o Ezra Klein, "The Single Most Important Fact About American Politics" www.vox.com/2014/6/13/5803768/pew-most-important-fact-american-politics
 - o Poole, "The Decline--and Rise--of Party Polarization in Congress"

- John Gerring, *Party Ideologies in America, 1828-1996* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 22-54.

October 20: Can There Ever Be a Viable Third Party in American Politics?

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- Are two parties inevitable? What does history and comparative study tell us?
- Is this a uniquely American reality?
- If a third party cannot take over in the general election, what is the value and ethics of voting for third party candidates?

Readings:

On Electoral-Party Interactions:

- "Could a third-party candidate win the U.S. presidency? That's very unlikely." <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/08/02/could-a-third-party-candidate-win-the-u-s-presidency-very-unlikely/>
- John Sides, "There are Lots of Dumb Predictions About Third Parties. Here's a Smarter One" <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/06/14/there-are-lots-of-dumb-predictions-about-third-parties-heres-a-smarter-one/>
- Duverger's Law, <http://janda.org/c24/Readings/Duverger/Duverger.htm>
- "Duverger's Law is a dead parrot. Outside the USA, first-past-the-post voting has no tendency at all to produce two party politics" blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/duvergers-law-dead-parrot-dunleavy/
- "You can't spend your way out of a prisoner's dilemma" *The Economist*, www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2013/06/polarisation

On the ethics of third party candidates:

- Ralph Nader, "Why Bernie Sanders Was Right to Run as a Democrat" <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/03/25/ralph-nader-why-bernie-sanders-was-right-to-run-as-a-democrat/>
- NY Times Editorial, "The Power of the Undecideds" www.nytimes.com/2000/11/05/opinion/the-power-of-the-undecideds.html?pagewanted=all
- Peter Dreier, "Ralph Nader's Hypocrisy" www.huffingtonpost.com/peter-dreier/ralph-naders-hypocrisy_b_4542304.html
- New York Times, Room for Debate: The Power of Third-Party Campaigns, www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/09/09/the-power-of-third-party-campaigns
- Oliver Hall, "Unfairly blaming the third-party candidate" https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/unfairly-blaming-the-third-party-candidate/2015/01/30/77965c88-a739-11e4-a162-121d06ca77f1_story.html?tid=a_inl
- "Bernie Sanders and Third Parties" www.nytimes.com/2015/07/17/opinion/bernie-sanders-and-third-parties.html
- Skim: Herron and Lewis, "Did Ralph Nader Spoil a Gore Presidency? A Ballot-Level Study of Green and Reform Party Voters in the 2000 Presidential Election" www.sscnet.ucla.edu/polisci/faculty/lewis/pdf/greenreform9.pdf

*** Presidential Debate – October 19 US Time ***

October 24: Interest Groups, Lobbies, and Money in American Politics

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- How do interest groups and lobbies exert influence in the American political arena?
- How much influence do narrow interests have over national election results?
- How much influence do economic elites have versus majority masses?

Readings:

- Logic of American Politics, Ch. 13 – Interest Groups.
- Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” *Perspectives on Politics* (September 2014): 564-581.
- Required for Discussion Leaders - Tee, Recommended for Others: Something on Citizens United -- TBD.
- Recommended: Re-read Federalist Papers #10 and Tocqueville, "On The Primary Role and Essential Importance of Associations in America"

October 27: Presidential Selection and the Vulnerability of the US System to Demagogues

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- Party elites on both the left and the right, and most ‘establishment’ political observers, think Trump is beyond dangerous, a fringe, anti-democratic, demagogic, racist, threat to America. Given all we’ve read about how parties, election rules, separation of powers, balance of power, cross-cutting factions, and other forces are supposed to protect America from tyrannical rule... how did he get so far?

Readings:

- Jim Ceasar, Presidential Selection, Introduction and Conclusion. First read the National Review overview and Interview with Jim Ceasar.

October 31: Is There Room for Mainstream Progressive Politics in 2016 America?

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What does history tell us?
- Has the country changed so much that history is no longer a reliable guide?
- What does a comparative politics lens suggest?

Readings – Specific Readings TBD:

- Alan Brinkley, *Voice of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, & the Great Depression*, 1982.
- Sidney Milkis, *Theodore Roosevelt, the Progressive Party, and the Transformation of American Democracy* (2009)
- Milkis, “Introduction: Progressivism Then and Now” in Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, eds. *Progressivism and the New Democracy* (1999).
- Jerome Mileur, *The Legacy of Reform: Progressive Government, Regressive Politics* in Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, eds. *Progressivism and the New Democracy* (1999).
- Herbert Croly, *Progressive Democracy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998): 18-45.

- Franklin Roosevelt, "Commonwealth Club" Speech (1932).
- Lyndon Johnson, "To Fulfill These Rights" Speech (1965).
- James T. Kloppenberg, "'A Nation Arguing With Its Conscience': Deliberative Democracy, Philosophical Pragmatism, and Barack Obama's Conception of American Governance," *Harvard Magazine* (November-December 2010): 34-40.
- Noah Millman, "Brexit and the Wailing of the Anglo-American Commentariat" (Progressivism feels under attack) www.theamericanconservative.com/millman/brexit-and-the-wailing-of-the-anglo-american-commentariat/ (Saved)
- Damon Linker, "How Brexit Shattered Progressives' Dearest Illusions" theweek.com/articles/632380/how-brexit-shattered-progressives-dearest-illusions; <http://theweek.com/articles/632380/how-brexit-shattered-progressives-dearest-illusions> (Saved)

November 3: Conservative America in 2016

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- Are current conservative politics and politicians so unique?
- What best explains current conservative politics: education, race, money, globalization, manipulation?

Readings – Specific Readings TBD:

- Dan T. Carter, *The Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* 1995 (but ideally use 2nd edition from 2000 and read the preface).
- Hofstadter, "Paranoid Style of American Politics" *Harper's Magazine*. (Saved)
- "How the 'Stupid Party' Created Donald Trump" www.nytimes.com/2016/08/01/opinion/how-the-stupid-party-created-donald-trump.html
- Gerard Alexander, "Why are liberals so condescending?"
- Emmett Rensin, "The Smug Style in American Liberalism" www.vox.com/2016/4/21/11451378/smug-american-liberalism
- Peter Lawlawr, "The Postmodern Conservative" 2016 www.nationalreview.com/postmodern-conservatism
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- Gerard Alexander, "Conservatism does not equal racism. So why do many liberals assume it does?" *Washington Post* www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/09/10/AR2010091002679_pf.html
- Paul Krugman, "Republicans and Race" http://www.nytimes.com/2007/11/19/opinion/19krugman.html?_r=0
- Irving Kristol, "American Conservatism 1945-1995," *Public Interest* (Fall 1995): 80-91.
- James Ceaser, "Four Heads and One Heart: The Modern Conservative Movement" (2010).
- Ronald Reagan, "First Inaugural Address" (1981).
- George W. Bush, "Remarks on Compassionate Conservatism," (2002).

- Samuel Francis, "From Household to Nation: The Middle American Populism of Pat Buchanan," *Chronicles* (March 1996): 12-17.
- Garry Wills, *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust in Government* – intro and final chapters.

November 7: What's About to Happen!?!

NOTE: In-class Content Assessment INCLUDING readings assigned for this week.

Discussion and Reading Themes:

- What Americans supports which candidate and why?
- Who rejects which candidate and why?
- Election Expectations?
- Which readings best explain 2016 election patterns?

Readings:

- People bring in their own research.

***** NOVEMBER 8 -- PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION DAY *****

November 10: What Just Happened!? Final Thoughts and In-Class Debate

Discussion Themes:

- How exceptional was the 2016 election in American political history?
- How exceptional is American in comparative political context?
- What do you foresee, hope, and fear for the next 20 years of American politics?

End of Classes, Beginning Reading Week and Finals
