

PSCI 2200

Professor Melissa Haussman

Intro to U.S. Politics

Dept. of Political Science

Summer 2021

<https://carleton.ca/polisci/>

May 6-June 17, 2021

[melissa.haussman@carleton.ca](mailto:melissa.haussman@carleton.ca)

T/Th 11:35-1:25

Office hrs: Thursdays 10:30-11:30 and by appt.

**TA:** Lucas Tersigni, [lucastersigni@cmail.carleton.ca](mailto:lucastersigni@cmail.carleton.ca)

**Meetings:**

Thursdays 11:35-12:25 groups with last names beginning A-L

12:35-1:25 groups with last names beginning M-Z

**Course description:**

In this course, our discussion will cover enormously exciting and topical questions which have lately been presented to US policymakers. These questions are embedded in unique aspects of the US political structure and we will examine which aspects “bequeathed” to the US by the Framers in 1787 have survived, vs. which ones have been overcome by savvy political actors.

Over the course of the term, we will look at the slave-owning roots of inequality in the US and how political institutions were constructed to enable privileged access to white property owners. We will also pay attention each week to the strongly “checked and balanced” US system (across the legislative, executive and judicial branches as well as up and down between the federal and state levels). Taken together, these structural aspects have posed large obstacles for organizations fighting for voting rights (and larger civil rights) for different groups, including most recently Black Lives Matter and Asian Lives Matter, for those trying to change the application of voting laws in the states, and for LGBT equality.

**My goal is to give you a basic yet thorough understanding of many of the ways in which Americans “do politics differently” from other countries, including their neighbours to north and south. No US politics knowledge is assumed. Each week of the course covers central topics in the study of US politics,**

## **including rights and liberties, political institutions and the structure of US politics and political behaviour.**

During our six and one-half week summer sessions, the course will be a mix of asynchronous (Tuesdays) and synchronous learning (Thursdays). For the Tuesday time frame (which you can look at any time), there will be notes posted onto Brightspace with videos of me inserted to the powerpoints emphasizing certain points in the slides. Each set of slides starts with “structuring questions” to guide you and me through the key arguments presented. There will also be other videos/files embedded in Brightspace, particularly emphasizing key aspects of the overview of US politics as embedded in the slides. These other sources will 1) help amplify the points I make in the slides, and 2) give you more insights for the Thursday discussions. The reference book to be used for this course is the Rice University open-text *American Government*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. available for free download at: [www.openstax.org](http://www.openstax.org) and posted on the Brightspace homepage. You do not have to read it every week but it is there to help answer questions and give you more background, should you desire.

Our Thursday meetings are from 11:35-1:25 and are led by me or by Lucas Tersigni, our TA. Each Thursday class has prompts for our discussions, included in the outline below and highlighted in the Brightspace course outline. We will convene via Zoom, and the link will be provided in Brightspace. While you are not required to turn on your cameras, it makes life much more interesting for everybody if you can do so.

### **Learning outcomes:**

By the end of the course, you will have achieved the ability to:

- 1) **Identify and understand** crucial aspects of why the US political framework is structured in such a unique way-particularly regarding the presence of checks and balances, both horizontal and vertical.
- 2) **Analyze the arguments** used by both right and left (among policy makers and citizens) to frame their positions.
- 3) **Decide** whether the current actions of the US government fit with the Constitutional framers’ statements in 1787 or not.
- 4) **Contribute** to the evolution of the class over the six and one-half weeks in terms of your written and group participation.

- 5) **Demonstrate the ability** to have respectful, university-level conversations about the currently-polarized nature of US politics, how it got there and why.

### **Assignments/Assessments:**

- 1) To start, there will be a short introductory (ungraded) exercise which asks you to identify which aspects of US politics interest or puzzle you the most, as well as any exposure you have had to US politics. You can also include any other information about yourself which you would like to. See my introduction about myself on the homepage!
- 2) Two short papers, 1500 words each, due by 10 pm **May 23 and June 21**. Rubrics will be provided. 25% each
- 3) A graded forum, requiring at least two contributions from each student, 300 words each. 10% each, total 20%
- 4) You should be prepared to participate in at least five of the six Thursday discussions. If you are in a different time zone we can arrange for you to submit written or recorded participation. Again, **Group A consists of last names beginning with A-L, meeting Thursdays 11:35-12:25 and Group B, last names beginning M-Z, meeting Thursdays 12:35-1:25**.  
Total value: 30%

### **Course meeting outline:**

#### **Class I May 6 Thursday**

**Intro-What is Government?** Please review ppt slides. Relevant text in *American Government*, Ch. 1

**Assignment 1:** What is the one thing you'd most like to learn about US politics? Are there areas in which you have had a lot of exposure to US politics?

#### **Week I Background and Civil Liberties, May 11, 13**

May 11, slides. Relevant text, AG Chs. 2-4. Also posted links/files on Brightspace.

May 13 **Thursday** Discussion-George Floyd, police reform, Black Lives and Asian Lives Matter protests

-rights of the accused and the local nature of policing and state level of criminal law in the US. All related to Amendments 4-6 (due process) and 10 of the Bill of Rights, local “police powers” (including health).

## **Week 2 Civil Rights May 19, 21**

May 19, slides and review, if needed, AG, Chs. 4, 5 also extra readings for discussion to be posted on Brightspace, concerning historic roots of racial inequality in the US and recent and current polarization over it.

### May 21 **Thursday** Discussion

- 1) the important actors pushing to make the Supreme Court’s interpretation of the equal protection clause of the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment-“nor shall any state deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”
- 2) The intersectionality of queer and African-American identities of many of these pioneers.
- 3) A comparison of the framing strategies of different movements.

**Paper 1 due on one of the questions above 1500 words on May 23 by 10 pm.**

**Please compare the main goals and strategies of two of the movements which are posted on the homepage or ask me if you would like to cover others. Please base this mainly on the links/pdf’s posted but you can bring in the textbook or other readings too. They should be cited at the end of your discussion.**

## **Week 3 Congress May 26, 28**

May 26, slides and review text if necessary (AG, Ch. 11). Also links/pdf’s posted to Brightspace.

### May 28 **Thursday** Discussion-

- 1) how has polarization increased in the Congressional structure since the 1990s (and previously)? How did this contribute to the January 2021 riots?
- 2) Why is it important that the vast majority of African-American members of the House until 2015 (88%) represented majority-minority districts but started to represent more majority white districts in 2018?
- 3) What were the goals of those who started the Black (1971) and Women’s (1977) caucuses in Congress? Have they helped these groups to gain power?

### **Week 4 June 1, 3 Presidency**

June 1, slides and review text where necessary (AG, Ch. 12). Additional files/links to be posted to Brightspace.

#### **June 3 Thursday Discussion**

- 1) Why are Presidential appointment powers important and how has new President Biden made use of them?
- 2) How is Deb Haaland, the first Indigenous Cabinet Secretary in US history, adapting an MMIW inquiry to the US based on the Canadian framework?
- 3) What is Kamala Harris, the first VP of colour in the US contributing to President Biden's administration?
- 4) What are the limits to Presidential power?

**Forum posts this week due by June 7 (2 for each student, 300 words each post)**

### **Week 5 June 8, 10 Supreme Court**

June 8, slides and if necessary AG, Ch. 13. In addition, files/links posted on Brightspace.

#### **June 10, Thursday Discussion**

- 1) What is the nature of political appointments to the US Supreme Court. Please compare the clips of Clarence Thomas' nomination hearings (and Anita Hill's interrogation in the Senate Judiciary Committee) in 1991 with Ruth Bader Ginsburg's questions by the same committee in 1993 (links/files).
- 2) Why did the US Supreme Court become so powerful in policymaking early on in the US?
- 3) Where does it choose to limit itself?

### **Week 6 June 15, 17 Political Behaviour and Campaign Finance**

June 15, slides and text if required (AG, Chs. 7, 9) and additional links/pdf's on Brightspace.

#### **June 17 Thursday Discussion**

- 1) Why is the state-level role in administering elections (and drawing US House districts) a problem in many ways? (From Constitution Article I, Section 4)
- 2) How have crucial actors such as Stacey Abrams (GA) fought back?
- 3) Why was the *Citizens' United* (2010) case so important yet not surprising?
  - **Final paper (1500 words) due by June 21, 10 pm requiring at least two sources (non textbook). What do you consider the most difficult issue to change in US politics? Is there any indication that the issue you have chosen is on the road to change-why or why not?**

## Academic Accommodations

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### Accommodations during COVID

Due to COVID, instructors will not request or require a doctor's note when students seek accommodation for missed term work or exams due to illness. Instead, students will be asked to complete the self-declaration form available here: <https://carleton.ca/registrar/wp-content/uploads/self-declaration.pdf>

### Requests for Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

### Pregnancy obligation

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: [carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Religious obligation**

Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details, visit the Equity Services website: [carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf](https://carleton.ca/equity/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide-to-Academic-Accommodation.pdf)

### **Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you have a documented disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation or contact your PMC coordinator to send your instructor your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term. You must also contact the PMC no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your instructor as soon as possible to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. [carleton.ca/pmc](https://carleton.ca/pmc)

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and its survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: [carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support](https://carleton.ca/sexual-violence-support)

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

For more information on academic accommodation, please contact the departmental administrator or visit: [students.carleton.ca/course-outline](https://students.carleton.ca/course-outline)

## Plagiarism

The University Senate defines plagiarism as “presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one’s own.” This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else’s published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one’s own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another’s data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another’s works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in "substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a serious offence which cannot be resolved directly with the course’s instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They may include a mark of zero for the plagiarized work or a final grade of "F" for the course.

Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the author(s). They are intended for personal use and may not be reproduced or redistributed without prior written consent of the author(s).

## Submission and Return of Term Work

Papers must be submitted directly to the instructor according to the instructions in the course outline and will not be date-stamped in the departmental office. Late assignments may be submitted to the drop box in the corridor outside B640 Loeb. Assignments will be retrieved every business day at **4 p.m.**, stamped with that day's date, and then distributed to the instructor. For essays not returned in class please attach a **stamped, self-addressed envelope** if you wish to have your assignment returned by mail. Final exams are intended solely for the purpose of evaluation and will not be returned.

## Grading

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor, subject to the approval of the faculty Dean. Final standing in courses will be shown by alphabetical grades. The system of grades used, with corresponding grade points is:

Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale	Percentage	Letter grade	12-point scale
90-100	A+	12	67-69	C+	6
85-89	A	11	63-66	C	5
80-84	A-	10	60-62	C-	4
77-79	B+	9	57-59	D+	3
73-76	B	8	53-56	D	2
70-72	B-	7	50-52	D-	1

## Approval of final grades

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by an instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

## Carleton E-mail Accounts

All email communication to students from the Department of Political Science will be via official Carleton university e-mail accounts and/or cuLearn. As important course and University information is distributed this way, it is the student's responsibility to monitor their Carleton and cuLearn accounts.

## Carleton Political Science Society

"The Carleton Political Science Society (CPSS) has made its mission to provide a social environment for politically inclined students and faculty. By hosting social events, including Model Parliament, debates, professional development sessions and more, CPSS aims to involve all political science students at Carleton University. Our mandate is to arrange social and academic activities in order to instill a sense of belonging within the Department and the larger University community. Members can benefit through our networking opportunities, academic engagement initiatives and numerous events which aim to complement both academic and social life at Carleton University. To find out more, visit us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/CarletonPoliticalScienceSociety/> and our website <https://carletonpss.com/>, or stop by our office in Loeb D688!"

**Official Course Outline**

The course outline posted to the Political Science website is the official course outline.