Course description

This course is designed to give students an institutional overview of the U.S. system of federal government, as well as historical and current insight into the broader political, economic and cultural landscape in the U.S. Of central concern is the institutional framework of the three separate and coequal federal branches (legislative, executive and judicial – Congress, the Presidency, and the Courts). Only by understanding the origins and interaction dynamics of the three branches can the ongoing complexities of U.S. politics be fully understood.

The course is structured around a distinction between the concepts of government (the specific elements and institutions of the state) and politics (the broader social, political and economic actions within the state and civil society that determine who gets what, how and why). Thus, we focus partly on the “how questions”, or the central institutions within the three branches of American government, the U.S. Constitution, the electoral process, political parties and the details of creating and implementing laws and rules. Complementing this will be an analysis of American politics whereby we will address important “why questions.” To this end, we will explore key themes such as race, class, the activity of money and corporations, parties, elections, rights, and liberties. The combination of these two approaches will give students a more complete understanding of the political, economic, and cultural landscapes in the U.S.

Learning Objectives

By taking this course, you will:
• Build a fundamental understanding of the 3 separate, co-equal branches of the federal government
• Develop a stronger sense of how institutional dynamics structure political outcomes in the US
• Explore the history of civil rights and civil liberties
• Study the US Constitution and learn how it is at the center of much of US politics
• Follow the presidential election cycle and understand its institutional context
• Reflect on current social, economic, cultural, and political issues in the US today

Course Texts


○ The book is available at Haven Bookstore (43 Seneca St. @ Seneca & Sunnyside) and the Campus Bookstore, as well as through various online booksellers. It is also available in an eformat at: https://www.vitalsource.com/products/by-the-people-james-moronev9780190298944

○ There are several optional books that you may consider using to supplement your study of US politics. I have not ordered any of these books. However, they are readily available through all the usual online and physical bookstores, or directly from the publishers using the links provided below.

○ Two books that are highly recommended:


○ I suggest this introductory textbook for those interested in a more critical perspective focused on the tensions between capitalism and democracy:


○ The Oxford Very Short Introduction series has several good books on US politics, in addition to the Valelly text mentioned above. For greater insight in highly accessible short texts, consider the following:

  o American Political History, Donald T. Critchow
Evaluation

- Tutorial participation 15% (tutorials start on Sept. 18th)
- Final Exam 40% (during official exam period, date/time TBA)
- First paper 22.5% (due by Oct. 16th, 11:59 pm on CU Learn)
- Second paper 22.5% (due by December 7th, 11:59 pm on CU Learn)

All components of the course must be completed to pass. For instance, if you don’t submit one of the essays or do not take an exam, you will receive a failing mark (FND: “Failure with no deferred final examination allowed. The grade FND is assigned only when the student has failed the course on the basis of inadequate term work as specified in the Course Outline. FND is assigned 0.0 grade points.”)

Details regarding Term Work and Final Exam

The two papers and the take-home portion of the final exam should be submitted on CU Learn via the appropriate link. DO NOT EMAIL YOUR PAPERS OR HAND IN PAPER COPIES. Papers handed in any other way than on CU Learn will not be accepted and will receive a mark of zero.

Assignments submitted late will be penalized 10% of the value of the assignment per day late, to a maximum of 5 days after which the assignment will receive a grade of zero. Late papers should be submitted on CU Learn as usual.

You must provide appropriate documentation for requests of an extension on medical grounds. See “Academic Accommodations” below for additional exceptions.

NOTE: Student or professor materials created for this course (including presentations and posted notes, case studies, assignments & 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).

- Tutorial participation (15%): Tutorial meetings begin on Tuesday, September 18th. Please refer to your registration information to find out when and where your tutorial meets. To keep the numbers balanced, no unauthorized switching between groups is allowed. Going to the tutorials is required and part of your mark will be based on attendance. In addition, your mark
will come from active participation in discussions and activities in the group. **You cannot earn the tutorial mark in any way other than attending and participating.** Your TA will assign this mark. Readings will be required for tutorial meetings and these will be posted on CU Learn and/or a link will be provided for them. Your TA will structure the discussions and debates in each meeting.

- **Final exam (40%):** The final exam will take place during the official exam period. The exam will cover material from all assigned readings (not tutorial readings) and lectures. You will have three hours to complete it. The exam will consist of multiple choice questions as well as some longer answer essay style questions. I will give you the questions for the longer answer component at least a week before the scheduled exam. Additional details and study suggestions will be given in class. Students who miss the final exam must apply for a deferred exam through the registrar’s office. The university sets a date for deferred exams during the following term.

- **First paper - “the ideas paper” (22.5%):** For your first paper, you will be using the 7 key ideas in US politics presented in chapter 1 of the textbook. Your goal in this paper is to illustrate how some of these ideas translate into action in US politics. You will analyze an issue/policy debate OR the statements, platforms, debates, or speeches of at least two candidates in an election. Identify the key ideas in the case(s) you select and explore how people have competing definitions or understandings of the ideas. You can do a comparative analysis of two or more cases (e.g., 2 campaigns, 2 issues) or you can contrast differing views within the same issue (e.g., different sides on an issue like gun control represented through legislative debates, disagreements between branches, etc.). This is an analytical paper, not a normative one (i.e., you won’t be arguing that one person is right or best). Support your argument by describing how some or all of the foundational ideas and traditions are used. Are certain ideas prioritized? Are others ignored? Are there contradictions or tensions between the ideas used? What are the strategic electoral reasons for using those ideas? Using readings other than the textbook is not expected (other than the source material, of course). Debates as well as campaign websites or news outlets are useful sources for speeches. You are not expected to analyze the entirety of a speech or other material, only a representative segment. The paper should be **about 2000 words.** I will post additional information about the first paper on CU Learn. **The first paper is due no later than October 16th by 11:59pm on CU Learn.**

- **Second paper – “the institutions paper” (22.5%):** This paper is due no later than **December 7th by 11:59pm on CU Learn.** The paper revolves around the main institutions of US politics – the three branches of federal government, as well as parties, elections, and the constitution itself. You will need to choose a topic (I can help if needed) from the very broad range of issues in US politics both foreign and domestic. You will then research a case or two within your chosen area (e.g., select something specific within the topic of elections such as the role of money or the issue of vote suppression). In addition to fully describing the case (background, key actors, main points of interest, etc.), you will need to show links to other areas (branches, liberties/rights, etc.) and name any of the 7 key ideas at work in the case. You will also formulate a concluding argument about US government/politics based on your research and analysis. This can be a statement and/or a proposed solution. In your paper, try to reflect on the notion that the US system of government was designed to be one of ‘separated institutions sharing power’. Of course, a part of
your paper will be spent describing the issue or event itself but don’t make that the primary focus. You will also evaluate how well the system works to deal with the issue or problem and what should be done to make it work better. So, there is a normative element here in terms of arguing for or against something. The paper should be about 2500 words. Additional information (including suggested topics) will be provided on CU Learn.

Course Topics and Class Schedule

September 11: Ideas that shape American politics - By the People, Preface & Chapter 1

September 18: The Constitution - BTP, Appendices I & II (pp. A-1 to A-24) + Chap. 2

September 25: The Constitution - BTP, Chap. 2

October 2: Federalism - BTP, Chap. 3

October 9: Civil Liberties - BTP, Chaps. 4

October 16: Civil Rights - BTP, Chap. 5

October 23 - Reading week – no class

October 30: Congress - BTP, Chap. 10

November 6: Congress / The Presidency - BTP, Chap. 10 + 11

November 13: The Presidency - BTP, Chap. 11

November 20: The Judicial Branch - BTP, Chap. 13

November 27: Campaigns & Elections - BTP, Chap. 8

December 4: Political Parties - BTP, Chap. 9
Academic Accommodations

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

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

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 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

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 is 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

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

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
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<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter grade</th>
<th>12-point scale</th>
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<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>C+</td>
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<td>85-89</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>50-52</td>
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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/](https://www.facebook.com/CarletonPoliticalScienceSociety/) and our website [https://carletonpss.com/](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.