Carleton University
Department of Political Science
https://carleton.ca/polisci/

Winter 2025

PSCI 2200 (A)
Intro to U.S. Politics
Wednesdays 11:35-1:25
January 8-April 2, 2025
(Online, synchronous)

Prof. Melissa Haussman

melissa.haussman@carleton.ca

Office hours: Weds 9:30-11 and by appt

Course description:

Our discussion will cover enormously exciting and topical questions concerning US policymaking. We will look at how the US' slave-owning past has shaped its political institutions and behavior. We will also cover the checks and balances at each level of government (legislative, executive, judicial) and how they impact policy formulation and implementation.

Among the topics to be discussed, as they map onto the textbook chapters, are the questions of power centers inside and outside Congress, including how then-former-President Trump worked with the far-right House Freedom Caucus to tank immigration reform and foreign aid legislation, whom some of the new power players in the 119th Congress will be and the hyper-polarized nature of Congress, which will include new far-right Senate Majority Leader John Thune, with an A+ rating from the NRA.

Other topics will cover how in the world Donald Trump was re-elected, including the hyper-localized nature of US elections as detailed in Article I, Section 4 of the US Constitution, and the longstanding resistance, particularly in the US South, to federal "intervention" in its conduct of elections. This resistance was amplified after the US Supreme Court's *Shelby v. Holder* case of 2013, which struck down key portions of the *Voter Rights Act* of 1965. We also will examine Trump's

unusual and strategic takeover of crucial state party organizations. We will also examine how the localized nature of police administration in the US works and the rise of Black Lives Matter and other movements to contest the degree of police discretion, particularly after the Breonna Taylor and George Floyd deaths.

While no knowledge of US politics is assumed, it is always helpful. Ultimately, what you will come away knowing is more about the original "rules of the game" regarding the set up of the US system, particularly through the Constitution of 1788 and the Bill of Rights in 1791, and important drivers for either change or stasis.

We meet each week on Wednesday mornings from 11:35-1:25 , and you have a one hour TA session each week additionally. I will present topics from the slides posted prior to each class. Each set of slides includes "structuring questions" to guide us through the key arguments. There will be other relevant videos/files posted to Brightspace. These are included to amplify points from class and TA sessions. The reference book to be used for the course is the Rice University open-text *American Government*, available for **free** download at www.openstax.org and posted on the Brightspace homepage. **Note: there are no materials to be bought for this course.**

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 the way it is-particularly regarding horizontal and vertical checks and balances.
2) Analyze the arguments used by both right and left-wing policy makers and citizens.
3) Decide whether the current actions of the US government fit with the Constitutional framers' statements in 1787.
4) Contribute to the class in terms of your written and verbal participation.
5) Demonstrate the ability to have respectful, university-level conversations about the currently-polarized nature of US politics and the historical roots of this situation.

Assignments/Assessments:

1) You will write **4 (four)** papers during the term, **at least one of which must be completed before the February break.** There will be a choice

of topics and you will choose which four you wish to write on, with the schedule caveat previously noted.

Each topic will be 1,000 words, with due dates at different times throughout the semester, so as to keep from having students write all papers at one time. They are to be double spaced with 12 point font and will be uploaded through the Brightspace links (where you will also find rubrics).

Each paper is worth 20% of your grade.

2) The remaining 20% of your grade is divided into:
   a) 15% for attending and **participating** in TA sessions and
   b) 5% for attending and participating in classes on Wednesdays

Short paper Topics will include:

1) The downsides of local police control in the US, dealing with the discretion shown by police and civil rights concerns
2) Civil Rights questions, including incarceration of Black Americans and Native Americans and the worst record on maternal health in the Global North for birthing people of color
3) The structure of Congress and its increasingly polarized nature over time; this will include House caucuses and the incoming Senate Majority leader and polarization in the Senate
4) The localized nature of elections in the US and the history (since the Constitutional Founding in 1788) of vote suppression and how different groups have worked against it
5) The right-ward turn of the Supreme Court on social policy and voting rights questions and the nature of appointments to the Supreme Court
6) How Donald Trump, a convicted felon and twice-impeached President, got elected in November 2024 and what his historic stances on trade portend for the future

Particular Assignments will only be able to be submitted within a particular 2 or 3 week window.

Class Outline:

Module I-Overview of US Government and Checks and Balances

January 8 Overview-How is the US government supposed to function, according to the Framers?

Textbook, Ch. 1

January 15 US Constitution and Federalism-what is the Framework within which rights and policy contestation occurs?

Textbook, Chs. 2, 3

January 22 Civil Liberties-how well are citizens protected under a framework of "negative liberties," largely run by the states?

Textbook, Ch. 4

January 29 Civil Rights I-pre Civil War through Reconstruction

Textbook, Ch. 5

February 5 Civil Rights II-20th and 21st Centuries

Module II-Political Institutions

February 12 Congress Part I-Things Congress can and can't do

Textbook, Ch. 11

February 26 Congress Part II-Polarization within Congress, including the Caucuses

Readings posted to Brightspace

March 5 Presidency-is the President now a King?

Textbook, Ch. 12

March 12 Supreme Court and Federal-level courts-opportunities for politicization

Texbook, Ch. 13

Module III Political Behavior

March 19 Political Parties, Voting and Elections

Does letting the states and counties run elections work? How did Trump take over Republican party infrastructure?

Textbook, Chs. 7, 9

March 26 Campaign Finance-the best system money can buy?

Readings to be posted to Brightspace

April 2 Last class

-does the US system resemble anything the Framers intended?

Political Science Course Outline Appendix

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:

Student Mental Health

As a university student, you may experience a range of mental health challenges that significantly impact your academic success and overall well-being. If you need help, please speak to someone. There are numerous resources available both on- and off-campus to support you. Here is a list that may be helpful:

Emergency Resources (on and off campus):
https://carleton.ca/health/emergencies-and-crisis/emergency-numbers/

Carleton Resources:

Mental Health and Wellbeing: https://carleton.ca/wellness/

Health & Counselling Services: https://carleton.ca/health/

Paul Menton Centre: https://carleton.ca/pmc/

Academic Advising Centre (AAC): https://carleton.ca/academicadvising/

Centre for Student Academic Support (CSAS): https://carleton.ca/csas/

Equity & Inclusivity Communities: https://carleton.ca/equity/

Off Campus Resources:

Distress Centre of Ottawa and Region: (613) 238-3311 or TEXT: 343-306-5550, https://www.dcottawa.on.ca/

Mental Health Crisis Service: (613) 722-6914, 1-866-996-0991, http://www.crisisline.ca/

Empower Me: 1-844-741-6389, https://students.carleton.ca/services/empower-me-counselling-services/

ood2Talk: 1-866-925-5454, https://good2talk.ca/

The Walk-In Counselling Clinic: https://walkincounselling.com

Academic consideration for medical or other extenuating circumstances: Students must contact the instructor(s) of their absence or inability to complete the academic deliverable within the predetermined timeframe due to medical or other extenuating circumstances. For a range of medical or other extenuating circumstances, students may use the online self-declaration form and where appropriate, the use of medical documentation. This policy regards the accommodation of extenuating circumstances for both short-term and long-term periods and extends to all students enrolled at Carleton University. Students should also consult the Course Outline Information on Academic Accommodations for more information. Detailed information about the procedure for requesting academic consideration can be found here.

Pregnancy: 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 accommodation regarding a formally-scheduled final exam, please contact Equity and Inclusive Communities (EIC) at equity@carleton.ca or by calling (613) 520-5622 to speak to an Equity Advisor.

Religious obligation: 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 click here.

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, please request your accommodations for this course through the Ventus Student Portal at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). Requests made within two weeks will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. For final exams, the deadlines to request accommodations are published in the University Academic Calendars. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally scheduled exam (if applicable).

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: https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services.

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 will be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me 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.

PETITIONS TO DEFER

Students unable to write a final examination because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control may apply within **three working days** to the Registrar's Office for permission to write a deferred examination. The request must be fully supported by the appropriate documentation. Only deferral petitions submitted to the Registrar's Office will be considered. See Undergraduate Calendar, Article 4.3

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

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). Permissibility of submitting substantially the same piece of work more than once for academic credit. If group or collaborative work is expected or allowed, provide a clear and specific description of how and to what extent you consider collaboration to be acceptable or appropriate, especially in the completion of written assignments.

WITHDRAWAL WITHOUT ACADEMIC PENALTY

The last day to withdraw from full fall term and fall/winter courses with a full fee adjustment is **September 30th, 2024**. The last day for a fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or the winter portion of two-term courses is **January 31, 2025**. The last day for academic withdrawal from full fall and late fall courses is **November 15, 2024.** The last day for academic withdrawal from full winter, late winter, and fall/winter courses is **March 15, 2025.**

WDN: For students who withdraw after the full fee adjustment date in each term the term WDN will be a permanent notation that appears on their official transcript.

OFFICIAL FINAL EXAMINATION PERIOD

Fall courses: **December 9-21, 2024**. Winter and Fall/Winter courses: **April 11-26, 2025** (may include evenings & Saturdays or Sundays)

For more information on the important dates and deadlines of the academic year, consult the Carleton 2024-2025 Calendar.

GRADING SYSTEM

The grading system is described in the Undergraduate Calendar section 5.4.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential element of a productive and successful career as a student. Students are required to familiarize themselves with the university's Academic Integrity Policy.

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:

- any submission prepared in whole or in part, by someone else, including the unauthorized use of generative AI tools (e.g., ChatGPT);
- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, 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 that cannot be resolved directly by the course's instructor. The Associate Dean of the Faculty conducts 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 can include a final grade of "F" for the course.

RESOURCES (613-520-2600, phone ext.)

Department of Political Science (2777)	B640
Loeb	
Registrar's Office (3500)	300 Tory
Centre for Student Academic Success (3822)	4th floor
Library	
Academic Advising Centre (7850)	302 Tory
Paul Menton Centre (6608)	501
Nideyinàn	
Career Services (6611)	401 Tory