

POLS 110  
MWF 10:00-11:05, M-I 207  
Office: M-I 214

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Office Hours: M 11:05-12:15, 1:30-2:30; Tu/W by appt; Th 9-9:45, 12-1; F by appt  
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## **US Federal Government and Politics Spring 2017**

This course is an introduction to U.S. government and politics. It provides background knowledge on guiding principles, constitutional guarantees, the federal system, major institutions, and mechanisms – such as elections and social movements – that link citizens and officials. The course covers both federal and states levels, and their interaction. Students will gain a foundation in American politics that is important not only for possible future coursework in Political Science, but also for being a critical thinking about and active participant in the political world around us.

To these ends, this course is organized around two approaches: (1) a historical narrative on American political development and political institutions and (2) a critical perspective on racial and gender exclusions from American government and politics. By developing both of these themes in relationship to one another, we will come to understand how *the way we narrate the history of American government is itself a political act*. These guiding principles will enable us to analyze issues such as the ongoing interplay between federal and state levels of government, the gaps between foundational American principles and exclusion in the practice of American government, the relationship between governance and political practices, the importance of institutions for understanding American politics, and more. They will also provide a framework for analyzing our current political situation.

The course emphasizes primary documents and academic writing; lectures on the historical development and institutions of American government will supplement the readings. We will also consistently use course material as a lens onto current events in our political world. Your final project, in which you will create a podcast, will bring together these dimensions of the course as you analyze a contemporary political issue in relation to ideas and material from class.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Expand knowledge about the foundations of American government and politics, federal and state governments, and the history of American political development.
- Develop a critical perspective on American political development and evaluate competing narratives about the history of American government
- Cultivate skills for reading and thinking about primary sources and academic writing in political science
- Reflect on one's own political orientation and be able to articulate it in conversation, while also remaining open to changing that perspective
- Improve academic reading and writing capabilities
- Improve the ability to ask critical, complex, scholarly questions about politics
- Foster an understanding of podcasting as a contemporary means of circulating information and of political analysis.
- Become a more thoughtful actor in one's political life

## Evaluation

- Class citizenship: 20%
- Discussion questions: 10%
- Essay Assignments (3): 45%
- Podcast: 25%

## Assignments

- Class citizenship (20% of grade): I care about whether you come to class and the role you play in it; our class will be most rewarding if you attend regularly, and if you are an active citizen. I expect you to come on time and to participate. After three unexcused absences, the class citizenship component of your grade will decrease by one letter grade for each additional unexcused absence. Class citizenship, however, entails more than just showing up. It means having done the reading, contributing to class discussions in large and small groups without monopolizing conversations, paying attention to me and to your classmates, completing short writing assignments in class, and generally participating in the collaborative activity of political analysis. I understand that speaking in class can be challenging. We will have a number of different kinds of discussions to encourage participation, and you should use the readings and discussion questions as a way of preparing ideas to bring to our class sessions. Regularly coming to office hours and discussing the readings can contribute to your class citizenship grade as well. Last but not least, class citizenship means being receptive of and interested in others' political perspectives, respectful of experiences different than your own, and open to having others disagree with you. Disagreement is inevitable in a political science class (including with me!), and can be incredibly productive so long as it proceeds collegially.
- Discussion Questions (10% of grade): For two days each week, submit one discussion question about the readings, to Moodle, no later than 7:00am the morning of class. You can choose any two days in a week to post, and can vary it from week to week. We will use these to guide the class sessions. Your questions should be something you would want to talk about in class: something in the reading that is especially interesting; a question opening up critiques of the reading, a question making connections to other readings and ideas from the course, a question connecting the reading to contemporary events, and so on. Your questions shouldn't be something any of us could answer quickly through Google, but rather are meant to open conversations.
- Essay assignments (45% of grade): You will have three assignments, which will require you to develop your own arguments using course material. For each day (not class period) an essay is late, it loses one letter grade.
  - Essay I (15% of final grade): due 2/10
  - Essay II (15% of final grade): due 3/3
  - Essay II (15% of final grade): due 4/14
- Podcast (25% of grade): Your final assignment for the class, in the spirit of Beloit's commitment to the liberal arts in practice, will be to create a podcast on a contemporary political

issue at the national, state, or local level, which you will relate to course material. There will be a specific set of guidelines as to what will be included in your podcast. You will have the option to work individually, or in a group of 2 or 3 people (but the podcasts from a group will be required to be longer than those of individuals). We will build up to this assignment throughout the semester, including: listening to podcasts as a “reading” for some classes; a tutorial on audio recording and editing; topic selections and outlines I will review; and “pitching” your podcasts. I am familiar with making podcasts and with audio recording and editing, and will be a resource for any technical difficulties you run in to. My goal with this assignment is to offer everyone an of-the-moment (and dare I say fun?) way to demonstrate critical thinking and analysis different from a traditional research paper. This assignment will also build technological skills relevant beyond the classroom. If they wish, students can opt of the podcast assignment, instead writing a 12-page research paper. Any student choosing this option should be in touch with me when we begin to discuss the final podcast project in order to receive assignment guidelines.

### **Texts**

The book for the class is required. It is available in the bookstore, and will be on reserve in the library for 2-hour checkout, used in the library only. All other readings will be provided on the course Moodle.

- Katherine J. Cramer, *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*, University of Chicago Press (ISBN 978-0226349114)

### **Technology**

In general, my personal preference would be to minimize the use of tablets and laptops in the classroom. There is a growing set of evidence (for example [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)) that, on aggregate, students taking notes by hand learn information more successfully and receive higher grades than those taking notes on computer, even when those on devices are exclusively focused on class tasks. Moreover, many of us (myself certainly included!) find it difficult to pull ourselves away from email, social media, news, etc. when we have screens in front of us. Finally, in a class that will involve lots of discussion with one another, screens may impede the conversations that will be essential to our experience in the course this semester.

However, I fully recognize that people learn in many different ways, and that you have limited print budgets. So, I would encourage you to reflect on the ways you learn effectively and the ways that learning is more difficult. If you would find it most effective to use a laptop or tablet for course readings and/or for note-taking, please do so, but there will be no phones used in class. I fully expect you to use devices in class only for tasks related to class, and that your attention is focused as much as possible on the conversations in class and on your peers. Ultimately, I want you to engage with the course material and course sessions in the way that will support your success in the class.

This policy is open to revision as the semester unfolds.

### **Disability Accommodations and Tutoring**

If you have a disability and need accommodations, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services located on 2nd floor Pearsons (north side), 608-363-2572, [learning@beloit.edu](mailto:learning@beloit.edu) or make an appointment through [joydeleon.youcanbook.me](http://joydeleon.youcanbook.me). For accommodations in my class, you must bring me an Access Letter from the Director of that office and then we will discuss how to meet your needs. Contact that office promptly; accommodations are not retroactive.

Free peer tutoring is available for most classes. For a tutor, apply by going to your Portal, to the Student Life tab, and then apply using the Tutoring Forms (on left) and Request a Tutor. If you have any questions, contact Learning Enrichment and Disability Services.

### **Writing Advising**

The Writing Center has student writers who are trained tutors ready to work with you collaboratively on any stage of your writing in this class--from brainstorming to final editing. It's a friendly and supportive place, and their goal is to help you to improve your writing and become a better writer. You can make an appointment here: [Writing Center Appointments](#).

### **Policy on Inclusivity at Beloit College**

*Inclusivity* is a demonstration of equity and social justice through awareness, understanding, and respect for the differences in identity, culture, background, experience, and socialization, and the ways in which these forms of difference impact how we live and learn. Inclusivity requires equitable, institution-wide representation and access to resources. In practice, this manifests itself by each individual being aware of, committed to, and responsible for the well-being and care of all students, staff, and faculty.

### **Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism**

Academic misconduct and dishonesty are serious offenses. Such acts violate the trust that forms the foundation of the student-teacher relationship, they rob students of opportunities to learn, and they damage the reputation of the College as a whole. In particular, plagiarism constitutes intellectual theft and is completely unacceptable. I expect that you will follow Beloit's policy on academic honesty printed in the Student Handbook. Any assignments or exams that violate this policy will receive a failing grade. I will also notify the Dean of Students of any cases of academic dishonesty, and she will determine any further penalties.

### **Other course policies and notes**

- If a student has a desired name that is not listed on the course roster, please let me know. Students may also notify me of their preferred gender pronouns. I use he/him/his pronouns.
- Check your email regularly.
- I strongly encourage you to come visit my office hours; if the times listed don't work, email me so we can figure out another time to meet.
- If you are struggling with any aspect of the course, talk to me sooner rather than later so we can work on the ways to best help you. Please also consider requesting a Peer Tutor, working with the Writing Center, or seeking assistance from Learning Enrichment and Disability Services.

- If a religious holiday that you observe conflicts with an assignment, please let me know in advance so that we may discuss alternate options.
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## **READING SCHEDULE**

*Subject to changes, which will be announced in class and over e-mail. Please read in the order listed on the syllabus.*

### **I. Founding Debates**

1/16: Hello and welcome

- Read the syllabus carefully!

1/18: How do we understand American political culture?

- Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America: An Interpretation of American Political Thought Since the Revolution* (1955) excerpt in Cannon et al., *The Enduring Debate*
- Rogers Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America” (1993), excerpt in Cannon et. al., *The Enduring Debate*

1/20

- Declaration of Independence
- Inauguration Day activity

1/23

- Listen to *Ben Franklin’s World*, “Danielle Allen, Our Declaration”
- Danielle Allen, *Our Declaration* (2014), “1. Night Teaching,” “14. When in the Course of Human Events,” and “18. An Echo”

1/25

- Howard Zinn, “A Kind of Revolution” in *A People’s History of the United States* (1990), excerpts
- Robert G. Parkinson, “Did a Fear of Slave Revolts Drive American Independence?” *The New York Times* (2016).

1/27

- The Articles of Confederation
- Constitution

1/30

- Federalist No. 10
- Federalist No. 39
- Federalist No. 51

2/1

- Brutus No. 2
- Brutus No. 5
- Melancton Smith, “Speech in the New York Ratifying Convention, June 21, 1788:”

2/3

- Kenneth M. Dolbeare and Linda Medcalf, “The Dark Side of the Constitution,” in *The Case Against the Constitution: From the Anti-Federalists to the Present* (1987), excerpt
- *Hamilton (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*: listen to the playlist at <https://johnnamcmahon.com/2016/08/08/hamilton-110/>

2/6

- Martha Derthick, “How many Communities?” in *Keeping the Compound Republic: Essays on American Federalism* (2001), pp. 9-32

2/8

- Thomas Jefferson, “The Kentucky Resolutions”
- George Wallace, “Statement and Proclamation of Governor George C. Wallace, University of Alabama, June 11, 1963”
- *United States v. Lopez*, 514 U.S. 549 (1995), excerpts

2/10: No class (John away at conference)

## **PAPER I DUE**

## **II. Civil Rights, Civil Liberties, and Race**

2/13

- Richard Young and Jeffrey Meiser, “Race and the dual state in the early American republic” (2008), in *Race and American Political Development*, ed. Lowndes, Novkov, and Warren

2/15

- Frederick Douglas, “What To The Slave Is The Fourth of July?” July 5, 1852:
- Abraham Lincoln, “First Joint Debate,” in Robert W. Johannsen, ed., *The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 51-55.

2/17

- W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction* (1935), excerpts
- Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter From A Birmingham Jail,” April 16, 1963
- Malcolm X, “The Ballot or the Bullet,” April 3, 1964

2/20

- Bill of Rights
- Cass R. Sunstein, Chapter 5 “Free Speech,” in *Why Societies Need Dissent* (2003), pp. 96-110
- Senator Russell Feingold, “On Opposing the U.S.A PATRIOT Act”, October 12, 2001

2/22

- *Roe et.al. v. Wade, District Attorney of Dallas County* 410 U.S. 113. Read: Syllabus; Part I; skim Part II, Part VIII-XII
- *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey*, 112 S.Ct. 2791, excerpt

2/24

- TBA Reading(s)/podcast on *Whole Women’s Health v. Hellerstedt* case
- TBA article on Trump Administration and reproductive rights

2/27

- Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, “Introduction” and “The Lockdown”

3/1

- Oyez, Chicago-Kent College of Law. “Utah v. Strieff”
  - read “Facts of the Case,” “Question,” and “Conclusion”
- *Utah v. Strieff*, 579 U.S. (2016)
  - Read: Syllabus; Justice Sotomayor’s dissent

3/3: Podcast Tutorial: Jedidiah Rex, Manager of Instructional Technology

## **PAPER II DUE**

Spring Break!

### III. Institutions

3/13

- John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse “Too Much of a Good Thing: More Representative is not Necessarily Better.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 31 (1998), pp. 151-157
- Eric Schickler, “Institutional Development of Congress,” in Paul J. Quirk and Sarah A. Binder, eds., *The Legislative Branch* (2005), pp. 35-62.

3/15

- Mary Hawkesworth, Case study on Congress, from “Chapter 8: Intersectionality” in *Feminist Inquiry* (2006)

3/17

- Julia R. Azari, “[Every president claims to have a mandate. Does Trump actually have one?](#)” *Mischiefs of Faction* (2016)
- Julia R. Azari, “[Trump’s presidency signals the end of the Reagan era](#)”, *Mischiefs of Faction* (2016)
- TBA Podcast on Trump presidency

3/20

- Federalist No. 78
- John Marshall, from *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) (excerpts)

3/22

- Cass R. Sunstein, “Judges and Democracy: The Changing Role of the United States Supreme Court,” in Kermit L. Hall and Kevin T. McGuire, eds., *The Judicial Branch* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 32-59.
- TBA podcast/reading on current Supreme Court

3/24: No class (Advising Practicum)

3/27

- Thomas E. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It’s Even Worse Than it Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the New Politics of Extremism* (2012), Introduction, pp. 84-103, and pp. 163-178

3/29

- Nolan McCarty, “What we do and don’t know about our polarized politics,” *Washington Post* (2014)
- Richard Pildes, “How to fix our polarized politics? Strengthen political parties.” *Washington Post* (2014)
- Listen to *New Books in Political Science*, “Hans Noel: Political Ideologies and Political Parties in America”

### IV. Elections and Social Movements

3/31

- Alexander Keyssar, *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States* (2000), pp. 33-42, 151-62, 168-71, 211-21.
- Listen to *NPR Fresh Air*, “Do Voter ID Laws Prevent Fraud, or Dampen Turnout?”

4/3

- Listen to *New Books in Political Science*, “Richard L. Hasen: Plutocrats United”
- Seth Masket, “Just How Much of a Problem is Campaign Money?” *Pacific Standard* (2013).
- Jonathan Bernstein, “Why Campaign Finance Laws Make Things Worse.” *Bloomberg Views* (2014).
- Listen to *Decode DC*, “Episode 133: The FEC Is a Watchdog that Doesn’t Bite”

4/5

- Alexis de Tocqueville, “On The Use which the Americans Make of Associations in Civil Life”
- James M. Berry, “The Advocacy Explosion” in *The Interest Group Society*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (1997), pp. 17-42.

4/7

- Robert D. Putnam, Chapter 2 “Civic Participation” in *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000)
- Russell J. Dalton, Chapter 4 “Bowling Alone or Protesting with a Group?” in *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics* (2008)

4/10

- “The Seneca Falls Declaration and Resolutions”
- Sojourner Truth, “Ain’t I A Woman”
- Combahee River Collective, “Combahee River Collective Statement: Black Feminist Organizing in the Seventies and Eighties”

4/12

- TBA; class led by Madison Oakley

4/14: No class (John away at conference)

**PAPER III DUE**

4/17

- Anonymous Queers, “Queers Read This,” New York, NY, 1990
- “Guiding Principles,” *Black Lives Matter*
- TBA reading on Standing Rock water protectors

4/19: No Classes (Spring Day)

**V. Wisconsin Politics (...and the Rise of Trump?)**

4/21

- Cramer, *Politics of Resentment*, chapters 1 and 2

4/24

- Cramer, *Politics of Resentment*, chapter 3

4/26

- Cramer, *Politics of Resentment*, chapter 4

4/28

- Cramer, *Politics of Resentment*, TBD

5/1

- Topic TBD by class collectively

5/3

- Review
- In-class peer review for final project

**MAY 6, noon: Podcast (or final paper) due**