

American Politics: Evaluating the Democratic Experiment

Political Science 2201
Fall 2018
MWF 2–2:50 PM
Olin Engineering 120

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Office Hours: MTW 3:30–4:30 PM

Democracy is not brute numbers; it is a genuine union of true individuals...
the essence of democracy is creating.

Mary Parker Follett (1918)

Course Description

This course aims to introduce students to the ideas and institutions that shape the national politics of the United States. We will focus in particular on the question of how political power is distributed in American democracy and how dilemmas of collective action and institutional design shape who governs us and how they govern. We will also examine how creative political actors navigate (and sometimes reinvent) the policymaking system itself to accomplish their desired objectives.

By the end of the course, students will be able to describe the essential features of American politics and government. Students will also develop a better understanding of the dilemmas of collective action that confront societies and how government interests solve (or fail to solve) these dilemmas. Students will also be able to evaluate arguments about the origins of individual behavior and the role of parties, interest groups, and the media in the functioning of government. Students will apply this knowledge to evaluate the quality of representative democracy in the United States. Throughout the semester, students will gain skills in empirical analysis through conducting their own fieldwork. In terms of writing skills, students will hone their ability to make rationally persuasive arguments, supported by evidence. Finally, students will improve their speaking skills through participating in class.

The course begins by examining the institutional and cultural origins of American democracy. Next, we will examine several modes of political participation and representation in the United States, including elections, the formation and maintenance of political parties, and the organization of interest groups. We then turn to the core institutions that structure U.S. governance: the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of national government, federalism, and the bureaucracy. The course concludes with a student-led exercise, evaluating proposals to enhance American democracy.

POSC 2201 and the Marquette Core Curriculum

The Individuals and Communities theme stresses the relationship between individuals and communities, including how communities shape individuals' ability to mobilize, innovate, and act collectively for the common good. POSC 2201 examines the role of individuals, groups, and institutions in shaping the practice of American democracy. Using the tools of political-science analysis, students will critically evaluate the processes that have deepened democracy in America over time, allowing for greater equality of political voice, as well as those processes that undermine the stability of democratic rule. Throughout the course, students will investigate the mechanisms that affect political power and collective action. Each week of the semester, we will examine a broad subject related to the understanding of major political outcomes. Under the title of that week is a list of "topics" that connect the study of comparative politics to the theme of Individuals and Communities. These topics and their connection to the Individuals and Communities theme will be a regular focus of class discussion.

The course is closely connected to two of the MCC's learning outcomes:

1) Leaders in Discovery: Marquette students will advance understanding of the world by identifying significant questions and then searching for answers based on a systematic process of discovery that is rooted in intellectual inquiry and the Jesuit liberal arts tradition.

2.) Citizens with Purpose: Marquette students will come away with a sense of purpose professionally, personally, and as global citizens who demonstrate critically reflective discernment processes that are rooted in one's sense of theological intellectual and personal commitments.

It also has two course-specific learning outcomes, which connect to the Individuals and Communities theme. Upon completion of this course, students will be able to: 1) Apply political science theories and analytical tools to evaluate how American political institutions represent the interests and identities of individuals and communities. 2) Evaluate proposals for reforming American political institutions to enhance democratic representation.

Course Requirements

Participation (10%): This course requires an extensive amount of reading and preparation prior to class. To facilitate this, weekly reading questions will be posted to D2L. You are expected to attend each class session having read and digested all assigned material, ready to engage in an informed, lively discussion with the instructor and with other students. If you do not speak at all during the semester or are absent for more than 6 class sessions, you will receive a 0 for participation.

Reading Quizzes (5%): Throughout the semester, there will be several short, unannounced reading quizzes. These quizzes will include several basic, multiple-choice questions about the assigned reading for the day of the lecture.

Fieldwork (20%): Better understanding how American democracy works means observing it in practice. During the course of the semester, students will be asked to carry out four pieces of fieldwork. After conducting each piece of fieldwork, students will write-up two double-spaced pages of analytical field notes that describe their observations. More details will be provided during the semester.

- Fieldwork Assignment #1: Power in everyday life (5%) (due 9/10)
- Fieldwork Assignment #2: Political attitudes (5%) (due 10/8)
- Fieldwork Assignment #3: Interest group influence (5%) (due 10/29)
- Fieldwork Assignment #4: The electoral connection (5%) (due 11/12)

Op-Ed (5% for outline + 10% for final draft = 15%): During the semester, students will craft a 750-word op-ed column on an assigned topic. This op-ed will give students an opportunity to hone their skills at evaluating the practice of American democracy. Students will turn in an outline of the op-ed on **November 19** and a final version on **December 7**.

End-of-semester group exercise (5%): At the end of the semester, students will participate in a group exercise evaluating proposals to strengthen American democracy. More information will be provided later in the semester.

Midterm Exam (20%): There will be one midterm exam for this class, held during our regular 50-minute meeting time on **October 17**. The exam will include a combination of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essay questions. Topics will include material discussed in class and assigned readings.

Final Exam (25%): A final exam for the course is scheduled for **December 12, 10:30AM–12:30 PM**. This will be similar in format to the midterm exam, but will cover material from the entire semester. You will have two hours to complete the exam.

Grading Scale

≥ 93	A
≥ 90	A-
≥ 87	B+
≥ 83	B
≥ 80	B-
≥ 77	C+
≥ 73	C
≥ 70	C-
≥ 67	D+
≥ 60.0	D
< 60.0	F

Course Policies

Academic Misconduct: Information on Marquette's Academic Misconduct Policy can be found here: <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/> Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to, individual violations, helping another student with any form of academic misconduct, failing to report any form of academic misconduct, or intentionally interfering with the educational process in any manner. Academic misconduct of any type is unacceptable and will result in immediate referral to Marquette's Academic Integrity Director. If you are in doubt as to whether an action or behavior is subject to the academic misconduct policy, you should consult an appropriate member of the Academic Integrity Council, faculty or staff.

Disabilities: If you have a disability for which you are requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact the University's Office of Disability Services within the first week of classes. For more information, contact the Office of Disability Services in Marquette Hall, Suite 005 or at (414) 288-1645. If you require any accommodations for exams or other assignments, you must notify me (along with all required documentation) at least one week in advance of the assignment due date.

Courtesy: Your participation is essential to this course. As such, you are expected to behave with courtesy towards your classmates and professor. **Phones should be silenced and out of sight.** While laptops are appropriate for taking notes, numerous studies suggest that taking notes by hand greatly improves one's ability to retain information and sustain focus. I strongly advise heeding the results of this research. Failure to appropriately use technology will result in a lower participation grade. E-mail communication with the professor should be professional and succinct. Always include a subject line and begin the e-mail with "Dear Professor."

Late Assignments: I expect all students to complete required assignments when they are due. If you are unable to complete an assignment for a serious or urgent reason you must contact me before the assignment is due. Otherwise, the assignment will be marked down a full letter grade for each day past the deadline.

Readings

Required: There is one required book for the course, available at Book Marq: Ken Kollman, *Readings in American Politics*, 4th ed. (WW Norton, 2018). All other required readings will be made available in a reading packet on D2L.

Recommended: Students who are relatively unfamiliar with the subject of American Politics are well advised to consult a background text to supplement readings for this course. A cost-effective option is Richard M. Valelly, *American Politics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2013). A more expansive introduction can be found in Ken Kollman, *The American Political System* (WW Norton, 2017). Additionally, all students are advised to read publications with daily coverage of national politics,

such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, or *Vox*. The *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* affords excellent coverage of local and state politics.

Schedule of Class Meetings

Note: All readings in the Kollman textbook are listed in bold by their chapter number. All other readings are available in a pdf reading packet, which can be found on D2L.

Date	Lecture Title (Individuals and Communities- Related Topics)	Readings	Assignment due-dates
8/27	Overview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> George Orwell, "Politics and the English Language," <i>Horizon</i> 13(76, 1946): 252-265. [d2l] 	
UNIT 1: ANALYTICAL FOUNDATIONS			
8/29	Analyzing Power (Sources and modes of political pressure and control)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Gaventa, <i>Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley</i> (University of Illinois Press, 1982), 3-17. [d2l] 	
8/31	No class – Dr. Rocco away at American Political Science Association meetings		
9/3	No class – Labor Day		
9/5	Collective Action (Coordination and free-rider problems)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman 1.2 (Olson) 	
9/7	Solving Collective Action Problems (Institutions)	No readings	
UNIT 2: THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF US DEMOCRACY			
9/10	Politics of Constitutional Design (Institutions; transaction and conformity costs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ken Kollman, <i>The American Political System</i> (Norton, 2015), 32-54 [d2l] 	Fieldwork assignment #1 due to D2L Dropbox before class

9/12	Evaluating Democratic Institutions (Criteria for analyzing democracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 2.3 (Dahl) • Seva Gunitsky, “How do you measure democracy?” [d2l] 	
9/14	Political Culture (Values, culture, ideology, equality, hierarchy, liberty)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection from Alexis De Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> (1835) [d2l] • Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America.” <i>American Political Science Review</i> 87 (3, 1993) [d2l] 	
9/17	The Struggle for Rights (Self-interest, collective action, institutions, rights)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Samuel Kernell et al., <i>The Logic of American Politics</i>, 7th ed. (CQ Press, 2016), pp. 122-157 [d2l] • Martin Luther King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail” (1963) [d2l] 	
9/19	The Struggle for Rights (Contestation over rights regimes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 13.3 (<i>Shelby County v. Holder</i>) 	
UNIT 3: PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION			
9/21	Public Opinion Formation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 9.2 (Zaller) 	
9/24	Debating Democratic Competence (Voter reasoning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 13.5 (Achen and Bartels) 	

9/26	Debating Democratic Competence (Voter reasoning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 9.1 (Lupia and McCubbins) • Nico Kolodny, “How People Vote,” <i>Boston Review</i>, February 17, 2017 [d2l] 	
9/28	Fieldwork Day: Collecting Data on Public Opinion	No readings – come to class ready to collect data in the field	
10/1	The Puzzle of Voter Turnout (Collective action; barriers to/facilitators of participation; institutions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adam Taylor, “American voter turnout is still lower than many other wealthy nations,” <i>Washington Post</i>, November 10, 2016 [d2l] • Henry Farber, “Rational Choice and Voter Turnout” (2009) [d2l] 	
10/3	The Science of Representational Distortion (Institutions; self-interest; quality of democracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert Draper, “The League of Dangerous Mapmakers,” <i>The Atlantic</i>, October 2017 [d2l] 	
10/5	Remedies for Representational Distortion (Institutions; self-interest; quality of democracy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nicholas Stephanopoulos, “The research that convinced SCOTUS to take the Wisconsin gerrymandering case, explained,” <i>Vox</i>, July 11, 2017 [d2l] • Barry Burden and David Canon, “The Supreme Court decided not to decide Wisconsin’s gerrymandering case. But here’s why it will be back.” [d2l] 	

10/8	Factions and Democracy (Models of political influence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> James Madison, <i>Federalist</i> #10 [d2l] 	Fieldwork assignment #2 due to D2L Dropbox before class
10/10	Factions and Democracy (Participation beyond the ballot box; group representation of interests)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selections from Kay Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry Brady, <i>The Unheavenly Chorus</i> (Princeton, 2012) [d2l] Kollman 11.1 (Gilens) 	
10/12	Factions and Democracy (Modes of Political Influence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman 11.2 (Kollman) Selections from Joshua Kalla and David Broockman, "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment," <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 60 (3, 2015) [d2l] 	
10/15	Factions and Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No readings – bring laptops to class to begin fieldwork on lobbying 	
10/17	MIDTERM EXAM		
10/19	Fall Break – No Class		
10/22	Parties and Democracy (Sources of party formation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman 12.1 (Aldrich) 	
10/24	Parties and Democracy (Sources of party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kollman 12.3 (Cohen et al.) 	

	formation; role of intense policy demanders)		
10/26	Parties and Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julia Azari, "Weak parties and strong partisanship are a bad combination," <i>Vox</i>, November 3, 2016 [d2l] • Sam Rosenfeld, "Two Cheers for Polarization," <i>Boston Review</i>, October 25, 2017 [d2l] 	
UNIT 4: INSTITUTIONS AND AMERICAN DEMOCRACY			
10/29	The Paradox of Congressional Representation (Electoral connection between voters and legislators)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 5.1 (Mayhew) • Kollman 5.4 (Grimmer et al.) 	Fieldwork assignment #3 due to D2L Dropbox before class
10/31	The Paradox of Congressional Representation (Polarization; agenda control)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 5.3 (Cox and McCubbins) 	
11/2	The Paradox of Congressional Representation (Legislative gridlock)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Binder, "Polarized We Govern?", Brookings Institution Working Paper [d2l] 	
11/5	Presidential Power (Bargaining and persuasion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 6.1 (Neustadt) 	
11/7	Presidential Power (Link between presidents and public opinion)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 6.5 (Kernell) 	
11/9	Presidential Power (Unilateral authority; alternatives to bargaining and rhetorical leadership)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 6.4 (Howell) 	

11/12	Accountability in the Bureaucracy (Agency loss; delegation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 7.1 (McCubbins and Schwartz) 	Fieldwork assignment #4 due to D2L Dropbox before class
11/14	Unelected Judges in a Democracy (Sources of judicial autonomy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 8.2 (<i>Marbury v. Madison</i>) 	
11/16	Unelected Judges in a Democracy (Limits on judicial autonomy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 8.1 (Rosenberg) 	
11/19	Federalism and Democracy (Effects of decentralization on public voice and exit options)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonathan Rauch, "A Separate Peace" [d2l] • Jamila Michener, "The politics and policy of racism in American health care," <i>Vox</i> May 24, 2018 [d2l] 	Op-ed outline due to D2L dropbox before class
11/21	No class – Thanksgiving Break		
11/23	No class – Thanksgiving Break		
11/26	Federalism and Democracy (Empirical evaluation of democratic governance in US federal system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kollman 3.3 (Riker) • Cheyenne Polmedio and Elena Souris, "Why federalism is hard," <i>Vox</i>, February 27, 2018 	
11/28	Federalism and Democracy (Explaining contestation for power within US federal system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heather Gerken, "We're about to see states' rights used defensively against Trump," <i>Vox</i>, January 20, 2017 [d2l] • Daniel Béland, Philip Rocco, and Alex Waddan. <i>Obamacare Wars: Federalism, State Politics, and the Affordable Care Act</i> (University Press of Kansas, 2016), Introduction [d2l] 	

UNIT 5: ASSESSING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY			
11/30	Political Scientists Evaluate American Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Results of Bright Line Watch Survey (2017) 	
12/3	Recommendations for Fixing Democracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No readings – bring laptops to class to prepare for in-class presentations 	
12/5	In-class presentations		
12/7	In-class presentations and course wrap-up		Op-ed due to D2L Dropbox before class.
12/12	FINAL EXAM 10:30AM – 12:30 PM, Olin Engineering 120		