

# **POLS 433: Problems in American Democracy**

Mondays 8:30-11:30am

Theological Hall 203

## **Instructor:**

Paul Gardner

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:00-12:00 PM, Wednesdays 2:00-3:00 PM and by appointment

## **Course Summary**

Donald Trump surprised political commentators and students of American politics when he secured victory in the Electoral College while losing the national popular vote. The Trump presidency has created a new set of challenges for American democracy, but even more, Trump's election is a result of complex and growing dysfunctions in American government.

This course seeks to examine American political life and the apparent dissatisfaction of the American electorate with its political leadership. What is it that Americans want from their government, and why are political elites unable to deliver on those demands? What are the sources of polarization in American politics and can political science suggest any solutions?

## **Learning Objectives**

This course has two kinds of objectives. The first is to gain substantive knowledge about American politics, and the second is to acquire skills that you acquire as a university student. The specific outcomes are as follows:

- 1) Identify and analyze the functions and dysfunctions in American politics,
- 2) Develop tools and principles to evaluate political behavior of individuals and groups in the United States as they interact with the political system,
- 3) Learn about the tools that political scientists use to study politics,
- 4) Improve research and writing skills through analysis of political science literature.

## **Course Readings:**

There is one required text for the course, Ken Kollman, *Readings in American Politics: Analysis and Perspectives*. W.W. Norton Press. 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, and one optional remedial text, Richard M. Valley, *American Politics: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press.

Each of the books are available at the Campus Bookstore, and are also widely available on your favorite bookstores on the web. You must obtain the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of *Readings in American Politics* to have access to all assigned readings on the syllabus.

The remainder of the course readings will be academic political science articles and popular newspaper and magazine articles drawn from the web. These readings will be posted on onQ. Refer to the course calendar, onQ notifications, and emails from the instructor for updates on the reading schedule and where to find materials.

<b><i>Readings on the syllabus should be read BEFORE the class for which they are listed.</i></b>
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## **Course Requirements**

Reading and writing assignments are central to the course. Keeping up with the syllabus is essential to success in the course. Grades are *earned* based on the quality of work submitted. You are encouraged to see me if you are unsure about the expectations for any assignment. I will go over the paper assignments in detail when they are assigned. Use of office hours is highly encouraged—students who come to office hours to discuss assignments are much more likely to succeed.

*Class format:* This class will be larger than most fourth-year seminars, but we will strive to create the greatest amount of opportunities for participation and discussion. Class will normally have several distinct parts, beginning with a short lecture, a discussion of current events, discussion of the week's readings, and other relevant simulations and activities. Participation will be an important part of your grade, and written exercises and attendance will be the major part of your participation grade. Coming to class late or leaving early on a regular basis may result in a reduced participation grade.

*Written Work:* There are three major written components in the course—a paper prospectus, a term paper, and a final exam. The term paper will involve applying the tools of political science to evaluate contemporary problems in American politics. The term paper assignment will be posted to onQ **September 21<sup>st</sup>**. The prospectus will be due in class on **October 15<sup>th</sup>** and the term paper will be due on **November 19<sup>th</sup>**. Peer review of the prospectus will be due **October 22<sup>nd</sup>**. The final exam will be according to the university schedule, see below.

All grading of written work will be done anonymously. This means that written work must be submitted with a **title page on which your name appears**, and then **your name should not appear on any other page**. All written work should include page numbers. Plagiarism will not be tolerated—see Academic Integrity in Course Policies, below.

Grades will be assigned based on the following rubric:

Paper Prospectus.....	10%
Peer Review .....	5%
Term Paper.....	30%
Final Exam.....	35%
Attendance and Participation .....	20%

*Final Exam:* The exam dates for each Term are listed on the Faculty of Arts and Science webpage under “Important Dates.” Student exam schedules for the Fall Term are posted via SOLUS immediately prior to the Thanksgiving holiday. Students should delay finalizing any travel plans until after the examination schedule has been posted. Exams will not be moved or deferred to accommodate employment, travel/holiday plans or flight reservations. Also, as indicated in Academic Regulation 8.3, students must write all final examination in all on-campus courses on the Kingston campus.

*Grading:* In this course, some components will be graded using numerical percentage marks. Other components will receive letter grades, which for purposes of calculating your course average will be translated into numerical equivalents using the Faculty of Arts and Science approved scale (see below). Your course average will then be converted to a final letter grade according to Queen’s Official Grade Conversion Scale (see below).

**Arts & Science Letter Grade Input Scheme**

Assignment mark	Numerical value for calculation of final mark
A+	93
A	87
A-	82
B+	78
B	75
B-	72
C+	68
C	65
C-	62
D+	58
D	55
D-	52
F48 (F+)	48
F24 (F)	24
F0 (O)	0

**Queen's Official Grade Conversion Scale**

Grade	Numerical Course Average (Range)
A+	90-100
A	85-89
A-	80-84
B+	77-79
B	73-76
B-	70-72
C+	67-69
C	63-66
C-	60-62
D+	57-59
D	53-56
D-	50-52
F	49 and below

All grading of written work will be done anonymously. This means that **written work must be submitted with a title page on which your name appears, and then your name should not appear on any other page.** If you have any questions about written assignments, either before or after they are due, you are welcome to speak with me.

Grade appeals: Grades may be appealed in rare circumstances. To do so, you should submit a clean copy of the paper to me, along with an explanation for the reason why you think you deserve a higher grade than you received (1 page). I will then re-grade the paper from scratch. This means that you could receive a grade that is lower, higher, or the same as the grade originally assigned.

Turnitin: This course makes use of Turnitin, a third-party application that helps maintain standards of excellence in academic integrity. Normally, students will be required to submit their course assignments to through onQ to Turnitin. In doing so, students' work will be included as source documents in the Turnitin reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism.

Turnitin is a suite of tools that provide instructors with information about the authenticity of submitted work and facilitates the process of grading. Turnitin compares submitted files against its extensive database of content, and produces a similarity report and a similarity score for each assignment. A similarity score is the percentage of a document that is similar to content held within the database. Turnitin does not determine if an instance of plagiarism has occurred. Instead, it gives instructors the information they need to determine the authenticity of work as a part of a larger process.

Please read [Turnitin's Privacy Pledge, Privacy Policy, and Terms of Service](#), which governs users' relationship with Turnitin. Also, please note that Turnitin uses cookies and other tracking technologies; however, in its service contract with Queen's Turnitin has agreed that neither Turnitin nor its third-party partners will use data collected through cookies or other tracking technologies for marketing or advertising purposes. For further information about how you can exercise control over cookies, see [Turnitin's Privacy Policy](#):

Turnitin may provide other services that are not connected to the purpose for which Queen's University has engaged Turnitin. Your independent use of Turnitin's other services is subject solely to Turnitin's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy, and Queen's University has no liability for any independent interaction you choose to have with Turnitin.

Notetaking: You are encouraged to take reading notes so that you are prepared to participate in class discussions. You may take notes using whatever format is most useful for you, but using the following format should result in useful notes:

- Evaluate the **source** of the argument. Is this a detached academic source or does the author have an agenda?
- Identify the **argument**. What is the main idea that the author wants to relay to the reader? What assumptions does the author make? Are important terms clearly defined?
- Identify the **evidence**. What kinds of evidence does the author use to support his/her claims? Is this evidence reliable?
- Evaluate the **conclusion**. Are you convinced by the argument? Why or why not?
- Consider the **implications**. If you accept that the authors conclusions are true, what impact does this have on our understanding of American politics? Does it affect who wins and who loses?

## **Course Policies**

Academic integrity: Academic Integrity is constituted by the six core fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage (see [www.academicintegrity.org](http://www.academicintegrity.org)). These values are central to the building, nurturing and sustaining of an academic community in which all members of the community will thrive. Adherence to the values expressed through academic integrity forms a foundation for the "freedom of inquiry and exchange of ideas" essential to the intellectual life of the University (see the Senate Report on Principles and Priorities <http://www.queensu.ca/secretariat/policies/senate/report-principles-and-priorities>).

Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the regulations concerning academic integrity and for ensuring that their assignments conform to the principles of academic integrity. Information on academic integrity is available in the Arts and Science Calendar (see Academic Regulation 1 <http://www.queensu.ca/arts/academic-calendars/regulations/academic-regulations/regulation-1>), on the Arts and Science website (see <http://www.queensu.ca/arts/academics/undergraduate/academic-integrity>), and from the instructor of this course. Departures from academic integrity include plagiarism, use of unauthorized materials, facilitation, forgery and falsification, and are antithetical to the development of an academic community at Queen's. Given the seriousness of these matters, actions which contravene the regulation on academic integrity carry sanctions that can range from a warning or the loss of grades on an assignment to the failure of a course to a requirement to withdraw from the university.

Laptops and other electronic devices: During class, your jobs are to listen actively, take careful notes, reflect on the concepts we are discussing, and participate in those discussions when you have something to say. None of these jobs requires a laptop, a tablet, or a phone, and the use of such devices during class can be quite distracting to students sitting nearby. Therefore, **no electronics will be permitted in class.**

Late assignment policy: Deadlines will be extended only under unusual circumstances, and only with Dr. Gardner's explicit permission. If you must be absent for one of the exams, you must inform me as early as possible, but **in no case later than two weeks before the exam**. Late papers will be reduced by a third of a grade for each day that they are late.

Academic support: Queen's University is committed to providing academic consideration to students experiencing extenuating circumstances that are beyond their control and are interfering with their ability

to complete academic requirements related to a course for a short period of time, not to exceed three months. Students receiving academic consideration must meet all essential requirements of a course. The Senate Policy on Academic Consideration for Students in Extenuating Circumstances was approved at Senate in April, 2017 (see [policy here](#)). Each Faculty has developed a protocol to provide a consistent and equitable approach in dealing with requests for academic consideration for students facing extenuating circumstances.

*Reasonable accommodation:* Queen's University is committed to achieving full accessibility for people with disabilities. Part of this commitment includes arranging academic accommodations for students with disabilities to ensure they have an equitable opportunity to participate in all of their academic activities. The Senate Policy for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities was approved at Senate in November 2016 (see [policy here](#)). If you are a student with a disability and think you may need academic accommodations, you are strongly encouraged to contact the Queen's Student Accessibility Services (QSAS) and register as early as possible. For more information, including important deadlines, please visit the QSAS website at: <http://www.queensu.ca/studentwellness/accessibility-services/>

*Office hours and email communication:* My regular office hours are listed above, but you are welcome to make an appointment for some other time. If you just have a quick question, I encourage you to reach me by email. In addition, I will regularly use onQ's announcement and mail feature to contact all members of the class. As such, all students are responsible for regularly checking their Queen's email accounts throughout the semester.

## **Course Calendar**

### **Week 1 (September 10): Trump and the 2016 Election**

Anonymous, *I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration*  
Philip Rucker and Robert Costa, *Bob Woodward's new book reveals a 'nervous breakdown' of Trump's presidency*  
Cass Sunstein, *How to Think About the Threat to America*  
Thomas Pepinsky, *Life in authoritarian states is mostly boring and tolerable*

### **Week 2 (September 17): Partisan Polarization**

Iyengar and Westwood, "Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence on Group Polarization"  
Morris Fiorina, from *Culture War? The Myth of Polarized America*  
RAP: Harbridge and Malhotra, from "Electoral Incentives and Partisan Conflict in Congress: Evidence from Survey Experiments"

Discussion leaders: Jessi Abugov and Greer Brodie-Hall

### **Week 3 (September 24): Identity Politics**

Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (selections)  
Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (selections)  
RAP: Michael Tesler, from *Post-Racial or Most-Racial: Race and Politics in the Obama Era*  
RAP: Donald R. Kinder and Cindy D. Kam, from *Us Against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*

Discussion leaders: Calum Cook, Alison Firth, and Will Forrester

### **Week 4 (October 1): Media and Elections**

RAP: John Zaller, from *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*  
Faris et al., *Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election* (selections)  
Nathaniel Persily, "Can Democracy Survive the Internet?"

Discussion leaders: Alison Gallagher, Bridget Galloway, and Tharziha Ganeshmoorthy

### **Week 5 (October 15): Electoral Institutions**

RAP: Koza, et al. *Every Vote Equal: A State- Based Plan for Electing the President by National Popular Vote*  
RAP: Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)  
RAP: Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder (2013)  
Fresh Air with Jimmy Carter (audio recording)  
Andrew Gumbel, "Voting rights rulings could deal blow to Republicans in 2016 elections"

Discussion leaders: Bronwyn Greenhalgh, Paul Hogan, and Colin Hunt

## **Week 6 (October 22): Responsiveness and Representation**

Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, *Democracy for Realists* (selections)

RAP: Lupia and McCubbins, Can Citizens Learn what they need to know?

Discussion leaders: Hannah Jensen, Sarah Kavanaugh, and Raphi Lauret

## **Week 7 (October 29): The Far Right**

Vanessa Williamson, Theda Skocpol, and John Coggin, “The Tea Party and the Remaking of American Conservatism”

RAP: Katherine Cramer, from *The Politics of Resentment*

Discussion leaders: Sara Lyons, ~~Pippi McKay~~, and Carolyn McPherson     Max Samuels

## **Week 8 (November 5): Economic Inequality**

Larry Bartels, “Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind”

RAP: Suzanne Mettler, from *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy*

RAP: Larry Bartels, from *Unequal Democracy*

Discussion leaders: Emma Orbinski, Chris Osei-Kusi, and Parth Panwala

## **Week 9 (November 12): Interest Group Influence**

RAP: Martin Gilens, from *Affluence and Influence*

Hall, Richard L, and Frank W. Wayman. “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.”

Video: Gunned Down: The Power of the NRA, PBS Frontline

Discussion leaders:, Auston Pierce, Caitlin Poxon, and Amrit Sagoo

## **Week 10 (November 19): Judicial Independence**

RAP: Gerald R. Rosenberg, from *The Hollow Hope*

Tom Clark, “The Separation of Powers, Court Curbing, and Judicial Legitimacy”

J. Mitchell Pickerill, *Constitutional Deliberation in Congress* (selections)

Discussion leaders: ~~Max Samuels~~, Matt Schafler, and Sean Stead-Fescer     Pippi McKay

## **Week 11 (November 26): Presidential Power**

Terry M. Moe, “The Politicized Presidency”

Whittington, “How Does Impeachment Work?”

RAP: Richard E. Neustadt, from *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*

Discussion leaders: Savannah Thomson, Kirk Varrin, and Sherry Wang