Agenda: Introduction to American Government

COURSE
INFORMATION

Term: Fall 2021
Level: Introductory
Meet: Tues & Fri 2:30-3:50
Room: CHL 221 & Chickee Hut
Syllabus Revision: August 31, 2021

Instructor: Jack Reilly
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Appointments: jacklreilly.com/appointments

NOTE

In addition to this agenda, which identifies, for each week, what your course responsibilities are, you should also consult the **course syllabus**, which outlines high-level expectations and course structures.

OVERVIEW

Topics Outline

W	Tuesday	Friday
1	Models and Science, FAQ, Startup	Five Useful Models of Politics
2	*Activity*: Collective Action Problems	*Activity*: Prisoner's Dilemmas
3	A Model of Governance: Madison's Republic	Critique of the Republic Model
4	*Activity*: Federalism & Sorting Models	Participation & Resource Bias
5	*Debate:* Foundations	Public Opinion & Media
6	*Activity*: Spatial Model & Party Behavior	Four Models of Vote Choice
7	*Debate*: Behavior	MIDTERM
	FALL BREAK	
8	*Activity*: Principle-Agent Problems	Parties & Party Theory
9	Interest Groups & Pluralism	Political Equality & Diversity
10	*Debate*: Representation	Three Models of Congressional Behavior
11	*Activity*: The Policy Process	Congressional Macro-Representation
12	Two Models of the Presidency	Non-Representative Institutions
13	*Debate*: Democracy & Stability	THANKSGIVING
14	FINAL	READING DAYS
F	FINALS WEEK	

Course Agenda

Content Notice: this course contains references to and discussion of inequality, privilege, race, slavery, and other aspects of contemporary and historical American politics and government.

WEEK 1.1

Models and Science

1. Read *(it's ok if you don't get to these until Friday's class)*

   - Course Syllabus (and scan this course agenda)
   - Text, Introduction
   - Mansbridge, "What is Political Science For?" Reader.

2. Watch *(it's ok if you don't get to these until Friday's class too)*

   - Scott Page, "Why Model?", "Intelligent Citizens of the World", "Thinking More Clearly" *(in Week 1 readings folder)*

3. Submit: "Course Interest" Survey (direct link) (jacklreilly.com/interest)

4. Think: *What is "science"? How is it different than "history"? What does it mean to student American politics from a scientific modeling perspective?*

WEEK 1.2   Five Useful Models of Politics

1. Read: Text, ch 1

2. Think: *What makes a good model? How do we adjudicate between good models and bad?*

3. Submit: Questions to your discussion group ("House").

- You will receive an email from TA Riley with your group's email addresses. Make sure to email your whole group your questions, with the TA and Professor cc'ed, and title your email "AG X Questions Week 1.2" where "X" is your House name. (So if you are House Hamilton, you should title the email "AG Hamilton Questions Week 1.2".) Next week, title the email "AG X Questions Week 2.1", then "AG X Questions Week 2.2", and so on and so forth.
- Discussion questions should be submitted by 9 AM the day of class to allow your group to see them before class.

WEEK 2.1   Activity: Collective Action Problems

1. Read

- Olson, "The Logic of Collective Action", Reader.
- Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons", Reader.

2. Think: *What is the public good? How do we decide upon it? How do we enforce compliance with contributions to the public good, and what is the ethical way to do so? How do we balance individual rights, collective goods, and government coercion?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 2.2   Activity: Prisoner's Dilemmas

1. Read: Class Debate Guidelines

2. Play: "The Evolution of Trust" (https://ncase.me/trust/)

3. Think: *What are some good techniques to build trust between actors who have incentives to defect from one another?*

4. Submit: Questions to your House

5. **Confirm** that you have access to the course Google drive and canvas page. All peculiarities should be worked out by now. **If you do not have access to these course resources, email Professor Reilly.**

WEEK 3.1   A Model of Governance: Madison's Republic

1. Read

- Madison, Federalist #10 and #51. (text, appendix).
- Dahl, "Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition" Reader.
- Text, chapter 2.
- Background: Constitution

2. *(Optional)* Listen: Duncan, "The Thirteen Colonies" Revolutions Podcast

3. Think: *What assumptions go into Madison's model of the Republic? Why did he, and the other founders, write and create the constitution and government in the way that they did? Are these assumptions likely to make his model "wrong" in problematic ways?*

4. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 3.2   Critique of the Republic Model

    1. Read

- "Brutus", "Anti-Federalist #1". Reader.
- Versteeg and Zackin, "Constitutions Un-entrenched: Toward an Alternative Theory of Constitutional Design" Reader.
- Dahl, "How Democratic is the American Constitution?" Reader.

    2. *(Optional)* Listen: Duncan, "The Rising Sun", Revolutions Podcast. [drive]

    3. Think: *How destabilizing are these critiques of the Republic? Are they enough to make us doubtful about the value of the overall Constitutional project, or are they minor glitches in an overall stable system?*

    4. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 4.1   Activity: Federalism & Sorting Models

    1. Read:

- Riker, "Federalism: Origin, Operation, Significance," Reader.
- Madison, Federalist #39. [drive]

    2. Think: *Is government the only way to ensure the provision of public goods? Are there ways we can incentivize contribution without resorting to coercion?*

    3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 4.2   Participation & Resource Bias

    1. Read

- Leighley and Nagler, "Who Votes Now? Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States" Reader.
- Hersh, "Hacking the Electorate: How Campaigns Perceive Voters" Reader.
- Text, chapter 3
- *Optional:*
  - Downs, "The Basic Logic of Voting". [drive]
  - Riker and Ordeshook, "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting". [drive]

    2. Think: *Why don't some people participate in politics as much as some others? How much of a problem is this for Madison's Republic? What kinds of interventions, actions, and laws could we design to mitigate this problem?*

    3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 5.1   Debate I: Foundations

    1. Debate! (Come Prepared!)

    2. Submit: Debate materials to Canvas

WEEK 5.2   Public Opinion & Media

    1. Read

- Lupia and McCubbins, "The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What they Need to Know?" Reader.
- Zaller, "The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion." Reader.
- Watts and Rothschild, "Don't blame the election on fake news. Blame it on the media." [drive]
- Prior, "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout" [drive]
- Text, chapter 4, pgs 56-69
- *Optional:*
  - Downs, "How Rational Citizens Reduce Information Costs". [drive]
  - Cramer, "The Politics of Resentment" Reader.
  - Lazar, et al, "The Science of Fake News" [drive]
  - Allcott and Genktzkow, "Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election" Reader.
  - Gentzkow et al, "Media Bias in the Marketplace" [drive]
  - Baum, "Soft News Goes to War" Reader.
  - Prior, "Media and Political Polarization" [drive]

    2. Think: *How are the problems of public opinion like and not alike the problems of participation and voting? Do each pose similar kinds of challenges to Madison's Republic?*

    3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 6.1   Activity: The Spatial Model and Party Behavior

    1. Read: Smith, "Political Parties", from *The American Anomaly: US Politics and Governance in Comparative Perspective*. [drive]

    2. Optional:

- Riker, "The Two Party System and Duverger's Law" [drive]

    3. Think: *Are you happy with the two political parties? Would you like there to be others? What are some ways of enabling third parties to be more competitive?*

    4. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 6.2   Four Models of Vote Choice

    1. Read

- Campbell et al. "The American Voter." Reader.
- Mason, "Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became our Identity" Reader.
- Achen and Bartels, "Democracy for Realists." Reader.
- Text, chapter 4, pgs 69-87.
- *Optional:*
  - Campbell, "Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America" Reader.

- Stimson, "Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics" Reader.
- Stone and Buttice. "Voters in Context: The Politics of Citizen Behavior." [drive]
- Bartels, "The Study of Electoral Behavior". [drive]
- Huckfeldt, "Information, Persuasion, and Political Communication Networks". [drive]

2. Think: *How effectively does each model of voting suggest individual citizens can overcome the challenges posed by opportunity, participation, and information costs? How much does each model of voting suggest the political system overall can overcome the systemic issues posed by these costs?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 7.1   Debate II: Behavior

1. Debate! (Come Prepared!)

2. Reference: *Note optional readings from week 5.2, 6.1*

3. Submit: Debate materials to Canvas

WEEK 7.2   MIDTERM

FALL BREAK

WEEK 8.1   Activity: Principle-Agent Problems

1. Read:

- Kiewiet and McCubbins, "Delegation and Agency Problems." [drive]
- Pitkin, "The Concept of Representation", Reader.
- *Optional*:
    - Miller, "The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models." [drive]

2. Think: *How do we trust anyone who is not us to work on our behalf?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 8.2   Parties & Party Theory

1. Read

- Aldrich, "Why Parties?" Reader.
- Harmel, Giebert, and Janda, "The Argument for More Responsible Parties", ch. 1 from *American Parties in Context*. [drive]
- Text, chapter 6
- *Optional:*
    - Wickham-Jones, "This 1950 political science report keeps popping up in the news. Here's the story behind it." *Monkey Cage Blog* [drive]
    - APSA, "The Responsible Parties Report" [drive]

- Cohen et al, "The Party Decides" Reader.
- Kollman, "Who Drives the Party Bus?" Reader.
- McCarty and Schickler[1], "On the Theory of Parties". [drive]

2. Think: *Do parties provide a panacea to the problems posed by governance? Would a political system more focused around parties provide superior democratic outcomes than the one we have?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 9.1   Interest Groups & Pluralism

1. Read

- Re-read Federalist #10.
- Dahl, *Who Governs?* excerpt. [drive]
- Text, chapter 5, pgs 88-95
- *Optional:*
  - Kollman, "Outside Lobbying" Reader
  - *note large optional list next class*

2. Think: *Do interest groups, and the pluralist model, provide a suitable response to the challenges posed by party theory and the costs of participation? Are they a solution that Madison would approve of?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 9.2   Political Equality & Diversity

1. Read

- Re-read Olson, "The Logic of Collective Action", Reader.
- Page and Gilens, "Democracy in America? What has Gone Wrong and What We Can Do About It". Reader.
- Bartels, "Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age", Reader.
- Text, chapter 5, pgs 95-102
- *Optional:* (Note increased options to serve as resources for Debate #3)
  - Schattschneider, "The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System". [drive]
    * *see also* Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People: a Realist's View of Democracy in America*
  - Mair, "E. E. Schattschneider's The Semisovereign People" [drive]
  - Studlar, "E. E. Schattschneider, The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America" [drive]
  - Schlozman, "What Accent the Heavenly Chorus? Political Equality and the American Pressure System". [drive]
    * *see also* Schlozman, Verba & Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*
  - Grossman, "The Influence of Interest Groups in American Politics: Myth vs. Reality". [drive]

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[1]New College Alum Alert!

– Crosson, et al. "Polarized Pluralism: Organizational Preferences and Biases in the American Pressure System"
– Washington, Hamilton and Madison, "Washington's Farewell Address", pgs. 11-18. [drive]
– Hardy, "Paradoxes of Political Parties in American Constitutional Development". [drive]
– Domhoff, "Who Really Ruled in Dahl's New Haven?". [drive]
– Gilens and Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics". [drive]
– Enns, "Relative Policy Support and Coincidental Legislation". [drive]
– Gilens, "The Insufficiency of Democracy by Coincidence". [drive]
– Enns, "Reconsidering the Middle". [drive]
– Aldrich, "Founding the First Parties". [drive]
– Frank and Kramnick, "What 'Hamilton' Forgets About Hamilton"

2. Think: *What are we to make of inequality in American politics, economics, and society? How does our system of representation materially influence this inequality, and how might alternate systems of representation reduce inequality more or less effectively?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 10.1   Debate III: Representation

1. Debate! (Come Prepared!)

2. Reference: *Note optional readings from week 9.2*

3. Submit: Debate materials to Canvas

WEEK 10.2   Three Models of Congressional Behavior

1. Read

- Re-read Federalist 51.
- Mayhew, "Congress: The Electoral Connection." Reader.
- Fenno, "Home Style." Reader.
- Background: Text, ch 8, pgs 149-160
- *Optional:*
  – Lee, "Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign", Reader.

2. Think: *How should political representatives interact with their constituents? Are representatives more responsible for making sure their constituents' preferences are reflected in the governing process, or are representatives more responsible for ensuring that good public policy for all gets passed, enacted, and implemented?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 11.1   Activity: The Policy Process

1. Read:

- Text, ch 7
- *Optional*:
  – Krehbiel, "Pivotal Politics" [drive]

2. Think:

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 11.2   Collective Representation in Congress

1. Read

- Re-read Kiewiet and McCubbins, "Delegation and Agency Problems." [drive]
- Cox and McCubbins, "Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the US House." Reader.
- Background: Text, chapter 8, pgs 160-166
- *Optional:*
  - Bernhard and Sulkin, "Legislative Style", Reader.
  - Hamilton, "Ten Things I Wish Political Scientists Would Teach about Congress" [drive]

2. Think: *How well does Congress mobilize to solve collective action problems and overcome their Madison-imposed constraints?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 12.1   Two Models of the Presidency

1. Read:

- Neustadt, "Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents." Reader.
- Howell, "Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action" Reader.
- Text, ch 9
- *Optional*
  - Cameron, "Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power." Reader.
  - Carey, "Did Trump prove that governments with presidents just don't work?" [drive]
  - Kernell, "Going Public in Theory and Practice", and "The Growth of Going Public". [drive]
  - Canes-Wrone, "Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public." Reader.

2. Think: *Does the institution of the Presidency solve the problem of collective responsiveness to the public? How and how not?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 12.2   Non-Representative Institutions & Conclusion

1. Read:

- Posner, "What Am I? A Potted Plant?" [drive]
- Karol, "American Political Parties - Exceptional No More" [drive]
- Finkel, et al, "Political sectarianism in America" [drive]
- Text, ch 10 & 11
- *Optional: Courts & Bureaucracy*
  - Clayton, "The Supreme Court and Political Regimes: 'Great Tides' in Politics and Law". [drive]
  - George and Epstein, "On the Nature of Supreme Court Decision Making". Reader.

– McNollgast, "Politics and the Courts: A Positive Theory of Judicial Doctrine and the Rule of Law" [drive]
– McCubbins and Schwartz, "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols vs. Fire Alarms." Reader.
– Wilson, "Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It." Reader.

- *Optional: Democracy Stability*

– Pepinsky, "Were Political Scientists Too Pessimistic About American Democracy?" and "Weak Parties Endangered American Democracy - And Then They May Have Saved It" [drive]
– Mettler, "The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy". Reader.
– Lieberman & Mettler et al, "The Trump Presidency and American Democracy: A Historical and Comparative Analysis". [drive]
– Levitsky and Ziblatt, "The Crisis of American Democracy". [drive]
– Stepan and Linz, "Comparative Perspectives on Inequality and the Quality of Democracy in the United States", [drive]
– Norris, "Why Republicans haven't abandoned Trumpism". [drive]
– Przeworski, "A Minimalist Conception of Democracy: A Defense". [drive]

2. Think: *How effective is the United States government at solving collective action problems to ensure the provision of public goods? How effective is it like to be in the future?*

3. Submit: Questions to your House

WEEK 13.1   Debate IV: Democracy and Stability

1. Debate! Come prepared!

2. References:

- Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Government?*
- Mettler & Lieberman, *Four Threats: The Recurring Crises of American Democracy*
- Levitsky & Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die*
- *Look, in particular, at the "democratic stability" reading recommendations from 12.2.*

3. Submit: Debate Materials to Canvas

WEEK 14.1   Final Exam

FINALS WEEK   End of Class

1. Submit: Bonus Essay, *by Friday at midnight* (Optional)