

# PLS 301: Political Representation

## Bradley University

Spring 2014

Professor Josh M. Ryan

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**Office Hours:** Monday and Wednesday, 2-3:30 pm. and by appointment. You are also welcome to stop by my office at other times and I'll make every attempt to meet with you.

**Class Time:** Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 11-11:50 am.

### Course Description

This course is an overview of the process of representation in the United States. We will discuss basic concepts of representation, along with applications to the American system, and how well representation works in our modern democracy. The course is not meant to be a definitive study of any one particular concept of representation, but is instead a broad overview of important ideas, both philosophical and practical, used to describe and evaluate the connections between the public and the government in republican government.

The course is a mix of theoretical and social science approaches. Theoretical approaches are concerned with identifying normative ideas about what representation is, and what representation should be. These approaches are closer to the political theory subfield or philosophy than modern, empirical social science. When thinking about theoretical approaches to representation, it is important to engage in normative debates about the subject, use close reading and logic to identify the strengths and weaknesses of various theorists' arguments, and use one's personal beliefs and experiences to inform one's understanding of the topic. The social science perspective allows us to examine theoretical ideas using the tools of positivism, meaning unbiased or non-normative. These tools include logic as well, but also mean studying the world as it is, without making judgments or using one's own beliefs to inform the subject matter. Both of these approaches, the scientific and theoretical, will be used in this class.

The course is focused around a few many themes. The major theme is identifying what representation is in the abstract, and what types of representation governments should strive to achieve, In other words, what types of representation work best? A second major theme centers on problems with representation, generally. These include unequal voices in government, and whether (or how) the mass public should affect public policy. The last theme centers on important debates in contemporary American politics. Some of these debates are structural and are at least partially the result of our institutional structure. Other debates are a function of other, more transient factors, such as the media, the role of money, etc.

There is a substantial amount of reading this class, and I fully expect each student to complete all the required reading. Reading is important because it promotes understanding of the material and generates discussion in class. The course is both lecture and discussion based. Some days will be mostly lecture, some days will be a mix, and some days will be mostly discussion. In general, Friday's class will be reserved for discussing the readings and presentation of the response papers. This is one of the reasons it is absolutely critical you keep up with the reading.

This class, like many in political science, often deals with subjects that are controversial. Engaging with these issues is an important part of being an informed citizen and as such, we will not shy away from discussing controversial current events. This also means you should never feel embarrassed or afraid to

share your opinion, even if it means disagreeing with other students in the class. However, each of us should remember that we have different experiences and different viewpoints. We must always be respectful of other students and other opinions. I take this policy very seriously and have **zero tolerance** for inappropriate, crude, disrespectful, or demeaning comments. I reserve the right to use an appropriate punishment for any student who engages in disrespectful behavior. This may include removal from the class, receiving a zero on participation for the semester, or being reported to university officials. Please speak with me promptly if you feel there is a civility problem in the classroom. See the Bradley Standards of Conduct at <http://www.bradley.edu/campuslife/studenthandbook/policies/conduct/>

If you need to contact me or set up a time to meet outside of my regularly scheduled office hours, don't hesitate to speak to me after class or send me an email. I check my email at least once daily and usually multiple times per day. If you have questions or do not understand the material please come to my office hours prior to the day before the midterm, final, etc. For any other issues or questions you may have, please speak to me throughout the semester.

## Reading

The course has three required books; each is available at the bookstore:

Bowler, Shaun, and Gary Segura. 2011. *The Future Is Ours: Minority Politics, Political Behavior, and the Multiracial Era of American Politics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Press.

Fiorina, Morris P., and Samuel J. Abrams. 2012. *Disconnect: the breakdown of representation in American politics*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Shapiro, Ian, ed. 2009. *Political representation*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

All other additional readings are posted on Sakai under "Resources."

## Course Requirements and Other Information

Readings are assigned for the week and should be completed by the start of the first class for the week (Monday). This ensures that you more fully understand the lecture topics, and that you are able to engage with other students and myself. There are many things I will not cover that will be in the reading, or topics that I will assume you know already from which I will build on.

There will be one midterm and one final (see below). The tests will cover both the readings and lectures. Anything mentioned in class is fair game for the tests. If you need to miss one of the tests for any reason, you must notify me immediately. I will decide whether or not a make up exam is appropriate on a case by case basis. I reserve the right to refuse to give you a make up exam. All tests are essay format (more details below).

I have a no cell phone or laptop policy. If I see or hear a cell phone the entire class will have a pop-quiz on the spot which will count toward the participation portion of your grade. For the sake of your classmates, please ensure your cell phone is on silent and please do not text in class. I do not allow laptops because experience has shown me they create distractions for other students. Please go to the bookstore and buy a notebook to take notes in.

I will periodically send out emails to the class list. You are automatically subscribed to the list if you are enrolled in the class through your campus email account. The list will allow me to inform you of changes in assignments, the schedule or to attach additional reading. I cannot send emails out to a non

Bradley email account. The Bradley email account is an official means of communication between myself and the students. If you have any questions, please see <http://www.bradley.edu/irt/policies/5.02.html> and/or talk to me.

## **Grading**

There are six grades for this class: participation, response papers, one midterm, one final, and an original research paper.

### **Participation 10%**

I do not take attendance *per se* so if you miss a class it is not necessary to tell me. However, there are some costs to missing class. First, you will miss items that are discussed in class that will be on the test. Second, you will be graded on your participation in class. This means that you should be an active learner, asking questions in class of me, and engaging in discussion with your fellow students. If you miss class you cannot participate in discussions and you will miss important information that will be on the test.

I know that some students will be uncomfortable about participating in class. I have a few thoughts about this. First, I understand that even very good students may have trouble speaking in front of groups. However, I also recognize that first, without discussion the class will be extremely boring and will consist of me giving boring lectures for an hour a day, three days a week. This is bad for both me and you. Second, learning to speak in front of other people, especially about controversial issues like politics in general, and voting, participation, religion, and race specifically (all things we will discuss in this class) is one of the most important skills you can learn in life, and being able to formulate coherent thoughts verbally and respond to others' arguments is part of the point of a liberal arts education. I will do my best to create an environment where everyone feels comfortable speaking to the class and to me. If you absolutely feel like you cannot speak in class, you should come to my office and have discussions in person with me.

### **Response Papers 25%**

Fridays will generally be reserved for class discussion of the week's topic. These discussions will be student generated, and there will be very little lecturing on these days. To promote discussion, a response paper will be due Friday every week, unless otherwise noted. The response papers should address at least two of the readings, and should integrate the information in the readings with topics discussed in lecture. Students should analyze the readings and lecture material in the response paper and discuss the student's views of the topics, criticisms of the readings, etc. Students are generally free to take any appropriate approach on the response papers, as long as the paper is relevant to that week's topic.

Response papers will be graded on a 1-5 scale. Grades of 5 are reserved for excellent papers which fully engage the material and offer original insight. While grammar and syntax are not explicitly graded, good papers will be able to clearly communicate the student's ideas. Papers with poor grammar and syntax will therefore receive lower grades. Response papers should be between 600-800 words (about one page single-spaced). There will be no makeups allowed on response papers.

### **Midterm, 20% and Final, 20%**

The format of the midterm and final will be short answer/essay. There will be constrained choice on the short answer and the essay (meaning you will have to answer 2 of 3 for example). There will be no multiple choice. The short answer/identification will be worth 50% of the test grade, with the essay worth the other 50%. The final will be cumulative. The midterm will be on March 14th in class, and the final will be on on Saturday, May 10 at 9 a.m.

## Paper 25%

A research paper of approximately 10-15 pages will be due on Friday, May 2nd in class. We will discuss the paper topics in class in a few weeks. A 1-2 page prospectus will be due on March 28th. I will provide comments within the week, after which you may schedule meetings with me as you see fit to discuss your paper further. This portion of the assignment is marked as either complete or incomplete. If you choose not to turn in a prospectus, you will be marked down one-third of a letter grade on your final paper (i.e. from a B+ to a B, or B to B-.)

## Misc. Grading Information

I will be happy to regrade anything with the understanding that the grade could be higher or lower than the original grade. In order to have me regrade something, you need to give me a written explanation of your specific concerns within one week. As mentioned, the tests are short answer/identification format. There will be no extra credit assigned or accepted.

Plagiarism and/or cheating will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating will a grade of zero on the assignment and be reported to the Director of Residential Life and Student Judicial System.. Please see the Student Handbook and Undergraduate Catalog for Bradley's policies on plagiarism.

You must complete all assignments to pass the class.

## Schedule

### Part 1 - Introduction and Background

Please note this schedule is tentative. I reserve the right to change it or add or subtract readings or assignments.

*Jan. 22: Syllabus*

*Reading: The syllabus*

*Jan. 24: What is representation*

*Reading: None*

*Jan. 27-31: Concepts of representation*

*Reading: Burke, "Speech to the Electors at Bristol," and "Speech on conciliation with America," The Federalist Papers 10, 51, 55, 57*

*Feb. 3-7: Criticisms of American Representation*

*Reading: The Federalist Papers 51, 62, 84 and Anti-Federalist Papers 2, 3, 5*

*Feb. 10-14: Modern representation in American Politics*

*Reading: Mansbridge, "Rethinking Representation," and Rehfeld, "Representation Rethought: On Trustees, Delegates, and Gyroscopes in the Study of Political Representation and Democracy."*

*Feb. 17-21: The Role of Elections*

*Reading: Political Representation, Chapters 10 and 11*

*Feb. 24-28: Elections as a Constraint*

*Reading: Canes-Wrone et. al., "Out of Step, Out of Office," pgs. 127-130, Carey et. al., "The Effects of Term Limits on State Legislatures," pgs. 105-108, Miller and Stokes, "Constituency Influence in*

*Congress.”*

*March 3-10: Political Knowledge and Electoral Constraint*

*Reading: Converse, “The Nature of Belief Systems in mass publics,” pgs. 3-29, Bartels, “Homer Gets a Tax Cut,” and Nealy, Malhotra and Mo, “Irrelevant events affect voters’ evaluations of government performance.”*

*March 12: Review for midterm*

*Reading: None*

### ***Midterm on March 14***

*March 17-21: No class, spring break*

*March 24-28: Knowledge and Accountability, Responses*

*Reading: Political Representation, Chapters 12 and 13, and Lupia et. al, “Were Bush voters simply ignorant?”*

### ***Research Prospectus Due on March 28***

*March 31-April 4: Descriptive and Substantive Representation*

*Reading: The Future is Ours, Chapters 2, 3, 4 and Political Representation, Chapter 9*

*April 7-11: Is Descriptive Representation Better?*

*Reading: Political Representation, Chapter 8, Mansbridge, “Should blacks represent blacks?” pgs. 628-637, Cameron et. al. “Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?” pgs. 794-799*

*April 14-18: Problems in Modern American Representation: Elections, Activists and the Media*

*Reading: Culture War, chapters 9 and 10, Disconnect, chapters 1-2*

*April 21-25: Solutions to Polarizing Forces*

*Reading: Disconnect, chapters 3, 7-8*

*April 28-May 2: Problems in Modern American Representation: Economic Inequality*

*Reading: Marty Gilens “Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness” pgs. 778-781, Hacker and Pierson, “Abandoning the Middle,” pgs. 33-44, Page, Bartels, and Seawright, “Democracy the Policy Preferences of Wealthy Americans,” pgs. 51-64*

### ***Research Paper due on May 2***

*May 5: Conclusion and review for final*

**Final on Saturday, May 10 at 9 a.m.**