

Dynamics of American Politics
Political Science BC 1001y
Barnard College
Spring 2009

Instructor: [Professor Kimberley Johnson](#)
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Office Hours: Tuesday: 4:00-6:00pm and by appointment

Course Description

This course develops a context for understanding contemporary American politics both as participant-observers as well as students. Why do many Americans feel that the American political system is broken? Why does there seem to be a persistent, if not growing gap between the public's ideals and the performance of American political and civic institutions? The second goal of the course is to help students understand the craft of political science. What is political science? Why do political scientists ask the questions that they do? And, how do they go about answering these questions? Attempts to address these and other questions are the foundations for course readings, lecture and discussion. We will look at issues such as democracy, institutional performance, participation, and political change.

Course Requirements

Participation: Class participation is encouraged and required. The questions that we will be addressing are challenging ones that have engaged Americans and others for generations. There are no dumb questions in this class, but thoughtful answers from all of us.

Reading Assignments: Students are expected to read assignments prior to class. Class discussion will begin but not end with these readings.

In-class Debate: There will be one in-class debate during the semester (currently scheduled for March 3). Attendance is required in order to complete the written assignment.

Quizzes: Unannounced quizzes may be given if in the instructor's opinion, class participation and/or preparation is not satisfactory.

Exams: There will be a Midterm Exam that will cover the first half of the semester. The Final Exam will cover the second half of the semester. Both exams will cover lectures and readings. A study sheet will be distributed in class before each exam.

Assignment due dates: All assignments are due *in-person* at the beginning of class. Late assignments will be penalized one grade for each day they are late (including weekends). Exceptions to this policy must be cleared by the instructor **at least 3** days prior to the due date.

Academic Honesty: The Barnard College Honor Code, approved by the student body in 1912, states:

We, the students of Barnard College, resolve to uphold the honor of the College by refraining from every form of dishonesty in our academic life. We consider it dishonest to ask for, give, or receive help in examinations or quizzes, to use any papers or books

not authorized by the instructor in examinations, or to present oral work or written work which is not entirely our own, unless otherwise approved by the instructor. We consider it dishonest to remove without authorization, alter, or deface library and other academic materials. We pledge to do all that is in our power to create a spirit of honesty and honor for its own sake.

Grade distribution	Percent of Total Grade
Class Participation	10
Empirical assignment	20
In-class debate/ Writing Assignment	20
Midterm	25
Final Exam	25

Statement on Disability

Students with disabilities who will be taking this course and may need disability-related accommodations are encouraged to make an appointment to see me as soon as possible. Disabled students who need test or classroom accommodations must be registered in advance with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in 105 Hewitt.

Course Readings

Assigned books are available at Book Culture bookstore, 536 West 112th Street. Articles readings are available via CourseWorks, JSTOR or CLIO; e-books are available via CLIO; assigned books are on reserve at Barnard College Library.

Books (in order of use)

Stephen E. Frantzich and Howard R. Ernst, *The Political Science Toolbox* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009)
 Robert Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (Yale University Press, 2002)
 John Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (University of Chicago Press, 1999)
 Jennifer Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

Course Schedule

Week 1: Current Approaches to the Study of American Politics

Frantzich & Ernst: Introduction

Robert A. Dahl, "The Behavioral Approach in Political Science: Epitaph for a Monument to a Successful Protest," *American Political Science Review* [hereafter *APSR*] 55:4 (1961), pp 763-772. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952525>

Barry R. Weingast, "Rational-Choice Institutionalism," in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002) PDF

Karen Orren and Steve Skowronek, "The Study of American Political Development," in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002) PDF

Donald P. Green and Alan s. Gerber, “Reclaiming the Experimental Tradition in political Science” in Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds., *Political Science: The State of the Discipline* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002) PDF

Week 2: Constitution

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 1

Dahl, *How Democratic is the Constitution*, (Yale University Press, 2002). Chapters 1-4

John P. Roche, “The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action,” *APSR* 55:4 (December, 1961), pp. 799-816 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952528>

David Brian Robertson, “Madison's Opponents and Constitutional Design,” *APSR* 99: 2 (May 2005), pp 225-243 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30038934>

Constitution in Practice

Barry Weingast, “Political Stability and Civil War: Institutions, Commitment, and American Democracy,” in *Analytic Narratives* (Princeton University Press, 1998) PDF

Brian J. Gaines, “Popular Myths about Popular Vote-Electoral College Splits,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* [hereafter *PS*] 34:1 (March 2001), pp. 70-75.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1350312>

Dahl, *How Democratic is the Constitution*, compare above with chapters 6 & 7.

Week 3: Supreme Court

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 4

Justin Crowe, The Forging of Judicial Autonomy: Political Entrepreneurship and the Reforms of William Howard Taft, *Journal of Politics* [hereafter *JOP*], 69:1 (February 2007), pp 73-87 PDF

Robert Dahl, “Decision-making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as a National Policymaker,” *Emory Law Journal* 50:2 (2001), pp 563–82 PDF

Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth, “The Influence of Stare Decisis on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices,” *American Journal of Political Science* [hereafter *AJPS*] 40 (1996):971-1003 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111738>

William Mishler and Reginald Sheehan, “The Supreme Court as a Countermajoritarian Institution? The Impact of Public Opinion on Supreme Court Decisions,” *APSR* 87 (1993): 87-101. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2938958>

Empirical Assignment Due: February 12th

Weeks 4 & 5: Congress

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 2

Congress: Norms & Structure

Nelson Polsby, "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives," *APSR* 62: (1968) pp. 144–68. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1953331>

Donald R. Matthews, "The Folkways of the United States Senate: Conformity to Group Norms and Legislative Effectiveness," *APSR* 53: (1959) pp. 1064–89
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1952075>

Samuel C. Patterson, "The Professional Staffs of Congressional Committees," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 15: (1970)22–37 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2391183>

Roger H. Davidson, "The New Centralization on Capitol Hill," *Review of Politics* 50: (1988)345–64. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1407904>

Congress: Representation

Richard F. Fenno, Jr., "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration," *APSR* 71:3 (1977) pp 883-917. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1960097>

Carol Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests* (Harvard University Press, 1993) Chapters 1, 2, 9, 10
PDF

John E. Jackson and John W. Kingdon, "Ideology, Interest Group Scores, and Legislative Votes," *AJPS* 36:3 (Aug., 1992), pp. 805-823 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111592>

Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger and Daniel Kryder, "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress: 1933-1950," *Political Science Quarterly* 108 (1993) pp 283-306
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2152013>

Week 6: Presidency

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 3

Presidential Power

Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (Simon and Schuster, 1990), Chapters 1 and 3
PDF

Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2004. PDF

William Leuchtenberg, "Waiting for Franklin D.," in *In the Shadow of FDR: From Harry Truman to Ronald Reagan* (Cornell University Press, 1983) PDF

Studying the Presidency

George C. Edwards, "Studying the Presidency," *The Presidency and the Political System* () pp 29-46
PDF

Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), Chapters 1-3 PDF

Writing Assignment on Presidents Due: March 12

Week 7: Bureaucracy

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 3

Michael Nelson, "A Short, Ironic History of American National Bureaucracy," *JOP* 44 (1982): 747-778. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2130516>

Samuel Kernell and Michael P. McDonald, "Congress and America's Political Development: the Transformation of the Post Office from Patronage to Service," *AJPS* 43: (1999) pp 792-811. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2991835>

Hugh Heclo, "Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment," in *The New American Political System*, ed. Anthony King, (Washington, DC: American Enterprise Institute), pp. 87-124 PDF

MIDTERM

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2009

Week 8: Parties

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 7

Structure and Behavior

John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), Chapters 1, 2, 6-9

APSA Committee on Political Parties, "A Report of the Committee on Political Parties. *APSR* (1950). Skim, but read especially "Summary of Conclusions and Proposals" http://www.apsanet.org/~pop/APSA_Report.htm#REPORT

Week 9: Realignment Theory and Voting Behavior

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 7 & 8

V.O. Key, Jr., "A Theory of Critical Elections," *JOP* 17 (1955), 3-18 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2126401>

V.O. Key, "Secular Realignment and the Party System," *JOP* 21 (May, 1959): 198-210. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2127162>

Peter F. Nardulli, "Concept of a Critical Realignment Electoral Behavior, and Political Change," *APSR* 89 (Mar., 1995): 10-22 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2083071>

Larry M. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior 1952-1996" *AJPS* 44: (2000) pp 35-50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2669291>

Week 10: Political Participation

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 8

Running for officeJames Bryce, "Why Great Men are Not Chosen President," *The American Commonwealth* PDFDavid T. Canon, "Sacrificial Lambs or Strategic Politicians? Political Amateurs in U.S. House Elections," *AJPS* 37: 4 (Nov., 1993), pp. 1119-1141<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111546>Jennifer Lawless and Richard L. Fox, *It Takes a Candidate: Why Women Don't Run for Office* (Cambridge University Press, 2005). TBACitizen ParticipationRobert Putnam, "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America," *PS* 28 (1995) pp 664-683<http://www.jstor.org/stable/420517>Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman, "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation," *APSR* 89 (1995): 271-294<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082425>**Week 11: Public Opinion and the Media**Public OpinionSusan Herbst, *Numbered Voices: How Opinion Polling Has Shaped American Politics* (Chicago, 1993) TBAPhilip E. Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter (New York: Free Press, 1964), 206-261. PDFJohn Zaller and Stanley Feldman, "A Simple Theory of the Survey Response: Answering Questions versus Revealing Preferences." *AJPS* 36 (1992):579-616.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2111583>The Media

Frantzich & Ernst: Chapter 6

Michael Schudson, "The News Media as Political Institutions," *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 5: 249-269. Available via CLIOStephen Ansolabehere, Shanto Iyengar, Adam Simon, and Nicholas Valentino, "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *APSR* 88 (1994):829-838.<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2082710>Markus Prior, "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout," *AJPS* 49 (2005):577-592<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3647733>

Week 12: Explaining Political Change

Samuel P. Huntington, "American Ideals versus American Institutions," *Political Science Quarterly*, 97:1 (Spring 1982), pp. 1-37 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2149312>

David R. Mayhew, "Wars and American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics*, 3 (Sep., 2005): 473-493. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3689019>

Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," in *The Frontier in American History* (1921). <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~Hyper/TURNER/>

James A. Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (Yale University Press, 2003) Introduction and Chapter 15: Modern Morals PDF

Richard Hofstadter, "The Paranoid Style in American Politics" (1964) PDF

FINAL EXAM – TBA

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