

## PS 102/Public Policy 101

### American Politics and Public Policy (Winter 2019)

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#### **Class Description**

The rise of Populist Parties in France, Germany, Denmark, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Greece, the Netherlands and the U.K. vote on Brexit are testimony that change is afoot in industrialized countries. Many scholars have argued that democracy is in decline throughout the world. The 2016 U.S. elections brought the U.S. to the forefront of the Populist conversation primarily because the result was unexpected and defied conventional wisdom. In President Trump's first 100 days, the newly elected president's ambitious policy agenda and style of governance were a shock to the media and the Washington establishment –Muslim ban, attempt to eliminate Affordable Care Act etc. While the first years of the Trump regime did not yield the quick policy results that he predicted, it did yield executive actions that featured deregulation of business, environmental policy set in the Obama administration and new aggressively pro protection trade policies and legislative action that cut taxes, increased deficits and shifted the Supreme Court rightward. Moreover Trump proposed and set into motion major foreign policy shifts affecting some of America's oldest allies.

In this course we seek to analyze, assess, debate and discuss the U.S. political system in its current form. We begin with a broad overtime view of how in the United States elections, institutions and public policy results hang together in rough equilibrium. We then turn to the question of is it true as some have argued that American political

institutions (the Presidency, Congress, and the Court) and political processes (the formation of political attitudes and voting) have for some time been inadequate to the task of making modern public policy. We cover both yes and no aspects of the claim. After this introduction we turn to in depth analyses of Institution: Elections, Congress, the President and the Courts. The final section of the course covers examples from specific policy areas: Health Care, Inequality, Immigration, Economic Security and Environmental issues. The course concludes with student presentations of their projects.

In some of these issue areas we use comparative data from other countries to see how the U.S. is doing relative to other countries. In addition to classroom lecture and discussion, student groups are formed to analyze policy issues of relevance and their reports are formally presented to the class.

### **Course Requirements**

Please sign up for one of the available sections on Canvas.

The final grade will be based on:

Mid-term Exam	30%
Final Exam	30%
Group Presentation	20%
Discussion Section Grade	20%

### **Exams**

Midterm take-home, Feb. 7-14

[Details to Follow]

Final take-home, March 14-21

[Details to Follow]

### **Group Presentations**

Students will also form groups of from 4 to 6 persons who will either choose one of the policy areas listed by the instructors or a policy area of their choice and give a fifteen minute presentation to the entire class at the end of the term.

### **Required Course Materials**

All readings will be made available for download or viewing from Canvass. For students who need basic background information on American Government, we recommend *The New American Democracy*, Morris Fiorina et al, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, Pearson.

### **Notice for Students with Documented Disabilities**

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an *Accommodation Letter* for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066) URL: <https://oae.stanford.edu/>

## **Part I: Overview of Current State of US Politics and Policy-Making**

January 8: Is Democracy In Decline Around the World or How Democracy Dies? (Brady)

Reading:

“The Democratic Disconnect,” Roberto Foa and Yascha Mounk, *Journal of Democracy*, July 2016.

“Political Trust in North America,” Russell Dalton, *Handbook on Political Trust*, July 2016.

January 10: Is American Government Broken and Impossible to Fix? (Cain)

Reading:

“The Case for Normalizing Impeachment,” Ezra Klein. *Vox.com*, Dec 6 2017

“Our Peculiar Reform Challenge,” Bruce Cain and Francis Fukuyama, *The American Interest*, October 2015

January 15 How has the American System Tied Elections, Institutions and Public Policy Together Over Time. (Brady)

Reading:

“What the New Deal Did” David Kennedy, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 124, No. 2 (Summer 2009), pp. 251-268.

Electoral Mandates in American Politics - Lawrence J. Grossback, David A. M. Peterson and James A. Stimson. *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Oct., 2007), pp. 711-730

America has local political institutions but nationalized politics. This is a problem.

By [Lee Drutman](#) May 31, 2018, 2:10pm EDT

<https://www.vox.com/polyarchy/2018/5/31/17406590/local-national-political-institutions-polarization-federalism?>

January 17: The New Political System and Its Consequences; 1980's- 2018, 2020?  
Emphasis on Importance of 2018 Midterms (Brady)

Reading: Living Through a Partisan Realignment ?, National Affairs, November 2018

David Brady and Bruce Cain

“Midterm Math” David Brady and Brett Parker

## **Part II: Elections, Institutions and Policy-Making**

January 22: Are Elections Being Stolen, And If So, By Whom? (Cain)

Reading:

“Poll: 41% say Election Could be Stolen From Trump,” Jake Sherman and Steven Shephard, Politico, October 2016  
at <http://www.politico.com/story/2016/10/poll-41-percent-of-voters-say-the-election-could-be-stolen-from-trump-229871>

“The Politics of Voter Fraud,” Lorraine Minnite, Project Vote,  
2007 [https://web.archive.org/web/20070703072330/http://projectvote.org/fileadmin/ProjectVote/Publications/Politics\\_of\\_Voter\\_Fraud\\_Final.pdf](https://web.archive.org/web/20070703072330/http://projectvote.org/fileadmin/ProjectVote/Publications/Politics_of_Voter_Fraud_Final.pdf)

January 24: Are Primary Elections the Problem or the Solution? (Cain)

Reading:

“Primary Elections and Candidate Ideology: Out of Step with the Primary Electorate?”  
David Brady, Hahrie Han and Jeremy Pope, Legislative Studies Quarterly, February 2007

“What Happens When Extremists Win Primaries?” Andrew B Hall, American Political Science Review, February 2015

January 29: Does the Traditional Model of Congressional –Presidential Policy Making Apply? With an Emphasis on the 2016 Elections (Brady)

Reading:

David Brady and Craig Volden, Revolving Gridlock, 2nd Edition, Chapters 1- 3

Jeffery Jenkins and Eric M. Patashnik , The Evolving Textbook Congress: Polarization and Policy Making on Capitol Hill in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Congress and Policy Making in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ,Cambridge Press 2016

January 31: Is the US Political System Too Vulnerable to Gridlock and Policy Obstruction? (Cain)

Reading:

“The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock”, Sarah Binder, APSR, September 1999

David Brady and Craig Volden, Revolving Gridlock, 2nd Edition, Chapter 2

February 5: How Powerful Should the President Be? (Cain)

Reading:

“Unilateralism and Presidential Power: A Theory,” Terry Moe and William Howell, Presidential Studies Quarterly, December 1999

“Westminster DC”, Commentary, David Brady, August 2016,

“Trump says he can cancel Obama’s unconstitutional executive actions, but it is not that easy,” Andrew Rudalevige, Monkey Cage,

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/03/trump-says-hell-cancel-obamas-unconstitutional-executive-actions-its-not-that-easy/?utm\\_term=.8a33d7b2b2fb](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/12/03/trump-says-hell-cancel-obamas-unconstitutional-executive-actions-its-not-that-easy/?utm_term=.8a33d7b2b2fb)

February 7: Can Congress Solve Important Policy Problems? Health Care Then and Now (Brady)

Reading:

“Why is Health Care So Hard to Reform?”, David Brady and Daniel Kessler, JHPPL, April 2010

<https://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/brady-health-care-difficult.pdf>

“The End of Obamacare”, Jonathan Oberlander, New England Journal of Medicine

[www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1614438](http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMp1614438)

Why Obamacare Repeal Failed And why it could still come back.

By [Dylan Scott](#) and [Sarah Kliff](#) Jul 31, 2017, 11:40am EDT

Obamacare repeal failed

<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/7/31/16055960/why-obamacare-repeal-failed?>

February 12: Are the Courts Impartial Referees or Just Another Political Branch? (Cain)

Reading:

“Public Opinion of the Supreme Court 1973-2015,” Sofi Sinozich, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, December 2016

“Political Justice? Perceptions of Politicization and Public Preferences Toward the Supreme Court Appointment Process.” Bartels, B. L., & Johnston *Public opinion quarterly*, September 201

#### **Part IV Policy Outcomes and Political Pressures**

February 14: Can the Congress and President do Meaningful Tax Reform? (Brady)

Reading:

Efficiency and Redistribution: An Evaluative Review of Louis Kaplow's *The Theory of Taxation and Public Economics* by Robin Broadway in *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. 48 No. 4 December 2010(pp. 964-79)

[The Structure of the Tax System versus the Level of Taxation: An Evaluation of the 1986 Act](#) by J Gregory Ballentine in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* Winter ,1992  
[www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.6.1.59](http://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.6.1.59)

[Tax Reform as Political Choice](#) by James M. Buchanan in *Journal of Economic Perspectives* . Summer, 1987 [www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.1.1.29](http://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.1.1.29) ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)

February 19: Trade Policy: A Good Deal for Whom? (Brady)

Reading:

[Free Trade in Chains by Paola Subacchi](#) - October 22, 2016

In this article click on the following: **Otaviano Canuto** and **Bjorn Lomborg** for a view that protectionism is coming soon and **Joseph Stiglitz** on who and why free trade has hurt. See **Joseph Nye** and **Dani Rodrik** on “it’s not that bad” and **Jeffrey Frankel** for the role of economic growth and trade problems.

[Can trade policy drive economic development?](#) - The role of trade in South Korea's economic growth miracle

February 21: Do We Have Too Much Economic Inequality? (Brady)

Reading:

The Fading American Dream - May Wong

<http://siepr.stanford.edu/highlights/fading-american-dream>

Why Inequality Doesn't Matter, April 23, 2014

PEW: 5 Facts About Economic Inequality, January 7, 2014

Inequality Matters, The Atlantic, June 5, 2015

"Just Be Grateful", Jamie Martin: Unequal Britain, London Review of Books, April 23, 2015

February 26: "Who Gets What, When and How" From Immigration Reform? (Cain)

Reading:

"Why Did House Members Vote for H.R. 4437?" J S Fetzer, International Migration Review, August 2006

"The Fiscal Cost of Unlawful Immigrants and Amnesty to the U.S. Taxpayers," Heritage Foundation Report, May 6, 2013.

February 28: Can We Adapt to Climate Change? (Cain)

Reading: "The Governance Gap: Climate Change Adaptation and Sea Level Rise in the SF Bay Area"

<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2015/11/feature-choosing-climate-future-paris>



<http://www.sciencemag.org/news/2017/06/trump-dumps-paris-climate-deal-reaction>

March 5: Are We Privatizing Risk and Increasing Personal Insecurity in the US Welfare State (Cain)

Reading:

Jacob Hacker, "Privatizing Risk Without Privatizing the Welfare State," APSR, May 2004

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.361.1509&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

PART V: Final Projects

**March 7 Presentations**

**March 12 Presentations**

**March 14 Presentations and Conclusions**