

POL S 571: National Political Institutions

Fall 2022, Wed., 1:30-4:20, SMI 111

Professor Rebecca U. Thorpe

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Hours: Wed. 11-12:30 & by appointment

Course Description

This is the core national institutions seminar in American politics. We survey some of the primary literature in the field with an emphasis on institutional development, representation and power. The course spans formal institutions—congressional representation and policymaking, executive power and judicial politics—and examines the development and complex interplay of political parties, media and interest groups. Throughout the course, we consider whether and to what extent US institutional arrangements promote democratic goals, and whether periods of consolidated power and democratic retrenchments reveal evidence of authoritarianism or autocracy.

Course Materials

Jamila Michener. 2018. *Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid, Federalism and Unequal Politics*. Cambridge University Press.

*Zac Gershberg & Sean Illing. 2022. *The Paradox of Democracy: Free Speech, Open Media and Perilous Persuasion*. University of Chicago Press.

*Frances Lee. 2016. *Insecure Majorities: Congress and the Perpetual Campaign*. University of Chicago Press.

Stephen Skowronek, John Dearborn & Desmond King. 2021. *Phantoms of a Beleaguered Republic: The Deep State and The Unitary Executive*. Oxford University Press.

*Ebook or photocopies will be made available

Assessment

Discussion/Participation (25%): Participation/ discussion and weekly post about the readings due 10am the day of the seminar.

Oral presentation (15%): Students will also be asked to lead (or co-lead) the discussion for two class meetings. This will involve preparing introductory and integrative comments about the readings for that date and facilitating discussion.

1-page research proposal (10%): Research plan for final paper due in week 5.

Final paper (50%) or two (2) literature reviews (60%): Students will write a 15-page paper on a subject related to course content or complete two 8-10 page literature reviews on a subject listed on the syllabus. The first literature review or preliminary outline is due in week 5. We will discuss your work in-progress during week 10. Final papers or a second literature review is due on December 14.

Your Physical & Mental Health

Your physical and psychological health takes precedence over everything that we are doing in class. Please let me know if you are experiencing difficulties related to illness, financial challenges, family circumstances or any other hardship. I will make every effort attempt to make appropriate accommodations so that can succeed in this class while prioritizing your physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Covid Policies

Masks are recommended inside UW facilities, as per UW policy. Masks are available at no cost at locations on each campus. Please refer to the [university webpage](#) for additional information.

Accommodations

I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with Disabilities Support Services (DRS), uwdrs@uw.edu. If you have established academic accommodations with DRS, please discuss this with me so we can make appropriate arrangements.

Religious Accommodations

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy \(https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodations-policy/). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form \(https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/\)](https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodations-request/).

Course Outline

**Articles, chapters and access to ebooks are available on Canvas.*

Week 1: 9/28 - Introduction: Studying Political Institutions

- Paul Pierson. 2004. *Politics in Time: History, Institutions & Social Analysis*. Ch. 4*
- Robert Dahl. 2003. *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* Yale University Press. Ch 1 & 3*
- Vesla Weaver and Gwen Prowse. 2020. "Racial Authoritarianism in U.S. Democracy," *Science* 369 (4508): 1176-1178.*

Week 2: 10/5 – Congress & Representation

- Frances Lee & Bruce Oppenheimer. 1999. *Sizing Up the Senate*. UCP, Ch 1-2*
- Jane Mansbridge. 2003. "Rethinking Representation," *APSR* 97 (4): 515-528.*
- Joseph Bafumi and Michael C. Herron. 2010. "Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress," *APSR* 104(3): 519-542.*
- Laurel Eckhouse. 2019. "Race, Party and Representation in Criminal Justice Politics," *Journal of Politics* 81(3): 1143-1152.*
- Adam Cayton and Ryan Dawkins. 2022. "Incongruent Voting or Symbolic Representation? Asymmetrical Representation in Congress, 2008-2014," *Perspectives on Politics* 20(3): 916-930.*

Week 3: 10/12 - Congress & Policymaking

- Frances Lee, *Insecure Majorities*, Ch. 1-3*
- Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson. 2010. "Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States," *Politics & Society* 38(2) 152–204.*
- Sean Farhang and Ira Katznelson. 2005. "The Southern Imposition: Congress and Labor in the New Deal and Fair Deal," *Studies in American Political Development*, 19(1): 1-30.*
- David Bateman. 2020. "Partisan Polarization on Black Suffrage, 1785-1868," *Perspectives on Politics*, 18(2): 470-491.*

Week 4: 10/19 - Presidential Leadership, Executive Power & the Administrative State

- Will Howell. "Unilateral Powers: A Brief Overview," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35(3): 417-39.*
- Stephen Skowronek. 2008. *Presidential Leadership in Political Time*. KUP. Ch. 1*
- Andrew Rudalevige. 2021. *By Executive Order: Bureaucratic Management and the Limits of Presidential Power*. OUP. Ch 1-2*

--Skowronek, Dearborn & King, *Phantoms of a Beleaguered Republic*, Ch 1-6 & 10

Week 5: 10/26 - Law, Courts & Social Change

--Mark Graber. 1993. "The NonMajoritarian Difficulty: Legislative Deference to the Judiciary." *Studies in American Political Development* 7: 35-73.*

--Paul Frymer. 2003. "Acting When Elected Officials Won't: Federal Courts and Civil Rights Enforcement in US Labor Unions." *American Political Science Review* 97: 483-499.*

--Sarah Staszak. 2010. "Institutions, Rulemaking the Politics of Judicial Retrenchment," *Studies in American Political Development*, 24(2): 168-189.*

--Stephen Vladeck. "The Solicitor General and the Shadow Docket," 133 *Harvard L. Rev.* 123 (2019)*

***Research Proposal or Lit Review 1 Due**

Week 6: 11/2 - Political Parties & Polarization

--John Aldrich. 2011. *Why Parties? A Second Look*. UCP. Ch. 1-2*

--APSA Committee on Political Parties. 1950. "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," *APSR* 44(3): 1-14.

--Kathleen Bawn et al. 2012. "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics." *Perspectives on Politics* 10: 571-597.

--Paul Frymer and Christina Wolbrecht. 2005. "Race, Parties & Democratic Inclusion." In *Politics of Democratic Inclusion* (eds. Wolbrecht, Christina & Rodney Hero, Temple University Press).

--Lilliana Mason. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. UCP, Ch. 1, 5-6*

Week 7: 11/9- Federalism & (In)equality

--Jamila Michener, *Fragmented Democracy*, Chapters 1-5

--Jacob Grumbach. 2018. "From Backwaters to Major Policymakers: Policy Polarization in the States, 1970-2014," *Perspectives on Politics*, 16(2): 416-435.*

--Desmond King. 2017 "Forceful Federalism against American Racial Inequality," *Government & Opposition* 52(2): 356-382.*

Week 8: 11/16 – How Resilient Are Democratic Institutions?

--Gershberg & Illing, *The Paradox of Democracy*, Intro + Ch. 1, 5, 7-8

--Paul Pierson and Eric Schickler. 2020. "Madison's Constitution Under Stress: A Developmental Analysis of Political Polarization," *Annual Review of Political Science* 23: 37-58.*

--Stephen Skowronek and Karen Orren. 2020. "The Adaptability Paradox: Constitutional Resilience and Principles of Good Government in 21st Century America," *Perspectives on Politics* 18(2): 354-369.*

Week 9: 11/23 – No class – Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 10: 11/30 – Discussion of Research In-Progress

Week 11: 12/7 – Elections Without Democracy? Anti-Democracy Movements & Resistance

--Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way. 2002. "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism," *Journal of Democracy* 13(2): 51-62.*

--Kim Scheppele. "Autocratic Legalism," 85 *Univ. of Chicago L. Rev* 545 (2018)*

--Amna Akbar, Sameer Ashar & Jocelyn Simonson. "Movement Law," 73 *Stanford L. Rev.* 821 (2021)*

Final paper or Lit Review 2 due Wed., December 14