

KEEPING THE REPUBLIC

**POLITICAL SCIENCE 10101/20101
HESB 20000/ CNST 20003
FALL 2024**

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Office hours: Mondays 2:00 – 3:15 PM; Tuesdays 3:00 – 5:00 PM

Lectures: Mondays and Wednesdays 3:30 to 4:20 PM
102 DeBartolo Hall

*Students must register for both the lecture and a Friday discussion section (POLS 22101), which are held at various times and locations.

Description

Back in 1787, Benjamin Franklin was asked what kind of government the new American Constitution created. He responded, “a republic, if you can keep it.” Today, many people are asking whether the republic—and thus democracy in America—as we know it will survive. Trust is low, polarization is high, and longstanding democratic norms are being shattered left and right. Some scholars have even suggested that the US is on the brink of a new civil war. Others, however, argue that things are not as bad as they seem.

In this course we will tackle the big questions about the current state of democracy in the United States. Is the US actually a democracy? (And is that different than a republic?) If so, how, when, and why did it become a democracy? Will the US remain a democracy? Finally, what role can YOU play in keeping the republic?

This course is built on the principle that to learn about democracy, you have to DO democracy. Students will thus meet weekly to hold vibrant dialogue on the themes of the course.

Course Learning Goals

In this course, students will be introduced to the study of democracy, a topic that overlaps both Comparative and American Politics, two subfields within the discipline of Political Science. The learning goals include:

1. An introduction to multiple theoretical approaches to the study of democracy. Specifically, students will be introduced to Political Science research that focuses on the study of institutions, and other work that focuses on political culture. Throughout the semester, we will discuss and debate whether democracy is better understood through the lens of institutions or culture.
2. Exposure to different methodological approaches to the study of democracy. Examples include elite-level surveys (Varieties of Democracy, Freedom House democracy scores), individual-level surveys (World Values Survey, American National Election Study, Notre Dame Index of Democratic Health), qualitative interviews, and historical documents. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each methodological approach?
3. Familiarity with how political scientists measure the health of democracy, and why there is currently concern about the state of liberal democracy around the world. For example, we will examine how elite-level surveys reveal an erosion in democratic institutions, while individual-level surveys suggest a weakening of democratic values. Students will also be introduced to debates among political scientists over the interpretation of this evidence.
4. The application of the above theoretical approaches and empirical evidence to the specific study of the state of democracy within the contemporary United States.
5. The integration of different forms of empirical evidence to (a) evaluate the current state of democracy in the United States and to (b) propose a reform with the potential to improve American democracy.

Question of the Week

Each week, you will write a brief response (maximum of 250 words) to the Question of the Week, which will be posted to Canvas. The questions pertain to the material covered during that week, and are preparation for the Friday sections. They are due every Thursday by 5:00 PM.

Research Papers

Throughout the course of the semester, you will write two papers.

Democratic Indicator Paper

The Democratic Indicator Paper will require you to identify an indicator of democracy in the United States, ask a research question pertaining to that indicator, and collect evidence to answer your research question. For this paper you will submit a rough draft to your Teaching Assistant, who will provide feedback to help you revise the paper into a final draft.

Democratic Reform Paper

The Democratic Reform Paper will be the culmination of the course. You will identify a potential reform to the American political system and—drawing on the theoretical and empirical tools developed throughout the course— write a paper about the likely consequences of implementing that reform. This paper is part of your final exam, and thus worth half of your final exam score.

Readings

There is one book to purchase, available in the bookstore or wherever fine books are sold.

Robert D. Putnam. 2021. *The Upswing: How America Came Together a Century Ago and How We Can Do It Again*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

There will also be a number of readings available on Canvas. In addition, course material, including any slides shown during the lectures, will be posted on Canvas.

Friday Discussion Sections

The Friday discussion sections are integral to the course, as this is where you will discuss, deliberate, and debate the themes covered in the lectures and readings. Often, you will have a short assignment to do prior to the section, which will inform the discussion. Each section has a discussion leader, either an advanced undergraduate or a graduate student. In addition to leading the Friday discussions, your section leader will be the first point of contact for anything related to the course.

Requirements

1. Come to class

The best reason to attend each and every class is that the quality of our collective learning experience rests on the willingness of everyone to be engaged in rigorous discussion. If that is not enough of an incentive, be warned that the exams will not only cover material from the assigned reading, but also from the lectures. As yet another incentive, attendance will be taken periodically. Plus, on some days there might be treats.

While I do not take attendance in every class, I do reserve the right to do attendance checks periodically throughout the semester.

In short, come to class. Every time.

2. Do the reading

Coming to class is necessary but not sufficient to succeed in this course. The assigned readings raise provocative questions, which we will discuss in class. The discussion will be really boring, however, if you have not done the reading assigned for that class session.

In short, do the reading. All of it. Every time.

3. Do your own work

As members of the academic community, we each have a responsibility to uphold rigorous standards of integrity. Every student is thus expected to abide by Notre Dame's Academic Code of Honor Pledge:

As a member of the Notre Dame community, I will not participate in or tolerate academic dishonesty.

The complete Code of Honor can be found at:

<https://honorcode.nd.edu>

Plagiarism (using the ideas, words, or work of others without attribution) will result in serious consequences. If you have any questions about the Code of Honor, plagiarism, or academic honesty, please contact Professor Campbell.

In short, do your own work. All of it. Every time.

4. Pay attention

Good citizenship in the classroom calls for everyone to devote their full attention to the lectures and ensuing discussion. That means:

Silence and put away your cellphones
No texting (or whatever the kids these days do)
No laptops or tablets, *unless you sit in the first row*

Sadly, I am compelled to ban the use of laptop computers in class *unless you sit in the first row*. Even though some students rely on their laptops solely for taking notes, many students cannot resist the siren call of their computer to watch Netflix or whatever. Not only is such behavior rather rude, it will cause you to miss stuff that will appear on exams.

Plus, you might miss the jokes. Most importantly, your fellow students are likely to be distracted by your glowing screen.

However, rather than an outright ban on laptops, students who strongly prefer taking notes on a computer are able to do so if they sit in the front row of the room.

In short, pay attention. All of the time.

5. Hand stuff in on time

All of you managed to get admitted to college, which means that you have demonstrated the ability to meet deadlines. In order to further reinforce the life skill of learning to plan ahead in order to meet deadlines, there will be no extended due dates for papers; nor will there be make-up exams. The only exceptions will be for serious illness (with a doctor's note).

In short, plan ahead and meet the deadlines. All of them.

Evaluation

Your evaluation in the course will have these components:

1. Midterm exam	20%
2. Democratic Indicator Paper	25%
3. Final exam (including Democratic Reform Paper)	35%
4. Question of the Week responses	10%
5. Participation and attendance	10%

The following scale will determine your final grade:

> 93%	A
90 – 92%	A-
87 – 89%	B+
83 – 86%	B
80 – 82%	B-
77 – 79%	C+
73 – 76%	C
70 – 72%	C-
60 – 69%	D
< 69%	F

The final exam will be held on Tuesday, December 17 in 102 DeBartolo Hall (our regular classroom) at 8:00 AM. This date is set by the University (aka "The Man"), I am not able to change it, nor grant exceptions. So don't even ask.

Preparation

Most lectures are accompanied by an assigned reading. You should read this material *before* the relevant lecture, as the lectures often build on the concepts introduced in these readings. Note that these readings are integral to the course; the exams will include questions that draw from this material.

You will not succeed in this course if you ignore the readings and draw only from the lectures; nor will you succeed if you ignore the lectures and draw only from the readings.

I strongly encourage you to take detailed notes on the readings. If you take notes on every assigned reading, you will easily master the material covered in this course.

Schedule (subject to change)

CAN indicates that a reading is available on Canvas.

8/28 Introductions

 No reading!

8/30 Friday Discussion

PART 1 IS THE US A DEMOCRACY?

9/2 What is a democracy?

 Philippe Schmitter and Terry Karl. 1991. What Democracy Is . . . And Is Not. *Journal of Democracy*, Summer, pp. 3-16. [CAN]

9/4 Waves of democracy

 Larry Diamond. 2019. *Ill Winds: Saving Democracy from Russian Rage, Chinese Ambition, and American Complacency*. New York: Penguin Books. Chapters 2-3 [CAN]

9/6 Friday Discussion

9/9 Democracy under threat

 Yascha Mounk. 2018. *The People Vs. Democracy: Why Our Freedom Is In Danger and How to Save It*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Chapter 3. [CAN]

9/11 Did America's Founders intend to create a democracy?

 Danielle Allen. 2017. A Democracy, If You Can Keep It. *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth Century Americanists*. 5 (2): 368-374. [CAN]

9/13 No Friday Discussion (President Dowd's Inauguration)

- 9/16 The US Constitution, part I (Race)
Robert A. Dahl. 2001. *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapter 2. [CAN]
- 9/18 The US Constitution, part II (Electoral College)
Jesse Wegman. 2020. *Let the People Pick the President: The Case for Abolishing the Electoral College.* New York: St. Martin's Press. Chapter 6 [CAN]
- 9/20 Friday Discussion
- 9/23 The US Constitution, part III (Women's suffrage)
Christina Wolbrecht and J. Kevin Corder. 2020. *A Century of Votes for Women: American Elections Since Suffrage.* New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2 [CAN]
- PART 2 WILL THE US REMAIN A DEMOCRACY?**
- 9/25 Civil society
The Upswing, chapters 1, 4 (5 is recommended but optional)
- 9/26 **Evening Meeting: viewing of *Join or Die* (details to come)**
- 9/27 Friday Discussion
- 9/30 Economic inequality
The Upswing, chapter 2
- 10/2 Partisan polarization, part I
The Upswing, chapter 3
- 10/4 Friday Discussion
- 10/7 Partisan polarization, part II
Liliana Mason. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 3. [CAN]

10/9 Polarized religion
David E. Campbell. 2020. The Perils of Politicized Religion. *Daedalus* 149 (3): 87-104. [CAN]

10/11 Friday Discussion

10/14 **MIDTERM EXAM**

10/16 Details on the Democratic Indicator Paper

10/18 No Friday Discussion

FALL BREAK

10/28 Congressional gridlock
Ezra Klein. 2021. *Why We're Polarized*. New York: Avid Reader Press. Chapter 8 [CAN]

10/30 Democratic norms
Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt. 2019. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Crown. Chapters 5-6 [CAN]

11/1 Friday Discussion

11/4 Voter turnout
MIT Election Data + Science Lab. 2021. Voter Identification. [CAN]
<https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/voter-identification>

DEMOCRATIC INDICATOR PAPER DRAFT DUE

11/5 **ELECTION DAY**

11/6 Post-election Discussion

11/8 Friday Discussion

- 11/11 Populism
William Galston. 2018. *Anti-Pluralism: The Populist Threat to Liberal Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Chapters 3 and 5. [CAN]
- 11/13 Free speech
Nadine Strossen. 2023. *Free Speech: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press. Chapter 1. [CAN]
- 11/15 Friday Discussion
- 11/18 Disinformation
Adam Berinsky. 2023. *Political Rumors: Why We Accept Misinformation and How to Fight It*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 2. [CAN]
- 11/20 No class
- DEMOCRATIC INDICATOR PAPER DUE**
- 11/22 No Friday Discussion
- 11/25 Political violence
Rachel Kleinfeld. 2021. The Rise of Political Violence in the United States. *Journal of Democracy* 32 (4): 160-176. [CAN]

THANKSGIVING BREAK

PART 3 WHAT ROLE DO WE ALL PLAY IN KEEPING THE REPUBLIC?

- 12/2 Civic education
David E. Campbell. 2023. How Civic Education Can Help Us Keep the Republic. *Judges' Journal* (American Bar Association), Spring, 13-16. [CAN]
- 12/4 Potential reforms
Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century. Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship, American Academy of Arts and Sciences. [CAN]

<https://www.amacad.org/ourcommonpurpose>

12/6 Friday Discussion

12/9 Overcoming polarization

Matthew Levendusky. 2023. *Our Common Bonds: Using What Americans Share to Help Bridge the Partisan Divide*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 7. [CAN]

12/11 Is there hope?

The Upswing, chapters 8-9

12/17 **FINAL EXAM**
102 DeBartolo Hall
8:00– 10:00 AM