

## **POSC109 THE US POLITICAL SYSTEM**

Fall Semester 2017

Clark Hall 302

MWF 10:35-11:25am

**Karen Beckwith, Professor**

Office: 223 Mather House

Phone: 216.368.4129

E-mail: karen.beckwith@case.edu

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1:00-2:30pm, or by appointment

Professor Website: <http://politicalscience.case.edu/people/karen-beckwith/>

### **COURSE OUTLINE AND REQUIREMENTS**

POSC109, The US Political System, is an introduction to the US political system, with a focus on national governing institutions, constitutional constraints, and the impacts of mass participation and electoral democracy. The course focuses on the political and economic development and national construction of the United States. In so doing, this course considers fundamental national values such as liberty, equality, racism, and democracy, in terms of the impact of these values upon the construction of the nation and of their negotiation in practice across two centuries.

The course is divided into three major sections. The first focuses on civil society and the state, the mechanisms of national government elaborated in the Constitution and their relationship to the economic system, and constitutional citizen rights and liberties. In this section, we consider how the US political system was constructed and the ways in which US national politics developed over time. The second section of the course is devoted to an investigation of the three major branches of national government: the Congress, the Presidency, and the federal court system. In the third section of the course, we examine the relationship between state and citizen, and the ways in which political power achieves expression in a democratic state. We will consider public opinion, the role of the media, the formation of interest groups and political parties, and the means by which citizens organize to have an influence on governing officials. The course concludes with a consideration of governance and democracy in contemporary U.S. politics.

**Evaluation of student performance** in this course will be based on the following criteria. First, students will complete two in-class examinations, the first of which accounts for 20 percent and the second of which accounts for 30 percent of the final course grade. Second, students will complete a final examination, which accounts for 40 percent of the course grade.

Finally, each student is expected to attend class and to be prepared for each class meeting by having read, in advance, the materials assigned for that day. Students should be prepared to discuss the material in detail in class every day. In addition, all students are expected to participate and to present themselves in class in a professional manner. Professionalism refers to adherence to standards of behavior and performance expected from political scientists. This includes, but is not limited to, courteous behavior in class; attention to and respect for other speakers; engagement with the work at hand; and, of course, adherence to university standards of academic integrity. Informed class participation and

professionalism are requirements of the course, and account for the remaining 10 percent of the final course grade.

Due dates for examinations are indicated in the schedule, below. Please note that students are required to attend all classes and to complete all course assignments. Note as well that students are expected to be present in class for all scheduled exams, including the final examination. **The final exam in this course is scheduled for Monday, December 18, from 9:00-11:00am.**

**Three books are required for this course**, listed below, and are available for purchase in the University Bookstore (and elsewhere):

Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)  
Theodore Lowi, Benjamin Ginsberg, Kenneth Shepsle, and Stephen Ansolabehere,  
*American Government: Power and Purpose* (brief 14th ed.)  
Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady,  
*The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice  
and the Broken Promise of American Democracy*

**Additional readings** support the required books; these are extensive and provide a deeper understanding and analysis of facets of the US national political system. Additional readings are identified in the *Schedule of Readings and Assignments*, below, and are available through electronic journals on the Kelvin Smith Library website (<http://library.case.edu/ksl/>), or on the course Canvas site.

Students are encouraged to read a daily national newspaper (e.g. the *Financial Times*, the *New York Times*, or the *Washington Post*; see <http://researchguides.case.edu/az.php?t=9256> and <https://global.factiva.com/np/default.aspx?NAPC=P>).

There are also several excellent political science blogs that include a focus on US politics, such as *Mischiefs of Faction* (<https://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction>) and *The Monkey Cage* ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/?utm\\_term=.2a99da715b55](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/?utm_term=.2a99da715b55)), as well as *The Conversation* (<https://theconversation.com/us/politics>) and the *Scholars' Strategy Network* (<http://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/>). Students may wish to read some of these blogs from time to time, for timely political science analysis and news related to US national politics.

**It is a requirement of this course that students use their CWRU email account for correspondence with the professor.**

**Standards of professionalism and academic integrity** are integral components of this course. Students are reminded that they are obliged to understand, to uphold, and to comply with the Academic Integrity Policy of the University. A copy of the Code may be found online at <http://students.case.edu/groups/aiboard/policy.html>.

Students who do not understand the Academic Integrity Policy after having read it should make an appointment to see me to discuss it; indeed, I welcome this discussion and encourage students to see me in advance of any assignment about which they have doubts or questions. It is a course requirement that students read the University's Academic Integrity Policy.

**SCHEDULE OF READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS**

August 28                    **Introduction to the Course**

August 30-  
September 1                **Civil Society and the State**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 1 and 2, the *Constitution of the United States* and the *Declaration of Independence* (in Appendices).

\*\*\*\*\*

September 4                **LABOR DAY: NO CLASS**

September 6-  
September 8                **Liberty, Equality, and the Democratic Tradition in the US**

READ: Schlozman, Verba and Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus*, Chapters 1 and 2

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

RECOMMENDED: George H. Sabine, "The Two Democratic Traditions," *The Philosophical Review*, 61 (4), October 1952: 451-474 [available online through JSTOR].

\*\*\*\*\*

September 11-  
September 13                **Federalism, the Fragmentation of Political Powers, and the Political Construction of State Institutions**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 3, and James Madison, *Federalist Paper #10*; Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

REVIEW: *The Constitution of the United States*

RECOMMENDED: Richard Simeon and Beryl A. Radin, "Reflections on Comparing Federalisms: Canada and the United States," *Publius*, 40 (3), 2010: 357-365; and Lisa L. Miller, "The Representational Biases of Federalism: Scope and Bias in the Political Process, Revisited," *Perspectives on Politics*, 5 (2), June 2007: 305-321 [available through e-journals].

September 15                **DISCUSSION**

\*\*\*\*\*

September 18-  
September 20

**Politics and the National Economy**

READ: Schlozman, Verba and Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus*, Chapter 3; Jeffrey A. Winters and Benjamin I. Page, “Oligarchy in the United States?,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 7 (4), 2009: 731-751 [available through e-journals].

September 22

DISCUSSION

\*\*\*\*\*

September 25-  
September 27

**Federalism, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 4

September 29

**FIRST EXAMINATION**

\*\*\*\*\*

October 2-  
October 4

**Congress: Legislating, Representing, Deliberating**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 5

REVIEW: The Constitution of the United States

RECOMMENDED: Jamie L. Carson et al., “The Electoral Costs of Party Loyalty in Congress,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 54 (3), July 2010: 598-616; and David R. Jones, “Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 54 (2), April 2010: 323-337 [both available through e-journals].

October 6

READ: Kathryn Pearson, “Demographic Change and the Future of Congress,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 43 (2), April 2010: 235-238 [available through e-journals].

\*\*\*\*\*

October 9-  
October 11

**Congressional Legislation, Congressional Gridlock**

READ: Sarah Binder, “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-1996,” *American Political Science Review*, 93 (3), September 1999: 519-533 [available through e-journals]; Alessandra Cassella et al., “A Transparent Filibuster Reform” (<http://www.politico.com/story/2013/07/opinion-filibuster-reform-94567.html>); and Sarah Binder, “Four Lessons from the GOP Failure to Repeal Obamacare” ([https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/28/four-lessons-from-the-gop-failure-to-repeal-obamacare/?utm\\_term=.9161ccd16953&wpisrc=nl\\_cage&wpmm=1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/07/28/four-lessons-from-the-gop-failure-to-repeal-obamacare/?utm_term=.9161ccd16953&wpisrc=nl_cage&wpmm=1))

October 13 DISCUSSION

\*\*\*\*\*

October 16- **The Presidency and Executive Powers**  
October 18

“The presidency isn’t a bull, and this country isn’t a china shop.” Sen. Ben Sasse (R-NE)

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapters 6 and 7

REVIEW: The Constitution of the United States

October 20 **Executive Power and Executive Orders**

READ: Kenneth R. Mayer, “Executive Orders and Presidential Power,” *Journal of Politics*, 61 (2), May, 1999: 445-466

\*\*\*\*\*

October 23-24 FALL BREAK

October 25 READ: David P. Auerswald and Peter F. Cowhey, “Ballotbox Diplomacy: The War Powers Resolution and the Use of Force,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 41 (3), September 1997 [available online at JSTOR]; and *The War Powers Resolution* [available at [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/warpower.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/warpower.asp)] and *Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Iraq Resolution of 2002* [available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ243/html/PLAW-107publ243.htm>]

RECOMMENDED: Charlie Savage, “Clock Ticking on War Powers Resolution,” *New York Times*, April 1, 2011, at <http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/04/01/clock-ticking-on-war-powers-resolution/>

October 27 **SECOND EXAMINATION**

\*\*\*\*\*

October 30- **The Supreme Court and the Federal Court System: “Equal Justice Under Law”**  
November 1

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 8

REVIEW: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 4

November 3 READ: Peter Enns and Patrick Wohlfarther, "The Swing Justice," *Journal of Politics*, 75 (4), 2013: 1089-1107 [available through e-journals]; Linda Greenhouse, "Justices on the Job," July 24, 2013 ([http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/24/justices-on-the-job/?\\_r=0](http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/24/justices-on-the-job/?_r=0)); and Jonathan Bernstein, "Ruth Bader Ginsburg Must Go," *Salon*, March 30, 2013 ([http://www.salon.com/2013/03/30/ruth\\_bader\\_ginsburg\\_must\\_go/](http://www.salon.com/2013/03/30/ruth_bader_ginsburg_must_go/)).

\*\*\*\*\*

November 6-10 **Democracy and Political Participation: Public Opinion, Interest Groups, and Political Movements**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapters 9 and 12, Schlozman, Verba and Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus*, Chapters 5 and 9

\*\*\*\*\*

November 13-15 **Democracy and Political Participation: Public Opinion, Interest Groups, and Political Movements, continued**

READ: Schlozman, Verba and Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus*, Chapters 10 and 14; Cramer Walsh, "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective," *American Political Science Review*, 106 (3), 2012: 517-532 [available through e-journals].

REVIEW: James Madison, *Federalist Paper #10*, in Lowi et al., *American Government*

November 17 READ: David S. Meyer and Eulalie Laschever, "Social Movements and the Institutionalization of Dissent in America," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*, eds. Richard Valelly, Suzanne Mettler, and Robert Lieberman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 563-589 [available on Canvas].

RECOMMENDED: Dara Z. Strolovitch, "Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender," *Journal of Politics*, 68 (4), 2006: 893-908 [available through e-journals].

\*\*\*\*\*

November 20-22 **Structures of Participation and Representation: Political Parties and Elections**

READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapters 10 and 11; Keith G. Bentele and Erin E. O'Brien, "Jim Crow 2.0? Why States Consider and Adopt Restrictive

Voting Access Policies,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 11 (4), December 2013: 1088-1116 (available through e-journals).

REVIEW: James Madison, *Federalist Paper #10*, in Lowi et al., *American Government*

November 23-24                      THANKSGIVING BREAK

\*\*\*\*\*

November 27                      **Presidential Elections: Structure, Media, and Campaign Finance**

READ: Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapter 4; John Aldrich, “The Invisible Primary and Its Effects on Democratic Choice,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 33-38; Todd Donovan and Rob Hunsaker, “Beyond Expectations: Effects of Early Elections in the US Presidential Nomination Contests,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 45-52 [available through e-journals].

November 29                      READ: Schlozman, Verba and Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus*, Chapters 16

December 1                      READ: Lowi et al., *American Government*, Chapter 9; Audrey A. Haynes and Brian Pitts, “Making an Impression: New Media in the 2008 Presidential Nomination Campaigns,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42 (1), January 2009: 53-58 [available through e-journals].

RECOMMENDED: Gabriel S. Lenz and Chappell Lawson, “Looking the Part: Television Leads Less Informed Citizens to Vote Based on Candidates’ Appearance,” *American Journal of Political Science*, 55 (3), July 2011: 574-589 [available through e-journals].

\*\*\*\*\*

December 4                      **Conclusion to the Course: How Democratic Is the US Political System?**

READ: Robert Dahl, *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?*, Chapters 5, 6, and 7.

December 6                      READ: Jeffrey A. Winters and Benjamin I. Page, “Oligarchy in the United States?,” *Perspectives on Politics*, 7 (4), 2009: 731-751 [available through e-journals]; and Schlozman, Verba and Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus*, Chapter 18.

December 8                      DISCUSSION

\*\*\*\*\*

**FINAL EXAMINATION: MONDAY, DECEMBER 18, 9:00AM – 11:00AM**