Class Schedule: Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:15-11:30 am
Professor Thomas Patterson
Taubman 242
Office hours: T 1:15-2:15, TH 8-9 and by appointment
Email: thomas_patterson@harvard.edu
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Course Assistants: TBD

A. Course Overview

This course will examine major tendencies in American politics—the “big picture.” The course will give you an analytical and applied understanding of American politics through the use of case studies. The aim is to teach you to “think politically.”

A second purpose of the course is to strengthen your writing and speaking skills, which are tools of political action. The course’s graded assignments require you to communicate your knowledge of American politics. You will participate in a team-based political briefing (which will include a group memo) and individually write an op-ed piece and two political memos, one of which will serve as the final exam.

B. Materials

Required Reading: Except for the text reading, all required reading can be accessed online through links listed on the course website. If something of political significance happens during the period of the course, a reading or readings related to it might be added to the course readings. In that case, you will be notified of the addition, which will be posted at least a week in advance of the class session where it applies.

You will need to acquire an introductory American government text. A familiarity with basic American political institutions and processes is necessary if you are to derive full benefit from the case-study discussions. The suggested course text is Thomas E. Patterson’s We the People, 11th edition (New York:
McGraw-Hill, 2015), which can be purchased at the COOP (reserve copies are available at the KSG library). If you have access to or prefer a different American government text or an earlier edition of the Patterson text, you are welcome to use it. In this case, except for the Patterson text, you will need to correlate its pages with each session’s topic. [NOTE: Tom Patterson’s royalties from HKS students’ purchase of the book will be used to pay for refreshments at the final session of the course.]

C. In-class Debates

Each student will be required at some point in the semester to participate in an in-class debate. These debates normally will take up about 20 minutes of class time and come at the end of the class session. Each debating team will consist of two members. You will be assigned your debate topic and partner. The debate will be graded (on an individual rather than team basis) as part of your class participation grade. In addition to the class readings, the debate teams will be provided a small set of additional readings that will help them prepare for the debate. Teams are neither expected nor encouraged to search for other. Confine your reading to what’s provided.

Debate Rules: The debates will employ modified Oxford rules. A proposition will be put forward and we’ll poll class members for their position on the issue. There will be one “pro” and one “con” team for each debate. Each side will have up to two minutes to make its argument, followed by a 90-second rebuttal of the opposing argument. You will be “on the clock” during the debate presentations and will be stopped in mid-presentation if you clearly overshoot your allotted time. An extra 15 seconds or so is okay, but an extra minute clearly is not and will be taken as an indication of poor preparation.

Each member of the team must present part of its argument and/or rebuttal, although the team can decide how to divide the time. A team might choose to split both the argument and rebuttal time between its two members. Or, a team might decide to have one member present the argument and the other handle the rebuttal. After the rebuttal round, the debate will be opened to the full class for questions and arguments. Following the full-class debate, we will re-vote the proposition.

D. Class Schedule

**FIRST SESSION (T, JAN 26): COURSE INTRODUCTION & THE ART OF WRITING**

1st WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT – newspaper op-ed (assignment is due TH, FEB 11)
This assignment requires you to write a newspaper op-ed on an issue of American politics. Detailed information on this assignment will be provided in a separate document.

This session will provide an introduction to the course and a discussion of the elements of good writing.
SECOND SESSION (TH, JAN 28): THE CONSTITUTION: LIMITED GOVERNMENT

The writers of the Constitution were determined to create a government powerful enough to meet the nation’s needs but not so powerful as to threaten people’s liberty. Accordingly, the Constitution is rooted in the idea of “limited government”—a government of restricted power. The Constitution provided for such a government in multiple ways—denials of power, grants of power, the Bill of Rights, and the separation of power.

Over the past century, as the domestic and international policy demands have increased, power has shifted toward the executive. A central issue in this development is how to constrain the growth in executive power. The “War on Terrorism” that was launched by the Bush Administration after September 11, 2001 included harsh methods of interrogation and detention. The methods were devised in the White House but, as they become public despite the Administration’s efforts to keep them secret, they became objects of inter-branch conflict. More recently, the Obama Administration’s targeted killing program, through the use of drones, has become a source of controversy. This session will explore the limits and the potential of America’s system of divided powers as a mechanism for controlling the use of political power, particularly when exercised by the executive in the context of national security.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: That the Obama administration’s policy of targeted killings through drone strikes is overly broad and should be subject to constraints established by Congress.
Reading

Patterson, *We the People*
- 11e, pp. 44-52.
- 10e, pp. 45-53
- 9e, pp. 41-50

[http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1558&context=facpub](http://scholarship.law.georgetown.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1558&context=facpub)


Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann, “When Congress Checks Out,” by Norman J. Ornstein and Thomas E. Mann, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December, 2006 [This article was written when Congress was controlled by Republicans.


“House Committee Rejects Provision Requiring Account of Drone Casualties,” Reuters, 11/21/2013

**Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)**

“The Social Contract,” Sage Publications. This reading provides an unusual lens through which to look at the theories of Hobbes and Locke; their notion of a social contract and Locke’s idea of limited government influenced the work of the framers of the Constitution.
[http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/2769_Swri01.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/2769_Swri01.pdf)
Third Session (T, FEB 2): The Constitution: Federalism

The writers of the Constitution created the first "federal" nation—one that divided sovereignty between a national government and state governments. By establishing two levels of sovereign authority, the Constitution created competing centers of power and ambition. We will examine this arrangement through the history of federalism as a constitutional issue, highlighting the conflicts between national and state authority that were ultimately resolved in favor of national authority.

The session will explain the division of power between the federal and state governments and also explain how broadly worded constitutional clauses, partisan differences, and changing national needs have combined to make federalism a source of political conflict and change. Among the cases explored in this session is the constitutional dispute provoked by the 2010 health care reform act. We will examine this tendency by looking at the 2010 health care reform act. Enacted by a Democratic-controlled Congress, and signed into law by President Obama, it was contested by virtually every Republican governor and Republican-controlled state legislature on grounds that its individual insurance mandate intruded on the states' authority under the Constitution.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: That the health care law's individual mandate was an invalid exercise of Congress's constitutional power to tax.

Reading

Patterson, We the People
11e, pp. 85-96
10e, pp. 86-98
9e, pp. 86-96

Article I, Section 8 and Amendment 10 of the U.S. Constitution (in back of text or online)

Enacting the Health Care Reform bill—read only the section entitled “Legislative History”
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patient_Protection_and_Affordable_Care_Act


Public response to the new health care system, as indicated by a recent Gallup Poll

Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)


Robert Jay Dilger, “Federal Grants to State and Local Governments: A Historical Perspective on Contemporary Issues,” Congressional Research Service, March 5, 2015 (read only pp. 18-41). This article examines the role of federal grants in extending national authority into policy areas traditionally reserved to the states. https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R40638.pdf

FOURTH SESSION (TH, FEB 4): THE CONSTITUTION: INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

First writing assignment (op-ed, see information on page 3 of syllabus) is due at the second class session next week (TH, FEB 11).

Under the U.S. Constitution, individuals are guaranteed free expression and fair trial rights. During the nation’s history, these rights have been expanded in practice through action by the Supreme Court. A key development has been their protection from action by state and local governments; the Court’s interpretation of the 14th Amendment’s due process clause has been the basis for the change. Americans also have less well-defined “democratic” rights, including the right to vote. The Supreme Court has struggled to develop a consistent jurisprudence when it comes to protecting these rights. Major Supreme Court rulings, many of them recent, will be discussed as a means of clarifying the nature of Americans’ rights.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: That voter registration requirements should be set by the federal government rather than by the states individually.

Reading

Patterson, We the People
9e, pp. 108-119, 128-136, 224-234.

https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/95-815.pdf (read only pp. 1-14)

“Voter Suppression in United States,” Wikipedia. 
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voter_suppression_in_the_United_States

William D. Hicks, Seth C. McKee, Mitchell D. Sellers and Daniel A. Smith, “Party Competition Is the Primary Driver of the Recent Increase in Restrictive Voter ID Laws in the American States,” London School of Economics, 2014. http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/60421/1/blogs.lse.ac.uk-Party_competition_is_the_primary_driver_of_the_recent_increase_in_restrictive_voter_ID_laws_in_the_Am%5B1%5D.pdf

Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)


Russell Hardin, “Civil Liberties in the Era of Mass Terrorism,” The Journal of Ethics (2004). This reading explores the challenges that the war on terrorism poses for civil liberties. The reading connects this session’s discussion of civil liberties with an earlier session’s discussion of limited government. http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/faculty/hardin/research/CivLiberties.pdf


FIFTH SESSION (T, FEB 9): CONGRESS & CONSTITUENCY

First written assignment—your op-ed—is due in class Thursday.

The Congress of the United States was established as the “first branch” of government—the institution that would represent the people. Indeed, nothing looms larger in the political thinking of most members of Congress than does their constituency—the state or district they represent. Unlike legislators in most parliamentary democracies, members of the U.S. Congress depend directly on their constituents—districts in the case of House members and states in the case of senators—for reelection. Recognition of this electoral imperative is central to an understanding of how Congress operates. As political scientist David Mayhew famously said, members of Congress “are single-minded seekers of reelection.”

In this session, we will examine how their constituency affects the behavior of members of Congress, including its influence on the type of bills that members are most likely to support. The 2014 farm bill will be used to highlight constituency influence on senators and representatives.
IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):
Resolved: That public financing of candidates would improve congressional campaigns.

Reading

Patterson, *We the People*
11e, pp. 329-337, 345-354
10e, pp. 346-355, 363-368
9e, pp. 368-376, 384-393

Summary of David Mayhew’s *Congress: The Electoral Connection* [Summary of a classic book that argues the behavior of members of Congress is driven largely by their desire for reelection.]
http://wikisum.com/w/Mayhew:_Congress#Comments_and_Criticism

Joshua D. Clinton, “Representation in Congress: Constituents and Roll Calls in the 106th House,” *Journal of Politics* 68 (2006): 397-409. This article examines the question of what “constituency” means to House members, showing they respond more to constituents of their political party than to the district’s population as a whole. Read intro and conclusion.

Agriculture Act of 2014


Robert Paarlberg (HKS faculty), “The Farm Bill’s Winners and Losers,” *US News*
http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2012/06/26/the-farm-bills-winners-and-losers

Optional Reading (if topic is of particular interest)

https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41545.pdf

**SIXTH SESSION (TH, FEB 11): CONGRESS & PARTIES**

NOTE: First written assignment, an op-ed, is due in class today.

2nd WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT – memo (assignment is due TH, MAR 3)
This assignment requires you to write a memo for a political official. Detailed information on this assignment will be provided in a separate document.

With its two chambers, numerous committees, and individually empowered members, Congress is a fragmented institution. Nevertheless, there is a unifying force in Congress—its political parties. Congress is organized along party lines—for instance, the majority party in each chamber chooses the top leaders and holds a majority of seats on each standing committee. Shared ideology and a shared interest in their party’s fate in the next election serve to bind together party members in Congress. In the past few decades, as a result of a widening ideological gap between Republican and Democratic lawmakers, partisanship has increasingly defined the actions of Congress.

This session will describe the role of parties in Congress and explain the developments that have contributed to party polarization within Congress. We’ll examine the 2013 government shutdown as a case study in party conflict. The session will also explain why Congress’s fragmented structure makes it difficult for Congress to take the lead on major national issues while making it perfectly suited to taking on scores of smaller issues at once.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):
Resolved: That the Senate should abolish the filibuster.

Reading:

Patterson, We the People
11e, pp. 338-345, 355-365, 418-421
10e, pp. 356-363, 372-382, 441-444
9e, pp. 378-384, 394-401, 463-466


The 2013 Budget Shutdown:
When it started: http://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/01/us/politics/congress-shutdown-debate.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
The political fallout from the 1995 government shutdown: [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/2011/02/lessons_from_the_great_governm.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/fact-checker/2011/02/lessons_from_the_great_governm.html)

**Optional Reading** (if topic is of particular interest)

Michael Barber and Nolan McCarthy, “Causes and Consequences of Polarization,” American Political Science Association. This article provides a comprehensive look at the sources and effects of party polarization in Congress.
[http://www.apsanet.org/portals/54/Files/Task%20Force%20Reports/Chapter2Mansbridge.pdf](http://www.apsanet.org/portals/54/Files/Task%20Force%20Reports/Chapter2Mansbridge.pdf)

John Aldrich and David Rohde, “The Logic of Conditional Party Government: Revisiting the Electoral Connection.” This paper explores how the constituency orientation of members of Congress has been modified by the rise of party polarization.

**SEVENTH SESSION (T, FEB 16): PRESIDENT & DOMESTIC POLICY**

Presidents operate within a system of divided power. Although they routinely propose legislative initiatives, Congress has the lawmaking power. As a result, presidents’ ability to get their policy initiatives enacted into law depends largely on Congress’s willingness to respond. An exception is executive orders, which are issued by the president through their constitutional authority as chief executive.

This session will examine the factors that affect presidential success in the area of domestic policy. Several factors will be mentioned, but the focus will be the partisan makeup of Congress—whether a majority of its members are from the president’s party. The 1964 food stamp bill and the 1996 welfare bill will be used to illustrate the relationship between presidential success and Congress’s partisan makeup. The session will also look at executive orders and the controversy surrounding several of President Obama’s recent executive orders.

**IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):**

**Resolved:** That President Obama’s expansive use of executive orders is inconsistent with the intent of the Constitution and sets a troubling precedent.

**Reading:**

Patterson, *We the People*

11e, pp. 372-377, 391-401
10e, pp. 393-399, 413-422
9e, pp. 414-420, 433-443
EIGHTH SESSION (TH, FEB 18): PRESIDENT & FOREIGN POLICY

Unlike other policy areas, foreign policy rests on relations with actors outside rather than within the country. As a result, the chief instruments of foreign policy—diplomacy, trade, intelligence gathering, and military force—differ from those of domestic policy. So, too, does the role of the America’s elected institutions. Writing in the 1960s, political scientist Aaron Wildavsky claimed that the United States has only one president but has two presidencies—one when it comes to domestic policy and another when it comes to foreign policy. Although Wildavsky’s thesis is now regarded as an oversimplification,
presidents are less constrained in the foreign policy realm than in the domestic policy realm. Although, for example, the Constitution assigns Congress the power to declare war, the decision to send US troops into hostile action in practice rests with the president.

In this session, we’ll examine the president’s comparative advantages—for example, control over information—in the making of foreign policy. We’ll briefly examine executive agreements (treaty-like arrangements authorized solely by the president) and then focus on the president’s war power. Although the Constitution assigns Congress the power to declare war, the decision to send US troops into hostile action in practice has rested with president, who is constitutionally empowered as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Few issues have provoked more controversy in recent decades than the “presidential wars” fought in Vietnam and Iraq. In this session, the president’s war powers will be studied through the lead up to President Bush’s decision to invade Iraq in 2003.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: That Congress should find an appropriate opportunity to invoke the War Powers Act in order to obtain a Supreme Court ruling on its authority over war.

Reading:

Patterson, We the People,
  11e, pp. 387-391, 399-402, 548-549
  10e, pp. 421-425, 579-581
  9e, pp. 442-441, 603-605


“Invasion of Iraq,” Wikipedia. The leadup to the Iraq invasion is this session’s case study. Read the pre-invasion material, stopping with the sections that discuss the invasion itself. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2003_invasion_of_Iraq


Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)
Aaron Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies,” *Transactions* 4 (1966); 162-173. The classic article that argued the presidency is a different office in the area of foreign policy than in the domestic area. [http://www.csuchico.edu/~ccturner/syllabi/TwoPresidencies.pdf](http://www.csuchico.edu/~ccturner/syllabi/TwoPresidencies.pdf)


**Ninth Session (T, Feb 23): Congress and the Presidency**

The U.S. system of divided powers differs from a parliamentary system where executive power and legislative power are vested in the majority party and its cabinet and prime minister. Lawmaking in the U.S. system accordingly rests on the interplay between Congress and the presidency. They differ in their powers and constituencies, and thus in their perspectives, but the requirement for joint action in some circumstances is a defining feature of American politics.

The interplay of legislative and executive power is starkly evident in trade policy, which is simultaneously a domestic issue and an international issue. This session will trace the evolution of America’s position as a trading nation during the post-World War II era, concentrating first on the factors that made America in the immediate post-war period the world’s unquestioned economic power and then on the factors that weakened that position. The session will conclude with an examination of the politics and policies of trade agreements, including NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) and more recent ones.

**In-Class Debate (See Debate Rules on P. 2 of Syllabus):**

Resolved: That free trade agreements are a net benefit to the United States in almost every instance.

**Reading:**

Patterson, *We the People*

- 11e, pp. 559-570
- 10e, PP. 592-602
- 9e, PP. 614-621
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2010-10-21/gdp-now-matters-more-force

http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2004/05/why-america-needs-to-support-free-trade


http://nationalinterest.org/feature/confused-coalitions-republicans-democrats-free-trade-14257

Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)  

Nicholas Weller, “Constituents and Party in U.S. Trade Policy,” *Public Choice* 141(2009): 87-101. This article looks at the relative importance of party and constituency on trade votes. (It’s limited, however, in that it conceives constituency as the whole of a district or state as opposed to the incumbent party’s voters in a district or state.) http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11127-009-9439-6#/page-1

Richard Armitage and Joseph Nye, “CSIS Commission on Smart Power,” 2007. Read only pp. 27-36. Authored by two leading foreign policy experts, this piece argues for an approach to foreign policy that is less reliant on military force.  

**Tenth Session (TH, Feb 25): Federal Bureaucracy**

The federal bureaucracy has no constitutional authority of its own. Staffed by unelected officials, its authority derives from constitutional powers granted to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. Yet, the federal bureaucracy exercises power of its own as a result of its role in implementing policy decisions. Moreover, federal agencies have an “agency point of view”—they seek
to promote and protect their programs and have resources that can enable them to succeed in this effort.

In this session, we’ll examine the federal bureaucracy—its structure, staffing, and operation. We’ll also explore the challenge of holding the bureaucracy accountable for its actions. The Air Force’s F-22 fighter jet program will serve as a case study of bureaucratic politics.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: In considering whether to terminate a weapons program, Congress should place substantial weight on the economic impact on the local communities where the weapon system is being manufactured.

Reading:

Patterson, *We the People*
   11e, pp. 411-418, 421-433
   10e, pp. 297-303, 444-457
   9e, pp. 307-314, 466-478


Optional reading (only if topic is of particular interest)
ELEVENTH SESSION (T, MAR 1): REGULATORY AGENCIES

Since the 1930s, the U.S. government has been actively engaged in regulating the economy, intervening to promote economic efficiency and to protect the public from harmful business activity. This session will examine four regulatory situations and their related policies: restraint of trade, which refers to anti-competitive business practices; inequity, which refers to unfair business transactions; moral hazard, which occurs when one party engages in risky economic behavior but passes the risk on to another party; and negative externalities, which result when firms fail to pay the full costs of production activity.

Although the primary emphasis will be on policy, the session will also address partisan divisions over regulatory policy, and the basis for those divisions. Several cases, most notably the politics and policies of climate change, will be used to illustrate key points.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: That U.S. climate change policy should be based only on costs and benefits to the United States and not also other countries.

Reading:

Patterson, *We the People*
11th ed. pp. 477-491
10th ed. pp. 503-517
9th ed. pp. 528-544


http://politics.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/2784/GordonHaferMandates.pdf

Aaron M. McCright and Riley E. Dunlap, “The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the
American Public’s Views of Global Warming, 2001-2010,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 52 (2011): 155-194. (This session’s primary case study is climate change.)


**Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)**

Stuart Shapiro, “Politics and Regulatory Policy Analysis,” Cato Institute, 2006. This article looks at the conditions under which cost-benefit analysis is likely to influence regulatory decisions.  


https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R43087.pdf

**TWELFTH SESSION (TH, MAR 3): JUDICIARY AND THE SUPREME COURT**

Individual Memo due today in class. NO IN-CLASS DEBATE THIS DAY.

3rd ASSIGNMENT – team briefing (briefings will be held T, MAR 29)

This assignment requires you, as part of a team, to brief a political official on an issue of American politics. Detailed information on this assignment will be provided in a separate document.

Article III of the Constitution establishes the federal judiciary and defines its authority. Article III reads in part: “The judicial power of the United States, shall be vested in one Supreme Court, and in such inferior courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish.” Of particular interest is the Supreme Court, which has been described as “the world’s most powerful court,” a situation that derives from its status as an independent and co-equal branch of the federal government and from the fact that America’s system of divided powers and individual rights is a frequent source of constitutional disputes.

This session will examine judicial power and the role of politics in Supreme Court decisions. We will also consider the normative question of how much power an unelected judiciary should have in a democratic system. The Supreme Court’s ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*
(2010)—in which it struck down an act of Congress prohibiting independent campaign expenditures by corporations and labor unions—will serve as a case study of judicial power.

Reading:

Patterson, We the People
11e, pp. 443-472
10e, pp. 467-495
9e, pp. 490-517

http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam033/2001052978.pdf

http://www.bloombergview.com/articles/2013-01-08/if-judges-aren-t-politicians-what-are-they-

Overview of Citizens United decision

http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/01/21/5-years-later-citizens-united-has-remade-us-politics

Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)


**Thirteenth Session (T, Mar 8): Public Opinion**

Public opinion has a powerful and yet inexact influence on elected officials. They risk their careers if they ignore it. Yet its influence is not easy to pinpoint and there are many issues where public opinion doesn’t come into play at all. There is also the fact that opinions are often based on sparse or inaccurate information. What influence should uninformed opinion have on policy decisions?

This session will examine the attributes of public opinion and explore its impact on the decisions of policymakers—a subject that has been heavily studied by political scientists. The session will also explain the theory and practice of polling, which has become the primary method of assessing public opinion. Gun control policy will be used to illustrate key points about the nature and influence of public opinion.
IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: That the First Amendment right of free expression grants donors the right to spend freely on election campaigns.

Readings:

Patterson, We the People
  11e, pp. 183-204
  10e, pp. 190-211
  9e, pp. 196-205, 211-217


Clay Ramsay, Steven Kull, Evan Lewis, and Stefan Subias, “Misinformation and the 2010 Election,” WorldPublicOpinion.org and Knowledge Networks, December 10, 2010. Skim only enough of this report to pick up the main point—that the public lacks information even on top issues. 


NRA’s response to Obama’s executive order: https://www.nraila.org/articles/20160105/statement-on-president-obamas-proposed-executive-actions-on-gun-control

Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)

W. Phillips Davison, “Public Opinion,” Encyclopedia Britannica. This article, written by a leading sociologist, provides an overview of public opinion. The last section covers some of the same polling topics discussed in previous reading, so you might want to skip or skim that section. 
http://www.britannica.com/topic/public-opinion
Russell G. Brooker and Todd Schaefer, “Methods of Measuring Public Opinion,” working draft. Useful if you’d like to know more about public opinion polling.


FOURTEENTH SESSION (TH, MAR 10): POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties are inseparable from democracy. By offering a choice in between policies and leaders, parties give voters a chance to influence the direction of government. As political scientist E.E. Schattschneider wrote: “It is the competition of [parties] that provides the people with an opportunity to make a choice. Without this opportunity popular sovereignty amounts to nothing.”

Unlike most democracies, the United States has a two-party system centering on the Republicans and the Democrats. This session will examine this feature of the U.S. party system and will explain the origin and nature of today’s Republican and Democratic parties. Party realignments will be a focus of the session; they will be explained in the context of the Civil War realignment, the Great Depression realignment, and the post-1960s realignment.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: That the United States is better served by clear-cut ideological parties than by overlapping moderate parties.

Readings:

Patterson, We the People
11e, pp. 234-249
10e, pp. 244-259
9e, pp. 252-267

David Mayhew, Electoral Realignments. Read only pp. 7-33.
http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS125/articles/mayhew.pdf

“New Deal Coalition,” Wikipedia. This reading provides a brief explanation of the U.S. party system resulting from the upheaval of the 1930s Great Depression.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Deal_coalition

Nicholas A. Valentino and David O. Sears, “Old Times There Are Not Forgotten: Race and Partisan Realignment in the Contemporary South,” American Journal of Political Science, 49 (2005): 672-688. Read the introductory pages and then skim the rest. This reading describes some of the changes that have occurred in the Republican and Democratic coalitions since the 1960s.
http://web.posc.jmu.edu/seminar/readings/4a-realignment/race+party%20realignment%20in%20the%20south%20old%20times%20not%20forgotten.pdf
Alan Abromowitz, “Partisan Polarization and the Rise of the Tea Party Movement”  

Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)

Richard J. Hardy, “The Paradoxes of Political Parties in American Constitutional Development,” Center for Civic Education Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, March 5, 2011. This paper examines key features of America’s party system.  
http://www.civiced.org/pdfs/GermanAmericanConf2011/Hardy.pdf

Delia Baldassarri and Andrew Gelman, American Journal of Sociology 114 (2008): 408-446. A lengthy but informative article that is difficult in parts if your statistical skills are limited.  

SPRING BREAK: No class March 15 and 17

Fifteenth Session (T, MAR 22): Campaigns & Elections

U.S. elections differ from those of virtually all other democracies—longer, more costly, and more clearly centered on the candidates rather than the political parties. This session will examine U.S. campaigns and elections. It will concentrate on the presidential election process, given that congressional elections were discussed extensively in previous sessions.

This session will look at the “invisible primary” (the period preceding the presidential primaries and caucuses), the state nominating contests, and the general election campaign, which centers on the battleground states—those that are competitive enough to be won by either candidate. Key points will be illustrated with examples from recent presidential campaigns.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: That the electoral college system should be replaced by a system where the outcome of the presidential election is decided by popular vote.

Reading:

Patterson, We the People
11e, pp. 377-387
10e, pp. 399-409
9e, pp. 424-430


**Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)**


**Sixteenth Session (TH, MAR 24): Interest Groups**

An interest group—also called a faction, pressure group, special interest, or lobbying group—is an organization that actively seeks to influence public policy. In that sense, interest groups resemble political parties but there is a key distinction between the two. Above all, parties are in the business of trying to influence elections. Groups, on the other hand, concentrate on influencing policies directly affecting their interests.

This session will examine interest groups, focusing on group influence and why some interests are more fully organized than others. The Dodd-Frank Act of 2010, enacted in response to the economic downturn that began in 2008, will be used to illustrate key points about group influence.

**In-Class Debate (See Debate Rules on P. 2 of Syllabus):**

Resolved: A policy of “too big to fail” serves the public interest.

**Reading:**

Patterson, *We the People*: 11e, pp. 270-296

“Dodd–Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act,” Wikipedia. The Dodd-Frank Act is this session’s case study. Read the background and legislative sections and skip the lengthy “Provisions” section of this reading. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dodd%E2%80%93Frank_Wall_Street_Reform_and_Consumer_Protection_Act](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dodd%E2%80%93Frank_Wall_Street_Reform_and_Consumer_Protection_Act)


Optional Reading (if topic is of particular interest)


**SEVENTEENTH SESSION** (T, MAR 29): POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

Team briefings are scheduled for today. No in-class debate for this session.

**4TH ASSIGNMENT — final (exam) memo (due T, APR 12)**

This assignment requires you to write a memo on an issue of American politics. Detailed information on this assignment will be provided in a separate document.

Political movements (or, as they are also called, social movements) are a way for citizens disenchanted with government to actively express their disagreement. Unlike voting or lobbying, political movements take place outside established institutions, often in the form of protest demonstrations and rallies.

This session will examine the factors affecting the success of political movements, such as their ability to attract the resources required for sustained advocacy. Four cases will be used to illustrate the
significance of these factors: the black civil rights movement, the Vietnam War protest movement, the Tea Party movement, and Occupy Wall Street.

**Reading:**

Patterson, *We the People*
- 11th ed. 224-228, 148-154
- 10th ed. 234-237, 154-161
- 9th ed. 238-242, 158-162


Here are overviews of the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street. Read only the portions that increase what you know of them.


**Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)**


**EIGHTEENTH SESSION (TH, MAR 31): MASS MEDIA**

The news media are Americans’ window onto the world of politics. For most people, politics is a secondhand experience, something they observe through the media rather than directly. Many of people’s images of politics derive from what they see and hear through the media.
This session will examine the news media’s influence on politics, focusing on the extraordinary changes that have taken place in the news system in recent decades and on the consequences of those changes. The U.S. news system was once dominated by the television broadcast networks and local newspapers. Today, they have to compete with cable and Internet outlets, many of which operate by a different standard. Studies of news effects and content will be used to document the differences and their consequences.

IN-CLASS DEBATE (SEE DEBATE RULES ON P. 2 OF SYLLABUS):

Resolved: On balance, the emergence of partisan media (such as Fox and MSNBC) has had a positive impact on American politics.

Reading:

Patterson, We the People

11th ed. pp. 306-324
10th ed. pp. 322-340
9th ed. pp. 336-358

http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199903%2993%3A1%3C99%3AHETGA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-H


http://www.journalism.org/2014/10/21/political-polarization-media-habits/

http://sites.sas.upenn.edu/mleven/files/polarization_ajps.pdf

Optional reading (if of particular interest)


- Brendan Nyhan (767-771) – DOI: [http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001405](http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001405)
- Nolan McCarty (772-774) - DOI: [http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001399](http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001399)
- Justin H. Gross, Cosma Rohilla Shalizi and Andrew Gelman (775-779) - DOI: [http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001387](http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001387)
- Nancy L. Rosenblum (780-782) - DOI: [http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001375](http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001375)
- Kathleen Hall Jamieson (783-785) - DOI: [http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001193](http://dx.doi.org.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/10.1017/S1537592712001193)

**Nineteenth Session (T, APR 5): Religion and Politics**

Social issues refer to disputes over values and how we should live our lives. Social issues end up pitting people against one another, which is the case today for social issues such as immigration, charter schools, police practices, gun rights, legalization of marijuana, environmental protection, and discrimination of all kinds.

Over the course of American history, no aspect of society has affected social issues more substantially than has religion. Social issues arise out of differences in values, and religions are founded on values. Not surprisingly, the intersection of religion and politics has been a persistent source of political conflict. This session will concentrate on the intersection of religion and politics, historically and today.
We will explain how issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage have played out in ways that have aligned religious conservatives with the Republican Party and aligned seculars and religious liberals with the Democratic Party.

Reading:

Patterson, *We the People*
- 11e, pp. 178-183
- 10e, pp. 185-189
- 9e, pp. 191-196

“Anti-Catholicism in the United States,” Wikipedia. Read the early sections, ending with the section titled “World War II.”  
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Catholicism_in_the_United_States


Drew Halfmann, “Why Abortion Controversies are So Central to U.S. Politics,” SSN.  
https://www.scholarsstrategynetwork.org/sites/default/files/ssn_key_findings_halfmann_on_political_institutions_and_abortion.pdf

http://www.pewforum.org/2012/02/02/trends-in-party-identification-of-religious-groups/

Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)

Michael Hout and Claude Fischer, “Explaining Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Political Backlash and Generational Succession, 1987-2102,” *Sociological Science* 1 (2014): 423-444. Rather than focusing on the impact of religion on politics, this article examines how politics has affected Americans’ religious practices. Skim the parts of the article that are of less interest.  

https://www.princeton.edu/~bartels/kansasqgps06.pdf

**TWENTIETH SESSION (TH, APR 7): CLASS AND POLITICS**

Since the Great Depression, the U.S. government has taken responsibility for promoting and sustaining economic growth and stability. This effort takes the form of fiscal policy, which refers to the government’s taxing and spending policies, and monetary policy, which refers to government efforts to control the money supply. This session examines fiscal policy and monetary policy—what they are, what tools they involve, and what political divisions they create. The nature of these policies will be
illustrated through several cases, including the policies enacted in response to the economic downturn that began in 2008. Much of the session will focus on the effect of fiscal and monetary policies since the 1970s on the income divide—the widening gap in the income level of most Americans and that of the country’s wealthier individuals.

Reading:

Patterson, We the People
- 11e, pp. 493-507
- 10e, pp. 519-533
- 9e, pp. 546-556

Hacker Jacob S. and Paul Pierson, “Winner-Take-All Politics: Public Policy, Political Organization, and the Precipitous Rise of Top Incomes in the United States,” Politics & Society 38 (2010): 152-204. This article is the lengthiest of any assigned for the course but will help you to understand the contribution of public policy to the widening income divide. [http://pas.sagepub.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/content/38/2/152.full.pdf](http://pas.sagepub.com.ezp-prod1.hul.harvard.edu/content/38/2/152.full.pdf)


Optional reading (if topic is of particular interest)


Doug Short, “Charting the Incredible Shift from Manufacturing to Services in America,” *Business Insider*, September 5, 2011. Part of the story of income stagnation is the shift in the nature of the U.S. economy, which this article briefly describes.


**TWENTY-FIRST SESSION (T, APR 12): COURSE WRAP UP**

4th assignment - final memo - due today in class.

This session will highlight key themes of the course, provide time for student course evaluations, and end with pizza and conversation in the hall.

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**GRADES**

The graded components of the course will make the following contributions to your final grade:

- Op-ed 10%
- Memo 1 20%
- Briefing 20% (15% for the oral briefing and power-point slides and 5 percent for the accompanying memo)
- Final Exam (Memo) 30%
- Class Participation 20% (includes formal in-class presentations, which will get a deduction only if you did not prepare and present properly)

Your absolute grade on any graded exercise is less significant than your grade relative to that of other students. Large-enrollment Kennedy School courses are required to assign final grades on a curve based on students’ ranking in the class. As a result, my grading effort is driven by equity: a determination to ensure that no member of the class receives a higher final grade than another member who has performed as well or better. If you take responsibility for your performance, I assure you that it will be evaluated fairly relative to the performance of other students.

Because DPI-101 is likely your first DPI course, all of the instructors who teach the course have concluded that we should apply the most liberal curve allowable by KSG guidelines. The final grades in this course will fall roughly within the following ranges: A (highest 15-20% of the class), A- (next 20-30%), B+ (next 20-30%), B (next 20-25%), B- or lower (lowest 5-10% of the class).