

PO 120: Introduction to U.S. Politics

Saint Michael's College - Fall Semester 2022
Jeanmarie Hall 378 ; Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays 11:00am-12:05pm

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Student Drop-in Hours: Tuesdays 10:30am-12:00pm, Wednesdays 3:00pm-5:00pm, & by appointment

Course Description

“True republicanism is the sovereignty of the people. There are natural and imprescriptible rights which an entire nation has no right to violate, just as national sovereignty is above the secondary agreements of the government.” –Marquis de Lafayette, Speech on 3 January 1834

“Democracy never lasts long. It soon wastes, exhausts and murders itself. There was never a democracy that did not commit suicide.” –John Adams, Letter to John Taylor in 1814

“Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself.” –John Lewis, Essay on the Occasion of his Funeral 30 July 2020

These three quotes provide the foundation for our discussions in this course. Lafayette's expression about the nature of a republican-style government echoes the core position of the Declaration of Independence. Specifically, it is the people who hold sovereign power within government; monarchs, aristocrats, generals, and theocrats are only delegated power by the people they govern. Yet, while a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people” is often seen as the pinnacle of good governance, its ability to endure is precarious. Adams' words dramatically, yet accurately, describe the inherent danger of democratic governance; the people may have the sovereign authority to establish government, but they can also destroy it. It is up to the people to follow the admonition of John Lewis and continually take action, or get in “good trouble,” in order to preserve democratic governance.

Our goal over the next sixteen weeks is to understand, analyze, and evaluate **1) how the people of the United States establish and conduct democratic government, 2) what the greatest weaknesses of and threats to U.S. democracy include, and 3) what concerned people can do to preserve and defend U.S. democracy.** This course is intentionally limited in scope, as it is an introduction to the institutions and concepts that support the government of the United States. It is my goal for this class to provide each of you the fundamentals necessary to begin a lifelong study of how the U.S. government operates, what role the people play in that operation, and the role you personally have in good governance. While we will only scratch the surface of these topics throughout the semester, we will identify the tools necessary for each of you to charter your own course towards improved future civic engagement and understanding.

Required Text

There is **no required textbook for this course** - but there will be a significant amount of required reading and listening. Most of your reading/listening assignments (referred to generally as readings from now on) will consist of magazine-style essays or informative podcast episodes, but there will occasionally be some academic research articles sprinkled in too. I posted to Canvas a tip sheet on how to read academic research and encourage you to consult it when you read these types of articles.

Readings are detailed in the Course Outline section of the syllabus. All readings are to be completed **before** the class session they are assigned. All readings or podcast links will be posted to our course Canvas page.

Course Policies & Expectations

Attendance, Participation, & Lecture Resources

I will come to our class sessions on-time and prepared to lead a lecture and discussion for the full amount of time we have scheduled together. I expect each of you to also be ready to listen, question, and discuss for the same amount of time. I will aim to post lecture slides to Canvas the morning of the class period of the lecture. Most weeks, Mondays and Wednesdays will be a bit more lecture heavy, while Fridays are intentionally designed to be a group discussion day centered around that week's topics.

Attendance counts as a very small portion of your participation grade. If you need to be absent, including if you are not feeling well, just e-mail me to give me a heads-up and you won't lose any attendance credit. If you are frequently absent, you will hear from me to check in and see how I can help you catch up and make sure you are ok. In order to help me learn your name and to take attendance, **I'm asking you to make a name tag that you can display on your desk.** The best way to do this is to fold a normal sheet of paper in thirds, and use a marker to write your name in big, bold letters. You can stand the name tag like a pyramid on your desk.

We are a highly vaccinated community and continuing to implement mitigation strategies to limit the spread of COVID-19 and other communicable infections. **While your personal risk to these infections may be low, some of your peers, faculty, staff, and their families are more vulnerable.** Please do your part to practice good citizenship and adhere to the health and safety policies so we can have a productive and safe semester. And also remember, these infections are termed communicable because they are easily spread; **contracting COVID-19, monkeypox, or any infection does not indicate a moral failure or a willful disregard for others.** Be compassionate and kind to each other - we could all do better at this in 2022.

There may be a reason for some or all of us to transition to an online format for a period of time - including if we are sick from a non-COVID-19 illness. To encourage you to stay home and focus on recovering when you are ill, all class sessions will be recorded and available in Echo360 on our course Canvas page. Please, take advantage of this setup and **do not come to class if you are not feeling well.**

Laptops & Other Electronics

The consensus of education scholarship¹ maintains students who take notes by hand retain more information over time than those who take notes on laptops or other electronic devices. Aside from the learning benefits of abstaining from laptop use for notes, the benefits of removing the audio/visual distractions associated with the use of electronic devices, both to you and those around you, are significant. As such, **the use of laptops, tablets, smartphones, and other electronic devices to take notes is strongly discouraged** during our time together. Using these devices for anything other than notetaking is not permitted in class.

If you insist on disregarding this notetaking advice, or you have a learning difference mitigated through the use of electronic devices, please avoid sitting in the front row(s) so you can minimize the distractions caused by your use of technology. Please note: if you are found to be using electronics for other activities (e.g. social media, checking e-mail, shopping, etc.) you will not be permitted to continue using electronic devices in

¹Check out this [New York Times article](#) for a summary of the research.

class. Additionally, **audio and/or visual recording of class sessions is not permitted** without prior authorization from me.

Student Drop-in Hours & E-mail

I have four hours set aside each week where I am available in my office to consult with students. That time is **your** time; you do not need an appointment to come by. I strongly encourage students to come in and chat about topics from the readings or lecture, to discuss study skills, or to simply talk about any questions you may have with the course. I would prefer spending that time chatting with you instead of doing something else, so please, don't be a stranger! If your schedule prevents you from being able to see me during drop-in hours, you are welcome and encouraged to e-mail me to set-up an appointment when we can meet.

I'm comfortable meeting with students in my office, but your circumstances or preferences may differ. If you would prefer to meet via Zoom, I'm happy to do so; just click the Zoom link for drop-in hours on the front page of our course Canvas site. You'll be placed in a waiting room until I add you to my feed; please be patient if there's a slight delay - it means I'm meeting with your peers and I will get to you as soon as I finish with the others.

I welcome students getting in touch with me through e-mail. E-mails should primarily be used to address quick questions, not for requests to go over what was discussed in class because of an absence. E-mails are a form of professional correspondence, not informal text messages. I will respond to e-mails within 24 hours on weekdays (and often much sooner), but do not expect a reply after 5:00pm or on weekends.

I will communicate with the class often through Canvas messages or announcements. Please be sure your Canvas notifications are updated to ensure you are informed when these messages are sent out.

Late Submissions

College student life is busy. I have prepared a Course Outline that allows you to plan well in advance to complete our readings and assignments. I strongly encourage you to use this outline to ensure you prepare sufficient time to complete all the tasks associated with our course. Each of you can hopefully use the outline in conjunction with your personal calendars to avoid work piling up.

Even with good planning, life happens. As such, you have a 24-hour grace period to submit assignments. **For up to 24-hours after the due date of an assignment, you can submit it late, no questions asked, no excuses needed, and no penalty assessed.** If your circumstances make it necessary for you to submit work past the grace period, you should contact me so we can work out an arrangement and so I can provide you support in successfully completing the course. If you submit work after the grace period, but did not contact me in advance to discuss your unique circumstances, I will not grade the assignment and it will receive a zero. **I strongly advise you do everything you can to submit at the deadline** and not view the "real" deadline as simply being the end of the grace period; technical difficulties will not permit an extension beyond the grace period. **Also, due to College policy, I cannot accept the final essay late - it must be submitted by the deadline.**

Grade Appeals

I am committed to making the grading process as transparent as possible. I will prepare a rubric for most assignments that outlines how they will be graded. When grades are posted, you should be able to see how you did according to the rubric in addition to any individual comments I make on your assignment or exam. **Grades are based on quality of work, not on a student's effort towards completing the work.** Think of your graded work like building a boat; you could spend a lot of time constructing that boat, but if when you take it out to the lake it immediately sinks, no one congratulates or pays you for spending a lot

of time on building a defective boat. If you believe the grade does not adequately reflect the quality of your submitted work, you may take the following steps²:

- Review any comments/feedback I have provided, including the rubric for the assignment.
- If after reviewing my feedback you still have questions about how your assignment was graded, come to my office hours and we can discuss it. **Please note: I do not discuss grades for 24 hours after they have been handed back to students.** This policy allows for all parties to discuss an assignment without the immediate emotional reaction of seeing the grade.
- If after discussing your grade with me in person, you still believe the grade does not adequately reflect the **quality of your work**, write a one-paragraph written request for a re-grade and submit it to me by e-mail. The request should outline specific examples of your work that you believe were incorrectly graded. **Any request for a re-grade must be submitted within one week of the assignment being returned to the student.** If your request is approved, I will evaluate the assignment as though it is a new submission. As such, the assignment may receive a lower grade, the same grade, or a higher grade. The result of this re-grade is final.

Campus Resources

Any student in need of accommodations for a learning difference, or who is unsure if they should receive any, should contact the [Office of Accessibility Services](#), located on the top floor of the Durick Library. You should also contact me to discuss necessary accommodations well in advance of the deadline for any assignment. I am committed to upholding the College's policy on ensuring students in need of accommodations are fully supported.

I highly recommend all students take advantage of the academic resources offered by the [Academic Enrichment Commons](#), also located on the top floor of the Durick Library. These resources include tools to improve study skills, academic writing, as well as select topic-specific assistance. Another valuable service available to you is the [Writing Center](#), located on the main floor of the Durick Library. The Writing Center provides a comfortable space for you to write, as well as find help from trained student writing coaches. Almost all of these services are included in your student fees, so take advantage of them and get your money's worth.

Finally, learning how to practice good mental health and maintenance is just as important as learning the skills and knowledge associated with your college degree. I invite and encourage each of you to take the opportunity to speak with a mental health professional as often as you need or want while at St. Mike's. These professionals at the [Bergeron Wellness Center](#) are specifically here and trained to provide you the support and care you need as a college student. Please use their services as an important resource during your college experience. Take a look at their services using the link above, and remember, **it's ok to not be ok; it's a sign of strength to ask for help when you need it.**

Academic Integrity

Simply put: do not cheat. Do not consider cheating, attempt cheating, or encourage others to cheat. All work done for this course must be done individually unless otherwise specified. You cannot submit work done in previous courses, or in another course during this semester, for credit in this course unless we discuss and I explicitly authorize it. You cannot plagiarize. I have posted a document on our course Canvas page explaining what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it. **I strongly encourage every student to review this document, even if you think you already know what constitutes plagiarism.** Accidental plagiarism is still plagiarism and will be treated as such. If you have any questions about academic integrity, please reach out to me.

²Please note due to time constraints in submitting course grades, final essays are not included in this policy

Any and all instances of violating the College's [academic integrity policy](#) will be reported to the Associate Dean of the College, and the assignment(s) and/or exam(s) that are the subject of the infraction will receive a zero.

Social Justice and Allyship

At the core of Saint Michael's mission is for everyone in our community to become an advocate for social justice, including a personal effort to be "intentionally inclusive." Political science is heavily involved in scholarship and education addressing many topics of social justice and building a more just and equitable society. I am personally committed to fulfilling this mission, and encouraging my students to do likewise. I strive to ensure my office and our classroom, whether physical or virtual, are safe spaces of inclusion for all. I invite each of you to join me in creating and ensuring such an environment during our time together.

Recent events have drawn attention to the issues and deficiencies that still exist within our society. The "Me Too" movement has highlighted how sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse continue to plague our institutions and communities. Black Lives Matter calls on us to recognize systemic racism, particularly in policing and government, and pro-actively become anti-racists. Pride marches present an opportunity to celebrate recent hard-earned judicial recognition of the civil rights and liberties for LGBTQ+ people, and the ongoing need to continue fighting for rights still denied or once more threatened. The consequences of policies regarding the treatment of immigrants, refugees, and undocumented people rouse us to consider how we can be more charitable and compassionate in our treatment of vulnerable and historically marginalized populations. This list is hardly comprehensive, as there remain other issues regarding religious persecution, income inequality, climate justice, and on and on.

While we will not touch on all of these issues, we will discuss many of them in the context of this course. I encourage all of you to intentionally consider how you advocate for social justice in your own life, and how you are striving to continually become an ally to those in need of your support. The College provides several resources and campus groups to help support what is both a personal and collective mission to promote social justice and allyship. I list some below and encourage you to check them out if you have not already during your time at St. Mike's.

- [Center for Multicultural Affairs & Services](#): They represent Saint Michael's "commitment to a campus and a world that values every human being, and supports and celebrates their uniqueness, experiences, and contributions." Some of their activities/groups include the Diversity Coalition, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Society and Convocation.
- [Center for Women and Gender](#): Their mission is "to promote awareness and activism around women's and gender equity issues by educating students, faculty and staff." They also support individuals by providing them with resources and referrals.
- [Common Ground](#): A GSA (Gender and Sexuality Alliance) that seeks to provide a safe space on Saint Michael's campus for all members of the LGBTQ+ community.
- [Center for Global Engagement](#): Serves as "the collaborative hub for international activity at SMC, promoting global learning and literacy, deepening inter-cultural competency and inclusion, and supporting opportunities for global engagement." Includes opportunities for study abroad, international internships, international and post-graduate volunteer opportunities (e.g. Peace Corps), and supporting international students on campus.

Boilerplate Notices

The following are some boilerplate notices I have included as we implement greater accessibility for the course. If you have any questions or concerns about them, please feel free to get in touch with me.

Recording and Posting of Class Sessions

Class sessions may be recorded by the professor and posted only to a College-approved site (e.g. Canvas). The recordings may include the student or their video feed, their name, and any materials they share during the class session (e.g. screen share, chat messages, spoken comments, etc.). **By enrolling in this course, you consent to being recorded and for that recording to be posted to the course Canvas page.**

Professor's Copyright of Course Materials

The professor's lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials, are protected by U.S. copyright law and by College policy. The professor is the exclusive owner of the copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies of course materials for their own use. Students may also share those materials with another student who is enrolled in or auditing this course. **Students may not reproduce, distribute or display (post/upload) lecture notes, recordings, or course materials in any other way, whether or not a fee is charged, without the professor's express prior written consent.** Students also may not allow others to do so. If a student violates this standard, they may be subject to student conduct proceedings under the College's academic integrity policy, including receiving a grade of F for the course.

Course Requirements

Grade Breakdown

All assignments are to be submitted in Canvas unless otherwise noted.

- 60% Reaction Papers - 4 papers at 15% each: one paper in each three or four week block due at 3:00pm on Friday, 16 September; Friday, 7 October; Friday, 28 October; Friday, 18 November.
- 25% Civic Engagement Reflection Essay: due Friday, 9 December, 3:00pm
- 15% Seminar Participation (including weekly meme submissions due at 11:00am every Thursday)

Reaction Papers

A goal of this course is for you to be an active participant in your learning. This includes that you apply what we discuss and reflect on how our discussions impact and shape your own views and understanding of U.S. democracy. To help provide you a forum and incentive for this kind of application and self-reflection, I'm asking you to write four reaction papers. These papers are due roughly every 3 weeks in the course. Within each 3-week block, consider one of the topics we discuss and write about them. While you're limited to the topics in each block (e.g. you shouldn't write about a topic from week 1 for your third paper), you could certainly link topics from other weeks together or use them to support and enhance your argument.

These papers are not review summaries - I do not want you to simply summarize a day's readings. I already know what the readings say, and I assume you do too since you were asked to read them. Instead, I want you to think about the readings and discussions from a particular day, and very briefly summarize those main points before spending the bulk of your paper (i.e. 90%) discussing your thoughts about what you have read. Don't just tell me "I agree/disagree with so and so..."; give me something more consequential and meaningful! Really explore and detail your views, why you have those views, and how these readings/discussions impacted the way you think about your views on a given topic. Each paper should be **no more than 2 pages**, double-spaced and 12-pt font. Unless you're using a direct quote, there's no need for a reference page.

Civic Engagement Reflection Essay

Your final assignment for the course is to reflect and discuss what steps you are committed to personally taking to immediately address democratic resiliency. After 15 weeks of talking about this topic, what are you going to do to preserve democracy? Be specific, be sincere; if you're apathetic say so. If you think democracy isn't worth saving, say so. There's not a right answer for you to give, but I do expect a detailed discussion outlining what actions you intend to take and why, or why you believe any action on your part would be meaningless. You should also take some time to highlight how your actions (or inaction) will motivate others to join and help you in advancing democracy. You can't save democracy on your own, so how will you take action to try and encourage others to join you in this endeavor?

Your essay should be no longer than 4 pages, double-spaced and 12-pt font. You should use other readings/arguments to support/explain your views and plans, and thus need to ensure you cite them and include a reference page.

Seminar Participation and Weekly Meme Submission

Our course will only be successful if we all participate and learn together. I expect everyone to participate over the 15 weeks we have together. Participation does not mean just asking questions or contributing to the discussion every week (though you are certainly encouraged to do so), nor does it mean that you should contribute so much that you forget to listen to what your peers have to share. Good civic discourse requires both sharing and listening. Please be sure to do both on a regular basis.

This is a political science course and we will be discussing political issues. Each of us has a unique opinion about many political issues, and some of these views are considered foundational to our varied belief systems. When we discuss these issues, there will likely be disagreement. That's a key part of politics; democratic governance anticipates and indeed promotes disagreement and differences of opinion. While we may have disagreements, I insist we discuss our differences with respect, civility, and empathy. Do your best to try to understand the point of view of your peers, even if you think they are completely wrong.

This standard does not mean you should avoid participating when you have an alternative point of view because you do not want to provoke an argument. Be bold! Share what you believe! You may be challenged to defend your beliefs, but that is an opportunity for you to learn and grow, not an attack on who you are or what you think. Deliberative discourse succeeds in preserving democracy when we listen with an empathetic ear, rather than speak with a threatening tongue.

Your participation grade will be based on your active participation in class, as well as your submission of a weekly meme. For these memes, your task is pretty simple; read through the week's assignments and consider the material discussed in class - then, make a meme about one aspect of that week's topic. For example, if we were studying the US Congress this week and discussed the House Rules Committee, you could make a meme that in some way expresses a fundamental concept about the House Rules Committee. Be as creative as you want, but don't be foolish or hurtful (see the above discussion about civility, respect, and empathy). You'll submit your meme in Canvas **by 11am every Thursday** (late period still applies). **You have 3 free passes to forget or just skip submitting a meme;** after that, you'll lose points from your participation grade for each subsequent meme not submitted. **Because of this provision, meme submissions cannot be made up.**

Course Outline

This section provides a daily outline of what we will be doing during the next 15 weeks.³ Readings are to be completed **before** the class they are assigned. All readings can be found on [Canvas](#). This schedule is subject to change, but I will give you notice if/when that occurs.

Legend: [Canvas/Online Readings](#), [Class Cancellation](#), [Exams & Assignments](#)

Democracy in Crisis

1. Monday, 29 August: U.S. Democracy in Crisis

- Review syllabus
- Levitsky, Stephen and Daniel Ziblatt. 22 January 2018. “How Democracies Die’ Authors Say Trump Is a Symptom of ‘Deeper Problems.’ *NPR Fresh Air* podcast interview.
- Ingraham, Christopher. 18 September 2020. “The United States is Backsliding into Autocracy under Trump, Scholars Warn.” *Washington Post*.
- Norris, Pippa. 7 January 2021. “It Happened in America. Democratic Backsliding Shouldn’t Have Come as a Surprise.” *Foreign Affairs*.

2. Wednesday, 31 August: Comparative Democratic Backsliding

- Bodea, Cristina, and Christian Houle. 4 August 2020. “The Longer-term Coronavirus Fallout Could Erode Democracy. Here’s How that Could Play Out.” *Washington Post*.
- Claassen, Christopher. 17 July 2019. “Does Public Support for Democracy Defend a Country from Autocrats? Not Necessarily.” *Washington Post*.
- Albertus, Michael, and Victor Menaldo. 26 February 2018. “How Flawed Constitutions Undermine Democracy.” *Washington Post*.

3. Friday, 2 September: Discussion Day

- Topic: Is the U.S. a democracy? Why is democracy desirable? What needs to change for the U.S. to return to/retain democracy?

4. Monday, 5 September: A Republic, If You Can Keep It

- The Declaration of Independence
- Douglass, Frederick. 5 July 1852. “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro.”
- Tomasky, Michael, and Eric Metaxas. 4 March 2019. “American Democracy (Keep It If You Can).” *NPR 1A* podcast interview.

5. Wednesday, 7 September: Democracy by Design?

- Garsten, Bryan. 10 January 2021. “Impeach and Convict Trump. Congress Must Defend Itself.” *New York Times*.
- Selin, Jennifer. 8 June 2020. “How the Constitution’s Federalist Framework is Being Tested by COVID-19.” *Brookings Institute*.
- Barabak, Mark. 25 April 2020. “Who Knows Best? Mayors Collide with Governors Over Coronavirus Lockdown.”

³I want to thank Dr. Hakeem Jefferson and Katie Clayton (both of Stanford University) for their work in developing the bulk of this reading and topic list.

6. **Friday, 9 September:** Discussion Day

- Topic: What is a democracy? Was the U.S. designed to be a democracy?

7. **Monday, 12 September:** Democracy in Polarized Times

- Iyengar, Shanto, and Sean Westwood. 2014. “Fear and Loathing across Party Lines: New Evidence of Group Polarization.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- “The Partisan Divide on Political Values Grows Even Wider (overview). 5 October 2017.” *Pew Research Center*.
- Klein, Ezra. 6 April 2014. “How Politics Makes Us Stupid.” *Vox*.

8. **Wednesday, 14 September:** Polarization in Political Leadership

- Gaynor, SoRelle Wyckoff. 14 December 2021. “Here’s How Republican and Democratic Party Leaders Reward the Faithful and Punish Wayward Members.” *Washington Post*.
- Barton, Richard C. 10 June 2022. “Congress Is Polarized. Fear of Being ‘Primaried’ Is One Reason.” *Washington Post*.
- Play [the fiscal ship game](#) (should take 30-60 minutes) at the link I’ve embedded in the syllabus. You need to play it through at least once. After you start a new game, it will ask if you want to choose your own goals. Click that button, then from the list of goals choose the following: a) Pick either Joe Biden’s Priorities or Republican Priorities; b) Pick either Rein In Entitlements or Strengthen Social Safety net; c) Pick one more goal of your choice, though it can’t be the not chosen options from a) or b). Once the game begins, make sure you review EVERY policy in EVERY category (there is a scroll button at the bottom of the page) - even if you hit your target early.

9. **Friday, 16 September:** Discussion Day

- Topic: How does political polarization affect democratic governance and democratic resiliency?
- [First Reaction Paper due 3pm](#)

10. **Monday, 19 September:** The Power of the States

- Grumbach, Jacob. 2018. “From Backwaters to Major Policymakers: Policy Polarization in the States, 1970-2014.” *Perspectives on Politics*.
- Mayer, Jane. 6 August 2022. “State Legislatures Are Torching Democracy.” *The New Yorker*.

11. **Wednesday, 21 September:** The Role of Local Government

- Beacon, Rosie. 5 May 2021. “Why Local Government Is the Best Laboratory of Innovation for Digital Democracy.” *Institute for Global Change*.
- Quinton, Sophie. 25 January 2017. “Expect More Conflict between Cities and States.” *Stateline*.
- Harris, Adam. 27 April 2022. “School Boards Are No Match For US Political Dysfunction.” *The Atlantic*.

12. **Friday, 23 September:** Discussion Day

- Topic: Does federalism strengthen or weaken democracy?

13. **Monday, 26 September:** Is This What Democracy Looks Like?

- Tam Cho, Wendy K., James G. Gimpel, and Joshua J. Dyck. 2006. “Residential Concentration, Political Socialization, and Voter Turnout.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Rao, Ankita, Pat Dillon, Kim Kelly, and Zak Bennett. 7 November 2019. “Is America a Democracy? If So, Why Does it Deny Millions the Vote?” *The Guardian*.
- Hopikins, Dan. 21 August 2018. “What We Know About Voter ID Laws.” *FiveThirtyEight*.

14. **Wednesday, 28 September:** Healthy Elections

- Persily, Nathaniel. 22 January 2014. “American Elections Need Help. Here’s How to Make Them Better.” *Washington Post*
- Baranovsky-Dewey, Alla. 26 September 2018. “Russia Is Trying to Influence the 2018 U.S. Election. But This Time the U.S. Is Prepared.” *Washington Post*.
- Persily, Nathaniel. 13 October 2020. “Ensuring a Free and Fair Election.” *Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies* interview.

15. **Friday, 30 September:** Discussion Day

- Topic: What qualifies an election as ‘free and fair?’ Does the U.S. have ‘free and fair’ elections?

16. **Monday, 3 October:** The Ugly Truth of Political Violence

- Kalmoe, Nathan, and Liliana Mason. 11 January 2021. “What You Need to Know about How Many Americans Condone Political Violence - And Why.” *Washington Post*.
- Jefferson, Hakeem. 8 January 2021. “Storming the U.S. Capitol Was about Maintaining White Power in America.” *FiveThirtyEight*.

17. **Wednesday, 5 October:** The Structure of American Political Attitudes

- View a “[Walking Citizenship Test](#)” with Jay Leno. 11 December 2011.
- Lelkes, Yphtach, and Paul Sniderman. 16 December 2016. “Democrats’ Policies are More Popular. But Republicans are More Ideologically Unified.” *Washington Post*.
- Jefferson, Hakeem, and Alan Yan. 6 October 2020. “How the Two-party System Obscures The Complexity of Black Americans’ Politics.” *FiveThirtyEight*.

18. **Friday, 7 October:** Discussion Day

- Topic: How do individual and group attitudes threaten and strengthen democracy?
- [Second Reaction Paper due 3pm](#)

19. **Monday, 10 October:** A Heavenly Choir Singing with an Upper Class Accent

- Kalla, Joshua L., and David Broockman. 2015. “Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Offices: A Randomized Field Experiment.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Drutman, Lee. 20 April 2015. “How Corporate Lobbyists Conquered American Democracy.” *The Atlantic*.
- Pildes, Richard H. 6 February 2020. “Small Dollars, Big Changes.” *Washington Post*.

20. **Wednesday, 12 October:** Political Advertising

- No reading - come ready to watch an hour's worth of political ads and discuss!

21. **Friday, 14 October:** **No Class - Fall Break**

22. **Monday, 17 October:** The Fourth Estate

- Mendelberg, Tali. 1997. "Executing Hortons: Racial Crime in the 1988 Presidential Campaign." *Public Opinion Quarterly*.
- Levendusky, Matthew, and Neil Malhotra. 2015. "Does Media Coverage of Partisan Polarization Affect Political Attitudes?" *Political Communication*.
- Martin, Gregory J., and Josh McCrain. 10 April 2018. "Yes, Sinclair Broadcast Group Does Cut Local News, Increase National News, and Tilt Its Stations Rightward." *Washington Post*.

23. **Wednesday, 19 October:** Disinformation and Democracy

- Nyhan, Brendan. 20 February 2020. "Brendan Nyhan on the Empirical Effects of Disinformation." *The Lawfare Podcast* interview.
- Kurtzleben, Danielle. 11 April 2018. "Did Fake News on Facebook Help Elect Trump? Here's What We Know." *NPR*.

24. **Friday, 21 October:** Discussion Day

- What is the role media must play in a democracy? What role does media play in the U.S.?

25. **Monday, 24 October:** All Politics Is Identity Politics

- White, Ismail K., Chryl N. Laird, and Troy D. Allen. 2014. "Selling Out?: The Politics of Navigating Conflicts between Racial Group Interest and Self-interest." *American Political Science Review*.
- Cramer Walsh, Katherine. 2015. "Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective." *American Political Science Review*.
- Byler, David. 12 November 2020. "Trump Shocked the World with His Latino Support. Here's How It Happened." *Washington Post*.

26. **Wednesday, 26 October:** White Identity Politics

- Jardina, Ashley. 2019. *White Identity Politics*. Ch.1
- Chotiner, Isaac. 19 January 2019. "The Disturbing, Surprisingly Complex Relationship Between White Identity Politics and Racism." *The New Yorker*.

27. **Friday, 28 October:** Discussion Day

- Topic: How does identity affect politics in the U.S.? How does identity politics impact democratic resiliency?
- [Third Reaction Paper due 3pm](#)

28. **Monday, 31 October:** Pride, Prejudice, and American Politics

- Bartels, Larry. 2020. “Ethnic Antagonism Erodes Republicans’ Commitment to Democracy.” *PNAS*.
- Malhotra, Neil, and Benjamin Newman. 22 May 2019. “What’s Behind the Desire for ‘Skilled’ Immigrants? Racial Prejudice.” *Washington Post*.
- Worland, Justin. 11 June 2020. “America’s Long Overdue Awakening to Systemic Racism.” *TIME Magazine*.

29. **Wednesday, 2 November:** Race and Democracy

- Prouse, Gwen, and Vesla Weaver. 2020. “Racial Authoritarianism in U.S. Democracy.” *Science*.
- Prouse, Gwen, and Vesla Weaver. 17 June 2020. “We Listened to People in Highly Policed U.S. Communities. Here’s What We Learned.” *Washington Post*.
- Johnson, Theodore R. 23 February 2022. “The Role of Racial Resentment in Our Politics.” *Brennan Center*.

30. **Friday, 4 November:** Discussion Day

- Topic: What would a multiracial democracy look like? What threatens a multiracial democracy from enduring?

31. **Monday, 7 November:** Law and Order

- Remember, tomorrow is **Election Day**. You can register to vote in Vermont, even on Election Day. If you are eligible to vote, no matter who you vote for, make sure you vote!
- Beauchamp, Zack. 23 April 2021. “How Broken Policing Is Breaking Our Democracy.” *Vox*.
- Bowie, Nikolas. 16 July 2021. “How The Supreme Court Dominates Our Democracy.” *Washington Post*.
- Millhiser, Ian. 30 June 2022. “A New Supreme Court Case Is the Biggest Threat to US Democracy Since January 6.” *Vox*.

32. **Wednesday, 9 November:** Uncivil Discourse on Civil Rights

- Serwer, Adam. December 2019. “Civility Is Overrated.” *The Atlantic*.
- Joseph, Peniel E. 4 July 2018. “America’s Nonviolent Civil Rights Movement Was Considered Uncivil by Critics at The Time.” *Washington Post*.
- Grigsby Bates, Karen. 14 March 2019. “When Civility Is Used As A Cudgel Against People of Color.” *NPR*.

33. **Friday, 11 November:** Discussion Day

- Topic: What role should courts play in preserving democratic government?

34. **Monday, 14 November:** Political Socialization

- Bos, Angela L., Jill S. Greenlee, Mirya R. Holman, Zoe M. Oxley, and J. Celeste Lay. 2022. “This One’s for the Boys: How Gendered Political Socialization Limits Girls’ Political Ambition and Interest.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Badger, Emily, and Claire Cain Miller. 1 April 2019. “How the Trump Era Is Molding the Next Generation of Voters.” *New York Times*.
- Take the [Pew Political Typology](#) quiz and come prepared to discuss your results on Friday.

35. **Wednesday, 16 November:** American Rage

- Ball, Molly. 2 September 2016. “Donald Trump and The Politics of Fear.” *The Atlantic*.
- Duhigg, Charles. January 2019. “The Real Roots of American Rage.” *The Atlantic*.
- Thomson-DeVeaux, Amelia, Jasmine Mithani, and Laura Bronner. 30 October 2020. “Why Younger Americans Don’t Vote More Often (*No, It’s Not Apathy).” *FiveThirtyEight*.

36. **Friday, 18 November:** Discussion Day

- Topic: How does U.S. society threaten democratic governance?
- [Fourth Reaction Paper due 3pm](#)

37. **Monday, 21 November:** No Class - Thanksgiving Break

38. **Wednesday, 23 November:** No Class - Thanksgiving Break

39. **Friday, 25 November:** No Class - Thanksgiving Break

40. **Monday, 28 November:** Climate and Democracy

- Meckling, Jonas, and Jonas Nahm. 7 December 2018. “How to Enact Policies that are Effective In Slowing Climate Change.” *Washington Post*.
- Roberts, David. 7 February 2019. “There’s Now an Official Green New Deal. Here’s What’s In It.” *Vox*.
- Rosner, Hillary. 2019. “How State and Local Governments Are Leading the Way on Climate Policy.” *Audobon Magazine*.

41. **Wednesday, 30 November:** Inequality and Democracy

- Roberts, David. 4 May 2020. “30 Million Americans are Unemployed. Here’s How to Employ Them.” *Vox*.
- Heller, Nathan. 2 July 2018. “Who Really Stands to Win from Universal Basic Income?” *The New Yorker*.
- Lowrey, Annie. 11 May 2018. “A Promise So Big, Democrats Aren’t Sure How to Keep It.” *The Atlantic*.

42. **Friday, 2 December:** Speech, Expression, and Democracy

- Bomboy, Scott. 16 March 2018. “Public School Student Free Speech: A Primer.” *Constitution Daily*.
- Liptak, Adam. 28 December 2020. “A Cheerleader’s Vulgar Message Prompts a First Amendment Showdown.” *New York Times*.
- Levin, Dan. 26 December 2020. “A Racial Slur, a Viral Video, and a Reckoning.” *New York Times*.

43. **Monday, 5 December:** Democratic Backsliding and Norm Erosion

- Clayton, Katherine, Nicholas Davis, Brendan Nyhan, Ethan Porter, Timothy Ryan, and Thomas Wood. 2021. “Does Elite Rhetoric Undermine Democratic Norms?” *PNAS*.
- Older, Malka. 30 November 2020. “Democracy Is Still Not Safe in the United States.” *Foreign Policy*.
- Beauchamp, Zack. 12 January 2021. “The Case for Consequences. Why Republicans Have to Be Held Accountable for the Attack on Capitol Hill.” *Vox*.

44. **Wednesday, 7 December:** What Is the Key to Democratic Resilience?

- Klaas, Brian. 21 July 2022. "America's Self-Obsession Is Killing Its Democracy." *The Atlantic*.
- Homans, Charles. 17 March 2022. "Where Does American Democracy Go From Here?" *New York Times*.

45. **Friday, 9 December:** Hope for U.S. Democracy?

- No reading - come prepared to participate in a final discussion reflection on the course's theme as a whole.
- [Civic Engagement Reflection Essay due 3pm](#)