**Introduction to American Politics**  
Loyola University Chicago, Fall 2018  
MWF 12:35-1:25 pm, Crown Center 141  
  
Dr. Meghan Condon | mcondon1@luc.edu | Coffee Hall 336 (3rd Floor) | Phone: 773-xxx-xxxx  
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 10:00 – 11:30 am

**Course Overview**

This course is an introduction to American government and politics. We begin by investigating the foundational ideas of our governmental system: the political culture, the Constitution, civil rights and freedoms, and federalism. We turn then to the role of the public, asking what Americans think and feel about politics and how those preferences are organized and communicated to government officials. Next, we address the major institutions that structure the decisions and behavior of those officials: Congress, the Presidency and Bureaucracy, and the Federal Courts. At the end of the course we will explore how these ideas, interests, and institutions come together to produce public policy, and how policy decisions feed back into the system, changing politics moving forward.

Across all of these topics, we will explore the controversies that animate contemporary American politics, applying course theories and concepts each week to build a deeper understanding of issues like racial justice, gun violence, gender inequality, election outcomes, Congressional gridlock, immigration debates, environmental policy, and political polarization. Our aim will be to approach the controversial landscape of American politics with civility, open minds, and respect for each other.

This course also takes what political philosophers call, a *participatory approach* to democratic learning. We follow Aristotle’s maxim: *what we have to learn to do, we learn by doing.* In the real world of American politics, people rarely develop a comprehensive knowledge of issues and institutions *before* participating. In fact, that sort of thinking can prevent people from getting involved and speaking up for their interests. Instead, often people and communities face a problem or want a change, and they learn the complexities of the system *through participation*. To that end, right from the start of this course, you will also explore several ways of engaging in the democratic process, selecting from a menu of participation options. You will have the opportunity, with guidance, to participate in elections, contact representatives, engage others in conversation about important issues, volunteer, and more. Like American civic engagement broadly, these activities can be nonpartisan, or they can be focused on advocating for changes you feel strongly about.

**Course Framing Questions:**

As you read, discuss, and participate in the course, ask yourself the following questions. By the end of the course, you should have your own perspective on each of them.

* Are politics in the US truly democratic?
* What does it mean to be a good citizen in a democracy?
* What are the big problems with American politics today; how should they be addressed?
* How can I exercise the power I have to influence government and politics?

**Learning Objectives**

Additionally, by the end of this course, students should grow in their capacity to:

* Explain how ideas, the public, and institutions combine to produce American politics and policy decisions.
* Identify several channels for political participation in contemporary society.
* Think critically about how people make political decisions and form attitudes.
* Communicate effectively and civilly with peers and with people with whom they disagree .
* Express evidence-based arguments through speaking and writing.

**Required Books**

There are two required books for this course. They are both available as e-books. Paper copies are available at the campus bookstore. Multiple copies of Hochschild are also available at University, Chicago City, and other local libraries. Used or new copies are available from all online booksellers, often at steep discounts. I do not recommend the audiobook of Hochschild for course purposes.

1. Ginsberg, B. et al. 2017. *We the people*, *eleventh core edition.*Norton. **(WTP)**I do not have a preference about students ordering the ebook, loose-leaf, or hard cover version. It is also fine if students rent the textbook or buy it used. The only important note is that you must buy some version of the eleventh core edition.
2. Hochschild, A. R. 2018. *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right.*The New Press.

**Other Reading**

Additional reading and viewing assignments will be linked to the course Sakai site and/or syllabus. This course does include instructional content delivered via audio and video. If you have any concerns about your ability to access and/or understand this material in its default format due to a disability or other exceptional learning need, please notify me early in the course so accommodations can be made.

I also expect all students to keep up with basic current events from a nonpartisan news source for the duration of the course. I recommend regularly reading a major national newspaper (or several), and keeping up with local news via a local paper, NPR, and/or Chicago Tonight (WTTW). Keeping up with the news is *required reading.*

**Assessment**

**Participation (15%)**

In class participation: The quality of the course will depend heavily on the participation of students. To receive full participation points, you must speak up with questions and contributions and participate fully in all in-class activities. This is not a grade for showing up. It must be evident that you consistently read and give thought to the assignments prior to class. To this end, in class, I sometimes request pop briefings from randomly selected students. You must be in attendance to respond if your name is called. Selected students will quickly brief the class on the main argument/idea of a assignment selection (section of textbook reading, other article or video assignment), and offer a comment or opinion (a strength, weakness, or question you have). It is to your advantage to come to each class session prepared to make these brief remarks.

Quizzes:  If, throughout the course, I feel that students could use an extra incentive to fully prepare, I may introduce short reading check quizzes that will be factored into the participation grade. However, we will not begin with quizzes.

**Action Reaction Assignments (15%)**

For this set of assignments you will ACT by participating in the democratic process, and then REACT by posting about it on our class discussion board. You must do this at least three times this semester. In each section of the course (before the first midterm, before the second midterm, and before the final) you must select one democratic action from the lists below. In your post, describe the participation action you took in this part of the course and the biggest lesson learned. Feel free to construe “lesson learned” broadly; it can be something that surprised you, a way in which the action connected to the readings, a change you experienced, or some other big take-home.

To receive full credit, you must post an original reaction of at least 200 words, plus at least one thoughtful response to someone else’s post or comment. Responses can include questions and/or statements, but they must be substantive to count toward your grade, meaning they should show you read and thought about the post to which you are responding. Please go ahead and write brief comments like “so interesting!” “that sounds hard,” or “can you post the contact info for the organization?” as you read through others’ posts. Such short comments can help the discussion along and make the poster feel heard. However, please note that these short replies will not count toward your grade because they could be written without reading or seriously thinking about the other student’s work. I will periodically highlight and discuss some of these reactions in class, sometimes asking students to elaborate. **Original posts are due one week prior to each exam, and replies are due one class period prior to each exam, but it is a good idea to start early** so you can focus on preparing for the exams as they approach. Action choices are at the end of the syllabus; however, if you have an idea for a different action, feel free to email me to seek approval.

**Exams (70%)**

You will take three exams in this course (two midterms and one final). Each exam includes a multiple choice and essay component. Details below.

**Exam Multiple Choice Component:** Half of the grade for each exam will be earned through a series of in-class multiple choice questions. Questions will be drawn from readings and in-class content which do not always fully overlap. The end-of-chapter study guides in the textbook are an effective guide for the textbook content on the exams. But please note that all content from the course is fair game for the exams, and students are responsible for taking careful notes in class and from the readings. On exam days, we will meet in a computer lab (details on Sakai), and this portion will be taken online.

**Exam Essay Component:** The second half of your grade for each exam will be an essay which you will prepare in advance. Each essay question (below) asks you to draw upon course material to answer one of the big driving questions of the course: are politics in the US truly democratic? What are the major problems with our political system, and what should be done to address them? You should have a perspective by the first midterm, but your ideas may change as we progress. In the final, you will revisit your first midterm argument, examining how your ideas have evolved and adding new evidence for your thesis.

The essay questions are provided far in advance so you can think about how the content from each week of the course connects to these big questions about American democracy. You will work on these essays outside of class, so you have ample time to craft a thoughtful, organized piece of writing. However, this also means I expect the quality of the argument, evidence, and language to exceed what you might produce through an in-class exam essay, and the work will be graded accordingly. I advise you to keep a running set of notes about these essay prompts as you read and attend class meetings. Working on the essay each week is also an excellent way to review material prior to the in-class exam rather than saving your studying until the last minute. You should feel free to discuss outlines and early drafts of all essays with me during office hours. Best practices for short analytic essay writing, citation guidelines, and specific evaluation criteria (including the rubric used for grading) will be discussed in class.

**Midterm 1 Essay Question:** Are politics in the US truly democratic? Give specific evidence from readings and class examples to support your answer. Be sure to have a single thesis and clear definitions of politics and democracy. You must underline your thesis statement and *italicize your definitions of politics and democracy*. Each can be done effectively in a single sentence.

**Midterm 2 Essay Question:** What is the biggest problem with American public involvement in politics today? Give specific evidence from readings and class examples to support your answer. In your answer explain the current state of affairs and why, specifically, those circumstances are problematic for democracy. Be sure to have a single thesis, underlined. In your concluding paragraph, you may suggest a direction for reform, but this is not required. Possible problems include, but are not limited to: party polarization, lack of participation, unequal participation, voter suppression, misinformation, apathy, or the role of money in politics.

**Final Essay Question:** Are politics in the US truly democratic? Revise your first midterm essay question substantially or draft an entirely new response. Your definitions of politics and democracy may change, as may your thesis. You must underline your thesis statement and *italicize your definitions of politics and democracy*. Be sure to take feedback from your midterm essays into account. As with your second midterm essay, in your concluding paragraph, you may suggest a direction for reform, but this is not required. This final essay must engage readings and class examples from all four units of the course to support a single thesis.

**A Short Note on Short Writing Assignments**

*I didn’t have time to write a short letter, so I’ve written a long one instead.*– attributed to Cicero, St. Augustine, Blaise Pascal, and Mark Twain

An excellent professional writer grabs your attention, gets to the point, and boils difficult ideas down to their essentials. Do not be fooled by the short required length of many writing assignments in the course. You will be asked to state and defend complex arguments and provide evidence. Doing so and sticking to the word limits should take more work and time than writing a longer form piece. In fact, many students find that they write a much longer first draft, and then put considerable effort into making it concise and achieving the word limit. I recommend pursuing op-eds in major national newspapers for good examples of concise writing; they are often around 400 words.

**Grade Distribution**

Participation 15%  
Midterm 1 20%   
Midterm 2 20%   
Final 30%   
Action Reactions 15% (5% each)

A 93-100  
A-90-92  
B+ 87-89  
B 83-86  
B-80-82  
C+77-79  
C 73-77  
C- 70-72  
D+67-69  
D 60-66

**Policies**

**Submission Policies**

* All written work must be submitted or posted to Sakai.
* Midterm essays must be submitted prior to the start time of the exam, though I strongly recommend submitting the essay portion a day or two in advance.
* Essays should be formatted in strict accordance with the assignment instructions (Sakai).
* Essays should be named as follows: **last name\_class#\_assignment**(e.g. Condon\_PLSC101\_Midterm1Essay).
* Action-reaction posts must all be submitted no later than one week prior to the associated exam, but I recommend posting early.
* Action-reaction replies must all be submitted no latter than one class period prior to the associated exam.
* All written work will be counted as a day late **beginning the minute class begins on the due date** (to discourage waiting until the last minute and missing part of class to finish).
* All late assignments are penalized 10 points per day late.
* No late work is accepted more than one week past the deadline.

Exceptions to this policy will only be made in serious family, personal, and emergency cases verified with the Dean of The College of Arts and Sciences.

**Accommodations:** I am committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment for all students. Please be aware that resources and accommodations are available at Loyola for students who have exceptional learning needs, economic hardship, and have experienced sexual or gender-based violence or harassment or discrimination.

If you have a documented *exceptional learning need or disability* and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible.

Any student who *faces* *challenges securing their food or housing* and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify me if you are comfortable in doing so. I will make every effort to assist you in navigating university and public resources.

If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences any form of *discrimination* or *sexual harassment*, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, know that you are not alone. Loyola University has staff members trained to support you in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Please be aware all Loyola *faculty* members are legally “responsible employees,” which means that if you tell me about a situation involving sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, I **must** share that information with the Title IX Coordinator.  Although I have to make that notification, you will control how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone privately, you can contact the [Wellness Center](https://www.luc.edu/wellness/about/hours/). Additionally, to connect with Loyola Advocacy Services, call the **Sexual Assault Advocacy Line** at 773-494-3810. The Line is open Monday-Friday, 8am-4:30pm and 24 hours on the weekend when classes are in session.

**Academic dishonesty** will not be tolerated. All assignments will be automatically run through Turnitin.com (an extremely effective plagiarism detection tool). Incidents of plagiarism or cheating on an exam (by copying from another student, use of a “cheat sheet,” or other means) will result in a grade of F (zero) on the assignment or exam in question. The behavior will be reported to the chair of your major department and to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Note that records of academic misconduct may be transmitted to medical school, law schools, and other organizations who have a legitimate reason to inquire.

**Syllabus Disclaimer**: The schedule, policies, and assignments described in this document are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

**Technology in the classroom:** I do not permit the use of laptops or phones during class. If you would like to read up on the growing body of research that finds that laptops interfere with in-class learning, this is a good place to start: http://web.stanford.edu/class/linguist156/laptops.pdf.

**Course Calendar**

UNIT 1: THE BIG IDEAS

**WEEK 1 Foundational Concepts**  
*What is politics? What is power? What is democracy? What is citizenship?*

Monday: Introductions and Syllabus, no reading or assignments

In-person class meetings are **canceled on Wednesday and Friday due to the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association**. This does not mean the class is canceled! The equivalent of two class sessions will take place online, rather than in person. Plan to devote approximately the same amount of time to this online work that you would to the class session. We will continue all online discussions in class following the Labor Day holiday.

Wednesday: Power and Democracy

1. **Read:** Dahl, Robert A. *On democracy*. Yale university press, 2008. Chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 35-61) (Sakai)
2. **View:** “How to Understand Power” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c_Eutci7ack> (7 min)
3. **View:** Van Keieken, Robert. “Power” [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s71\_waH3a94*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s71_waH3a94) (7 min). Please pay specific attention to the **three dimensions** of power.
4. **Post:** there is a discussion forum on Sakai entitled “Democracy.” Please respond to the prompt. As indicated in Sakai, full participation points will be given for students who post at least two thoughtful comments, at least one of which must engage something a classmate has written. Details on Sakai.

* **Deadlines:** for full participation points, your first post must be complete no later than 5pm pm on Wednesday (8/29). Your second post, the reply to a peer, must be complete no later than 5 pm on Friday (8/31).

Friday: The Meaning of Citizenship

1. **Read:** Cohen, Mitchell. "TH Marshall's" Citizenship and Social Class"." *Dissent* 57, no. 4 (2010): 81-85. Note that the author is a political philosopher, and his language can be pretty academic! Focus on gleaning the main idea of the piece, and pay specific attention to the three types of citizenship (civil, political, and social in the middle of the article). <https://www.dissentmagazine.org/article/t-h-marshalls-citizenship-and-social-class>
2. **View:** Brookings Institution. “Is America Dreaming? Understanding Social Mobility” (2014) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2XFh_tD2RA>
3. **Post:** there is a discussion forum on Sakai entitled “Citizenship.” Please respond to the prompt. As indicated in Sakai, full participation points will be given for students who post at least two thoughtful comments, at least one of which must engage something a classmate has written. Details on Sakai.
4. **Optional:** For students who wish to read more about how different political theorists think about citizenship, start here: Leydet, Dominique, "Citizenship", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*(Fall 2017 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.) <https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=citizenship>

* **Deadlines:** for full participation points, your first post must be complete no later than 5pm pm on Friday (8/31). Your second post, the reply to a peer, must be complete no later than noon next Wednesday (9/5).

**WEEK 2 American Political Culture: Our Demons and Ideals***What are the big ideas that drive American politics? Are they all positive? Do we all look at them the same way?*

Monday (9/3): No Class, Labor Day

Wednesday (9/5): Continued discussion foundational ideas; Core American political values

1. **Read:** WTP Chapter 1
2. **Read:** Comments on class discussion board from Week 1

Friday (9/5): Critical perspectives of American political culture

1. **Read:** Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the world and me*. Text publishing, 2015. pp. 1-12 (Sakai, recommended: entire)
2. **Read:** Hughes, Langston, "Let America Be America Again."  <https://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poem/let-america-be-america-again>
3. **Optional:** Smith, Rogers M. "Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: the multiple traditions in America." *American political science review* 87, no. 3 (1993): 549-566. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2938735?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents>

**WEEK 3 The Constitution and the Founding***Why was the American government set up the way it was? How has it changed, and should it change again?*

Monday (9/10): Constitution Basics

1. **Read:** WTP Chapter 2
2. **Read:** The Constitution (WTP, back of book)

Wednesday (9/12): Controversies at the Founding

1. **Read:** Federalist 10 (WTP, back of book)
2. **Read:** Federalist 51 (WTP, back of book)
3. **Read:** Brutus Essay (WTP, back of book)

Friday (9/14): Controversies Today

1. **Read:** Azari, Julia and Seth Masket. 2017. “The Four Types of Constitutional Crisis” <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/constitutional-crisis/>
2. **Read:** DeSilver, Drew. 2018. “Proposed Amendments to the US Constitution Rarely Go Anywhere.” *Pew Research Reports.* [*http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/12/a-look-at-proposed-constitutional-amendments-and-how-seldom-they-go-anywhere/*](http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/12/a-look-at-proposed-constitutional-amendments-and-how-seldom-they-go-anywhere/)

**WEEK 4 Civil Rights and Liberties***What freedoms are guaranteed by law in America? How do these freedoms look in the lived experiences of people living in the country?*

Monday (9/17): Civil Liberties

1. **Read:** WTP Chapter 4

Wednesday (9/19): Civil Rights

1. **Optional:** WTP Chapter 5 (Supplemental, content covered in lecture)
2. **Read:** King Jr., Martin Luther. "Letter from Birmingham Jail."  <https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.htmlDubenko>

Friday (9/21): Case Study: Gun Control and Gun Rights

1. **Submit:** Action-Reaction #1 is due no later than 12:34 pm today.
2. **Read:** Dubenko, Anna. 2018. “Right and Left React to the Deepening Divide over Gun Control.” *The New York Times.* <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/22/us/politics/right-left-react-gun-control.html?rref=collection/spotlightcollection/our-picks-the-best-from-around-the-web&login=smartlock&auth=login-smartlock>

**WEEK 5 Federalism***How do federal, state, and local governments share power in the US? Why does it matter?*

Monday (9/24): Federalism

1. **Read:** WTP Chapter 3
2. **Read:** Adler, Jonathan H. 2014. “This is your federalism on drugs,” *The Washington Post.* [*https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2014/08/28/this-is-your-federalism-on-drugs/?utm\_term=.58dd85788ad6*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/volokh-conspiracy/wp/2014/08/28/this-is-your-federalism-on-drugs/?utm_term=.58dd85788ad6)

Wednesday (9/26): Midterm Discussion

1. **Submit:** All Action-Reaction replies must be posted no later than 12:34 pm today.

**\***No additional reading, in-class discussion of Action-Reactions and Midterm Q&A

Friday (9/28): Midterm 1 Meet in Crown Center 103, upload your essay to Sakai prior to 12:34 pm.

UNIT 2: THE PUBLIC

**WEEK 6 Public Opinion and the Media***What does the public think about government action and politics? Where do those ideas come from? How much does it matter?*

Monday (10/1): Public Opinion

1. **Read:** WTP Chapter 6

Wednesday (10/3): Public Attitudes and The Media

\*No additional reading, WTP Chapter 7 (Supplemental, content covered in lecture)

Friday (10/5): How Media Shapes Our Understanding

1. **View:** Miss Representation (Kanopy, Sakai)

**WEEK 7 Political Participation***How do people influence government action? Who participates, who doesn’t, and does it matter?*

Monday (10/8): No class, fall break

Wednesday (10/10): Participation Today

1. **Optional:** WTP Chapter 8 (supplemental, content covered in lecture)
2. **Read:** Reyes, NBC News Non-Citizens Politically Engaged Study Finds <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/non-citizen-latinos-politically-engaged-study-finds-n596556>
3. **Read:** Menand, Louis. "The unpolitical animal." *The New Yorker* 80 (2004): 92-94. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/08/30/the-unpolitical-animal>

Friday (10/12): Voter Mobilization

1. **Read:** Gerber, Alan S., and Donald P. Green. "Field experiments on voter mobilization: An overview of a burgeoning literature." In *Handbook of Economic Field Experiments*, vol. 1, pp. 395-438. North-Holland, 2017. <https://www.povertyactionlab.org/sites/default/files/publications/Gerber%20Green%20Handbook.pdf> Please skim the first 11 pages and read the rest carefully. We will discuss the entire article together in class.

**WEEK 8 Campaigns and Elections***How do people decide how to vote? Are elections in the US operating according to basic democratic principles? How might they be improved?*

Monday (10/15): Campaign and Election Fundamentals

1. **Read:** WTP Chapter 10

Wednesday (10/17): Predicting and Modeling Election Outcomes

1. **Read:** Matthews, Dylan. 2016. “One of the best election models predicts a Trump victory. It’s creator doesn’t believe it.” *Vox.* <https://www.vox.com/2016/6/14/11854512/trump-election-models-political-science>

Friday (10/19): Investigating Current Elections

1. **Read:** Sides, John, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck. 2016. “The Electoral Landscape of 2016.” The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 667: 50-71. (Sakai)

**WEEK 9 Parties and Interest Groups***How do organized groups mediate the relationship between the public and elected officials? Do parties and interest groups enhance or distort the voice of the people?*

Monday (10/22): Parties

1. WTP Chapter 9

Wednesday (10/24): Interest Groups

1. WTP Chapter 11

Friday (10/26): How Groups Influence Officials

1. **Submit:** Action-Reaction #2 is due no later than 12:34 pm today.
2. **Read:** *Indivisible Guide.* Please note: this is a partisan resource. We will discuss it from a critical perspective in class, treating it as a primary source document. Additionally, note that the tactics in the guide for influencing Congress do cross partisan lines. In fact, though a group on the political Left wrote them down in this public guide, many tactics evolved initially on the political Right. Pay special attention to the charts on pages 10-11. <https://www.indivisible.org/guide/>

UNIT 3: INSTITUTIONS

**WEEK 10 Congress***How is the legislative branch structured in the US? How much power does Congress have? How do members of Congress make decisions?*

Monday (10/29): Congress

1. **Optional:** WTP Chapter 12 (supplemental, material will be covered in lecture) No additional reading.
2. **Read:** Ornstein, Norm. 2011. “Is this really the worst congress ever?” *Foreign Policy.* [*https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/19/worst-congress-ever/*](https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/19/worst-congress-ever/)
3. **Optional:** responses to Ornstein from other experts: <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/07/27/super-bad/>
4. **Read:** Warren, Mark. 2014. “Help We’re in Living in Hell and Don’t Know How to Get Out,” *Esquire*. <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/news/a23553/congress-living-hell-1114/>

Wednesday (10/31): Midterm Discussion

1. **Submit:** All Action-Reaction replies must be posted no later than 12:34 pm today.

**\***No additional reading, in-class discussion of Action-Reactions and Midterm Q&A

Friday (11/2): Midterm 2 Meet in Crown Center 103, upload your essay to Sakai prior to 12:34 pm.

**WEEK 11 The Presidency and Executive Branch**  
*How is the executive branch structured in the US? How much power does The President have? How do Presidents make decisions? How much power does the bureaucracy have? How do bureaucratic actors make decisions?*

Monday (11/5): Presidency

1. **Read:** WTP Chapter 13

Wednesday (11/7): The Federal Bureaucracy

1. **Optional:** WTP Chapter 14 (supplemental, material covered in lecture) \*No additional reading

Friday (11/9): Contemporary Problems with the Presidency

1. **Read:** Yglesias, Matthew. 2015. “American Democracy is Doomed” *Vox.* [*https://www.vox.com/2015/3/2/8120063/american-democracy-doomed*](https://www.vox.com/2015/3/2/8120063/american-democracy-doomed)

**WEEK 12 The Courts***How much power do the courts have? How do judicial actors make decisions?*

Monday (11/12): The Federal Court System

1. **Read:** WTP Chapter 15 (supplemental, material covered in lecture)

Wednesday (11/14): Interpreting the Constitution

1. **Read:** Scalia, Antonin. 2005. “Constitutional interpretation the old fashioned way” <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/centers/boisi/pdf/Symposia/Symposia%202010-2011/Constitutional_Interpretation_Scalia.pdf>
2. **Read:** Breyer, Stephen. 2002. “Our Democratic Constitution” <http://www.nyulawreview.org/sites/default/files/pdf/NYULawReview-77-2-Breyer.pdf>

Friday (11/16) Case Study: Separated Migrant Families

1. **View:** “Institutions and The Public together: Separated: Children at the Border” *Frontline* [**https://www.pbs.org/video/separated-children-at-the-border-abt8su/**](https://www.pbs.org/video/separated-children-at-the-border-abt8su/)
2. **TBD:** Additional news articles regarding the current state of the court battles surrounding migrant child separation and family detention may be assigned.

UNIT 4: THE POLICY PROCESS IN A DIVIDED NATION

*Framing questions for Unit 4, all weeks:*

* *How do the big ideas, the public, and institutions combine in American politics to generate public policy?*
* *How do those policy decisions affect politics moving forward?*
* *What is the relationship between economic conditions, politics, and policy in the contemporary US?*
* *How should we address the most pressing problems that face the nation: growing economic inequality and insecurity, partisan rancor, racial prejudice, environmental degradation?*
* *What is the best way to move forward in a divided nation?*
* *Is there political potential to be found in listening and talking with people with whom we deeply disagree? How can this be done?*

**WEEK 13**   
Monday (11/19)

1. **Read:** Hochschild, Arlie Russell. *Strangers in their own land: Anger and mourning on the American right*. The New Press, 2018. Preface, Part 1 (Chapters 1-5)

Wednesday (11/21): No Class, Thanksgiving Break

Friday (11/23): No Class, Thanksgiving Break

**WEEK 14**Monday (11/26)

1. **Read:** Hochschild Part 2 (Chapters 6-8)

Wednesday (11/28)

1. **Read:** Hochschild Chapter 9

Friday (11/30)

1. **Read:** Hochschild Chapters 10-13
2. **Submit:** Action-Reaction #3 is due no later than 12:34 pm today.

**WEEK 15**   
Monday (12/3)

1. **Read:** Hochschild Part 4 (Chapters 14-16)

Wednesday (12/5): Course Summative Discussion

\*No reading or submissions

Friday (12/7): Final Action-Reaction Discussion

1. **Submit:** All Action-Reaction replies must be posted no later than 12:34 pm today.

**\***No additional reading, in-class discussion of Action-Reactions and Final Q&A

**Final Exam: Friday 12/14 9-11 am; upload your essay to Sakai prior to 8:59 am.**

ACTION REACTION MENU

**MIDTERM 1 ACTION REACTION CHOICES:**

1. Find an adult (18+) who is not registered to vote or who does not know if they are registered.
   1. If they are unsure, help them check using their address: <https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/service/your-voter-information> or <https://ova.elections.il.gov/RegistrationLookup.aspx> outside of Cook County in IL. Similar tools are available in other states. Need help? Email me! Talk to them and try to understand the reasons they were unsure. (Note that IL is the 10th state, including D.C., that enacted a motor voter law to automatically register all eligible adults with drivers licenses, but this just went into effect in July of 2018, so confusion about it is widespread.)
   2. If they are not registered but are eligible to vote and agree, help them register. Talk to them and try to understand the reasons they aren’t registered but decided to register.
   3. If they are not eligible or do not want to register, have a discussion about what that means for them – talk about their feelings about it and/or how it might affect the way their interests are represented.

Please note, your conversation should aim to investigate the person’s own reasons and perspective, not necessarily to persuade them to register. An easy voting and registration guide can be found here: <http://www.brennancenter.org/how-vote-2016> and all current local registration deadlines are at the end of this syllabus. Some students, by starting these conversations, may encounter several people who want this information, so it is best to be prepared. (If you yourself are eligible but not registered, get that done too!) This option must be completed by 10/21/2018.

1. Volunteer at ICCIR’s voter registration at a Citizenship Oath Ceremony <http://www.icirr.org/about/get-involved> or another voter registration drive. September 25 is National Voter Registration Day. The Chicago League of Women Voters has registration activities here: <https://my.lwv.org/illinois/chicago/volunteer>
2. Attend a demonstration or protest. Have a conversation with at least one other person in attendance (this can be a friend you bring with you). What did it feel like to participate in this way? Did it change your ideas about the issue? Participation? Collective action? Did it feel effective or empowering? Protests are often publicized in local news outlets and public calendars. Feel free to ask for assistance if you would like to select this option but are not sure how to get started.
3. Find an organization focused on a civil rights or liberties issue that concerns you. Volunteer. Have a conversation with another volunteer or a staff member about the experience (this can be a friend you bring with you). Not sure where to look: start here:
   * <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/November-2015/The-Best-Charities-in-Chicago/>
   * <https://onegooddeedchicago.org/organizations/>
   * https://www.luc.edu/experiential/forstudents/possiblecommunitysites/
4. Big idea: Organize a voter registration drive of your own. Find a toolkit here: <https://www.rockthevote.org/action-center/host-your-own-event/> This option must be completed before 10/21/2018 and should be done in a group.

**MIDTERM 2 ACTION REACTION CHOICES:**

1. Make a plan and mobilize your own social network on election day. Post on social media, talk to people in person. Craft what you say and post based on what we have discussed in class. How many people can you get to commit to voting? How many turned out? Do you really know if your efforts had an effect? What information could help you know that?
2. Participate in phone banking for a candidate or mobilization drive. This can often be done from home. For a list of candidates for office where you live, see <https://www.ballotready.org/> (live beginning October 1).
3. Find someone whose attitudes about any major political issue differ from your own (e.g. a policy choice, preferred candidate, party affiliation). Have an open and civil conversation about it. Aim to understand the person’s perspective from their own point of view rather than to persuade them. Try to ask questions and listen at least as much as you explain your own views or make statements. Family members, friends, peers, and even professors are fair game here. You do not have to agree by the end of the conversation.
4. Canvass door to door for a candidate, mobilization drive, or issue. Find out more here: <https://my.lwv.org/illinois/chicago/volunteer>
5. Big idea: Work at a polling place on election day: <https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/agency/student-involvement> **CASH BONUS!** These roles pay up to $360; Loyola University assists students who want to take part: <https://www.luc.edu/communityrelations/equipmentmanagerprogram/>

**FINAL ACTION REACTION CHOICES**

1. Produce your own short voting story video and upload it to the class discussion board and to Rock The Vote (where examples can also be found): <https://www.rockthevote.org/action-center/share-your-story/>
2. Attend any political meeting in person. This can be a town hall meeting for a candidate or official, a city council meeting, or a meeting of an advocacy group, or even a student activist group. Meetings are often publicized in local news outlets, public calendars, and candidate websites. Feel free to ask for assistance if you would like to select this option but are not sure how to get started.
3. Call one of your elected representatives and voice your opinion on an issue. Not sure how to do this? Here’s a great beginner’s guide: <https://www.refinery29.com/2017/01/138465/how-to-call-senator>
4. Select any action you haven’t done yet from the other two lists.
5. Big Idea: Host a voting party. Register and get more information here: <https://secure.everyaction.com/oahBMp-b6UqVMJMeawKTGg2>

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| **Date** | **Event** |
| 8/8/2018 | First day to apply for a [mail ballot](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/agency/vote-mail) |
| 10/9/2018 | Last day to [register to vote](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/RTV) by paper application |
| 10/10/2018 | First day of [grace period registration and voting](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/service/grace-period-registration-and-voting) |
| 10/21/2018 | Last day to [register to vote](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/RTV) by online application |
| 10/22/2018 | First day of [early voting](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/agency/early-voting) |
| 11/1/2018 | Last day to request a [mail ballot](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/agency/vote-mail), including military and overseas voters |
| 11/5/2018 | Last day of [early voting](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/agency/early-voting) |
| 11/5/2018 | Last day of [grace period registration and voting](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/service/grace-period-registration-and-voting) |
| 11/6/2018 | Last day [mail ballots](https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/agency/vote-mail) can be postmarked |
| 11/6/2018 | Election Day |

**Source**: Cook County Clerk’s Office. <https://www.cookcountyclerk.com/agency/2018-elections> Dates and deadlines are likely different outside of Cook County and IL. Please check in the county in which you plan to vote.