IDEAS OF REPRESENTATION IN AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Political Science 225
Fall 2019
Tuesdays, 9:25-11:15 AM
Rosenkranz 05

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OVERVIEW

This course explores ideas of representation in American political history and our contemporary politics. Topics are divided into six categories. First, we will examine the Founding and the impact of the Constitution on U.S. political representation. Second, we will consider the positions of two of our primary representative institutions – Congress and the Presidency – over time. Third, we will examine ways in which political observers have debated how to best make our representative institutions act in the national interest. Fourth, we will consider how representation has also been construed to require the mobilization of partisan blocs or social movements. Fifth, we will survey how different group identities in American political culture have affected our understanding of representation. Finally, we will conclude the course by considering and debating challenges to representation today, including inequality and policy responsiveness.

More broadly, the lectures, discussions, primary source readings, and scholarly readings will help us achieve a few course goals. First, we will gain an improved ability to make sense of how American politics works (or doesn’t work!). Second, we will compare arguments and theories offered by various authors, critically evaluating their usefulness for describing American politics. Third, we will place the ideas from the readings into the context of present-day current events in politics. Finally, as a more general goal for the course, I hope that we all can take a step forward toward becoming more politically critical, informed, and engaged citizens. Politics can be maddening, but it becomes more interesting and fun when you can make some sense of what is going on.

Our activities in class may take a number of formats. While we will often have lectures, depending on the topic there may also be discussions, debates, and/or small group work. Political concepts and topics often may reveal differences of opinion. So even as some of us may have strong views and potentially disagree, I ask that we listen to each other’s viewpoints while working to ensure that civility and respect for each other are always present in our conversations.
ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

This is a seminar course. Students are expected to complete the readings, come to lecture, and participate in class.

Three times during the semester, students will be expected to complete short papers critically analyzing a unit of readings. Be sure to have a clear argument and use evidence to support your claims. There are three prompts are included in the syllabus. The papers should be 5-7 pages double-spaced. They are due by Week 4, 10, and 13, respectively and will be turned in on Canvas.

There will also be a final exam for the course.

The overall grade breakdown is as follows:

- Participation – 10%
- 3 Response Papers – 60%
- Final Exam (IDs and choice of 1 of 2 essays) – 30%

*For all assignments, an exception to the deadline will only be granted if you have a Dean’s excuse.*

READINGS

All readings for this course will be posted on the Yale Canvas course site. They are a combination of secondary scholarship and, for some weeks, primary sources.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic integrity is an essential part of being a college student and scholar. On any assignment, you are expected to uphold Yale’s standards for academic integrity. These include avoiding plagiarism, avoiding cheating on any assignment, avoiding improper collaboration with other students on an assignment, and avoiding submitting the same piece of work for multiple courses without the explicit consent of each instructor. Moreover, you are expected to appropriately credit and cite scholarly sources on written assignments. Please review Yale’s standards here: [https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources](https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/writing/using-sources)
COURSE OUTLINE

I. THE CONSTITUTION AND REPRESENTATION

Week 1-2 (September 3 & 10): *The Founding and Its Impact*


*Primary Sources:*

*Articles of Confederation* (1777)

*Constitution* (1787)

*Bill of Rights* (1789)

*Federalist* # 10, 51 (1787, 1788)

*Anti-Federalist* # 3 (1787)

**PAPER 1** – How was the Constitution a product of political compromise? How did these compromises affect political representation? Were these compromises justified? How would you want to reform the Constitution today, if at all? **DUE WEEK 4 (SEPTEMBER 27 @ 5 PM)**

II. CONGRESS, THE PRESIDENCY, AND REPRESENTATION

Week 3 (September 17): *How Does Congress Represent Us?*

David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), Ch. 1


*Primary Sources:*
Federalist # 53, 56-58, 62-63 (1788)

Week 4 (September 24): *The Patrician and Party Presidency*


*Primary Source:*

  Federalist # 70, 72 (1788)

Week 5 (October 1): *The Modern Presidency*


*Primary Sources:*

  Woodrow Wilson, *Constitutional Government in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1908), Ch. 3


III. REPRESENTATION AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Week 6 (October 8): *The Idea of Presidential Representation and its Impact*


*Primary Sources:*


  Selections from the *Henry Lewis Stimson Papers*, Manuscripts and Archives, Sterling Memorial Library, New Haven, CT.

  “Critical Analysis of H. R. 9783 Sixty-sixth Congress First Session – The so-called Good Budget Bill.,” 1919, 1, Folder “General Correspondence, Nov. 18-Dec. 1919,” Box
Week 7 (October 15): Congressional versus Presidential Performance


Douglas L. Kriner and Andrew Reeves, “Presidential Particularism in Disaster Declarations and Military Base Closures,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (December 2015): 679-702


**Primary Sources:**

Woodrow Wilson, *Congressional Government: A Study in American Politics* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), Ch. 2-3

Week 8 (October 22): Presidential Representation as Constitutional Problem

David R. Mayhew, “Congress as a Handler of Challenges: The Historical Record,” *Studies in American Political Development* 29, no. 2 (October 2015): 185-212


**PAPER 2** – Compare the purported merits and criticisms of congressional and presidential representation, and consider the impact of Congress and the Presidency on U.S. history. Should we expect the president to better represent the nation than Congress? What reforms, if any, would you suggest for Congress or for presidential-congressional relations? **DUE WEEK 10 (NOVEMBER 8 @ 5 PM)**

IV. REPRESENTATION AS PARTISAN MOBILIZATION

Week 9 (October 29): Responsible Parties and Polarization


*Primary Source:*

**Week 10 (November 5): Intra-Party Blocs**


**PAPER 3** – What is polarization and how has it affected Congress and congressional policymaking? Is polarization necessarily a bad thing for political representation? If it is desirable to reduce the levels of polarization, how might that occur? **DUE WEEK 13 (DECEMBER 6 @ 5 PM)**

**V. IDENTITY AND REPRESENTATION**

**Week 11 (November 12): Descriptive Representation**

Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” *American Political Science Review* 87, no. 3 (September 1993): 549-566


Kenneth Lowande, Melinda Ritchie, and Erinn Lauterback, “Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries,” *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 3 (July 2019): 644-659
VI. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES OF REPRESENTATION

Week 12 (November 19): Inequality


Martin Gilens and Benjamin Page, “Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens,” *Perspectives on Politics* 12, no. 3 (September 2014): 564-581


Week 13 (December 3): Policy Responsiveness