

17.20: Introduction to American Politics Course Syllabus*

Professor Devin Caughey

Fall 2022 | TuTh 11:00–12:00 | Room 66-168
<https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/15729>

Contact Information

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Course Description

This course provides an introduction to the academic study of American politics and to the discipline of political science more generally. We will cover a range of substantive topics, including the cultural and constitutional foundations of American politics; its institutional structures, such as Congress and the presidency; the activities of strategic political elites; the political behavior of ordinary American citizens; and various contemporary controversies. These topics will be examined using a variety of theoretical and empirical frameworks, with particular emphasis on the advantages and limitations of analyzing political actors as rational and strategic decision-makers.

This being a **communication-intensive** HASS (CI-H) subject, written assignments of various lengths are an integral part of the learning process, and we will be working closely with a writing advisor from Writing, Rhetoric and Professional Communication (WRAP). Another important part of the course is the assigned readings, which consist primarily of selections from scholarly books and articles. There will be daily reading quizzes, but no midterm or final exams.

Learning Goals

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe the essential formal and informal features of U.S. politics, including federalism, the three branches of government, political parties, and American political culture.

*Last modified September 21, 2022.

- Understand core theoretical concepts and analytical frameworks of political science, including the various manifestations of power; coordination and collective-action problems; and formal and informal institutions.
- Apply these theoretical frameworks to specific episodes and phenomena in American politics.
- Communicate to others their insights into American politics, by means of oral and written compositions of various styles and lengths.

Expectations

- Students are expected to **treat each other with respect**, listen attentively when others are speaking, and avoid personal attacks. At the same time, all students should feel comfortable expressing their opinions, political or otherwise, as long as they do so in an appropriate manner.
- I encourage but do not require you to **put away laptops, phones, and other electronic devices** during lecture unless I ask you to take them out. If you have a particular need to use electronics, please come talk to me outside of class.
- **Plagiarism will not be tolerated** in this course. As a general rule, you should never take credit for words or ideas that are not your own, and you should give your readers enough information to evaluate the source and quality of your evidence. Self-plagiarism (reusing material you have written in another context) is also not allowed. For more information on plagiarism and academic integrity, consult <http://web.mit.edu/academicintegrity/index.html>.
- We will be using the Chicago author-date citation style in this course (the citations in this syllabus follow this style). For details on this style, consult <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org.libproxy.mit.edu> (click [here](#) for an overview of the author-date system specifically).

Assessment

Grades in this course are based on six components: reading quizzes (20%), a long paper (30%), two shorter papers (30%), a news report (5%), a debate (5%), and recitation participation (10%).

1. **Reading quizzes (20%):** It is essential that you come to each class meeting having already read the assigned texts. To incentivize you to do so, I will administer a short closed-book reading quiz at the beginning of each class. The quizzes are designed to be easy for those who have done the reading but difficult for those who have not. Simply taking the quiz gets you half credit; students who miss the quiz entirely will receive no credit. I will distribute the quizzes at 5 minutes after the hour and collect them at 10 minutes past. If you arrive between 10 and 20 minutes past the hour, you may put your name on a quiz and thereby receive half credit. Unless an unforeseeable disaster befalls you, I will excuse absences only if you ask more than 24 hours ahead of time.
2. **Long Paper (15% draft, 15% final):** The course culminates in a longish (3,000–3,500 words) paper, a draft of which will be submitted about a month before the final version is due.
3. **Two Short Papers (15% each):** The short papers are designed to prepare students to write the long paper. They will be between 1,000 and 1,500 words in length (4–6 double-spaced pages).
4. **News Report (5%):** Once over the course of the semester, students will identify a recent news story that relates to the lecture readings and make a brief report on the story before the class.
5. **Debate (5%):** Students will participate in an in-class debate on a substantive issue.
6. **Recitation Attendance and Participation (10%):** Recitation attendance is mandatory, and students are expected to be active and productive contributors to discussion in recitation.

Assignment Dates:

- Sunday, October 2: Short paper #1
- Sunday, October 30: Short paper #2
- Sunday, November 20: First draft of long paper
- Tuesday, December 13: Final draft of long paper

Written assignments must be uploaded as PDFs to the Homework section of the course Stellar site. **Assignments must be uploaded by 11:59PM** on the day that they are due. Assignments submitted after midnight will be immediately penalized one-third of a grade (e.g., A to A-), and each eight hours the penalty increases by a third of a grade (e.g., an A paper turned in at 8:00AM will be marked down to a B+).

Required Texts

The following books are available for purchase at the MIT Coop and have been placed on reserve in the Dewey Library. **Make sure to get the correct edition of each book (check the ISBN).**

- Ken Kollman, ed. 2019. *Readings in American Politics*. 5th ed. New York: W. W. Norton. ISBN: 9780393679168.

Writing Advisor

We are fortunate to be working with WRAP writing advisor Kate Parsons, who will be actively involved in the writing aspects of the course and will be making several visits to recitations. Students must **meet with the writing advisor at least once in the first half of the term**, though many of you may find it useful to meet more than once over the course of the semester. To spread out the workload, half the students in the class will be assigned to meet with the writing advisor before the first paper, and half before the second paper.

Semester Overview

I Foundations

- 1 Thursday, September 8: Course Introduction
- 2 Tuesday, September 13: Collective Dilemmas and Political Institutions
- Thursday, September 15: NO CLASS (APSA Meeting)
- 3 Tuesday, September 20: Liberty, Democracy, and Power
- 4 Thursday, September 22: American Identity and Culture

II Institutions and Elite Behavior

- 5 Tuesday, September 27: The Constitution
- 6 Thursday, September 29: Political Parties
- 📌 *Sunday, October 2: Paper #1 Due*
- 7 Tuesday, October 4: Congress I—Incentives and Structure
- 8 Thursday, October 6: Congress II—Pivotal Politics and Lawmaking
- Tuesday, October 11: NO CLASS (Indigenous Peoples Day)
- 9 Thursday, October 13: The Presidency
- 10 Tuesday, October 18: The Bureaucracy
- 11 Thursday, October 20: The Judiciary

III Public Opinion and Mass Behavior

- 12 Tuesday, October 25: Foundations of Mass Behavior
- 13 Thursday, October 27: Groups, Identities, and Interests
- 📌 *Sunday, October 30: Paper #2 Due*
- 14 Tuesday, November 1: Policy Preferences and Opinion Dynamics
- 15 Thursday, November 3: Mobilization and Participation
- 16 Tuesday, November 8: Campaigns and the Media
- 17 Thursday, November 10: Voting and Elections

IV The American Political System

18 Tuesday, November 15: Responsiveness

19 Thursday, November 17: Policy Making and Policy Feedback

⬆ *Sunday, November 20: First Draft of Long Paper Due*

20 Tuesday, November 22: Federalism

Thursday, November 24: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

21 Tuesday, November 29: Democratic Backsliding

V Debates

22 Thursday, December 1: TBD

23 Tuesday, December 6: TBD

24 Thursday, December 8: TBD

25 Tuesday, December 13: TBD

⬆ *Tuesday, December 13: Final Draft of Long Paper Due*

COURSE SCHEDULE

The course is divided into five parts: Foundations, Institutions and Elite Behavior, Public Opinion and Mass Behavior, The American Political System, and Debates. The course schedule below lists the readings required for each class session, followed by a few questions to consider as you work through the readings. For some of the earlier sessions, I have also included an introductory paragraph to help orient you. Readings posted on the course website are indicated with [PDF](#), and those available on the web with [URL](#). Please read the assigned works in the order in which they appear on the syllabus.

I Foundations

1 Thursday, September 8: Course Introduction

Readings (19 pages):

- [PDF](#) Hans Noel. 2010. “Ten Things Political Scientists Know that You Don’t.” *The Forum* 8 (3): 1–19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2202/1540-8884.1393>.

2 Tuesday, September 13: Collective Dilemmas and Political Institutions

Readings (55 pages):

- [PDF](#) Mancur Olson Jr. “From *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*.” Originally published in 1965. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 1.1 (pp. 1–19)
- [PDF](#) Garrett Hardin. “The Tragedy of the Commons.” Originally published in 1968. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 1.2 (pp. 20–33).
- [PDF](#) Elinor Ostrom et al. 1999. “Revisiting the Commons: Local Lessons, Global Challenges.” *Science* 284 (5412): 278–282.
- [PDF](#) Paul Pierson. 2000. “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics.” *American Political Science Review* 94 (2): 251–267.

Reading Questions:

- Why does cooperation often unravel, even when everyone would be better off by cooperating?
- How do institutions help overcome collective-action problems?
- Why is it often so difficult to change institutions once they are in place?
- How do institutions reflect and reinforce the power relations in place at their creation?

Thursday, September 15: NO CLASS (APSA Meeting)

3 Tuesday, September 20: Liberty, Democracy, and Power

Readings (41 pages):

- [PDF](#) Jane Mansbridge. “From ‘What Is Political Science For?’” Originally published in 2014. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 1.3 (pp. 34–44).
- [PDF](#) Robert A. Dahl. “From *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*.” Originally published in 1970. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 1.4 (pp. 45–50).
- [PDF](#) Hanna Fenichel Pitkin. “From *The Concept of Representation*.” Originally published in 1967. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 1.5 (pp. 51–56)
- [PDF](#) John Gaventa. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, pages 3–20.

4 Thursday, September 22: American Identity and Culture

The readings for this week highlight various perspectives on American identity and culture. Song (2009) surveys different ideals of national identity, ranging from those based on adherence to common values to those privileging linguistic or ethnic criteria for membership, and considers their implications for immigration and citizenship. Huntington (1981) defends a variant of the “liberal tradition” thesis, arguing that what unites Americans is their adherence to a common “creed” that includes the values of liberty, equality, individualism, democracy, and constitutionalism. According to this thesis, even if actual practice sometimes falls short of these ideals, positions contrary to them are not considered legitimate or defensible in mainstream American politics. Smith (1988) critiques this view in general and Huntington in particular, offering what he later called a “multiple traditions” thesis. Based on a close reading of U.S. Supreme Court decisions, Smith argues that the United States has multiple political traditions, including not only liberalism but also republicanism and ethnocultural Americanism, that coexist uneasily with one another and whose relative prominence varies across time and context.

Readings (44 pages):

- [PDF](#) Sarah Song. 2009. “What Does it Mean to Be an American?” *Daedalus* 138 (2): 31–40.
- [PDF](#) Samuel P. Huntington. 1992. “American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony.” Chap. 4.2 in *Perspectives on American Government: A Comprehensive Reader*, edited by William Lasser, 128–134. Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath. Originally published in 1981.
- [PDF](#) Rogers M. Smith. 1988. “The ‘American Creed’ and American Identity: The Limits of Liberal Citizenship in the United States.” *Political Research Quarterly* 41 (2): 225–251 .



II Institutions and Elite Behavior

5 Tuesday, September 27: The Constitution


Readings (52 pages):

- Mila Versteeg and Emily Zackin. “From ‘Constitutions Unentrenched: Toward an Alternative Theory of Constitutional Design’.” Originally published in 2016. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Read-*

ings in *American Politics*, chapter 2.3 (pp. 71–84).



-  Gordon S. Wood. 1984. “The Intellectual Origins of the American Constitution.” *National Forum*, no. 64, 5–8, 13.
-  Robert A. Dahl. 2003. *How Democratic Is the American Constitution?* 2nd ed. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, chap. 2.

Optional

-  “The Constitution of the United States.” 2007. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CDOC-110hdoc50/pdf/CDOC-110hdoc50.pdf>, articles I–VII (pp. 1–10).

6 Thursday, September 29: Political Parties

Readings (43 pages):

-  Anthony Downs. 1957. “An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy.” *Journal of Political Economy* 65 (2): 135–150.
- John H. Aldrich. “From *Why Parties? A Second Look*.” Originally published in 2011. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 12.1 (pp. 521–536).
-  Kathleen Bawn et al. 2012. “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics.” *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (3): 571–597, **pp. 571–81 only**


Reading Questions:

- How do these authors differ with respect to who the primary actors are behind parties and what their goals are?
- What are the implications of these differences for their predictions about how parties behave and the function they play in democracy?

Sunday, October 2: Paper #1 Due

7 Tuesday, October 4: Congress I—Incentives and Structure

Readings (59 pages):

-  Gary Jacobson. 2016. “The Electoral Connection: Then and Now.” Chap. 3 in *Governing in a Polarized Age: Elections, Parties and Political Representation in America*, edited by Alan S. Gerber and Eric Schickler, 35–64. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins. “From *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*.” Originally published in 2005. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 5.3 (pp. 177–198).
- William Bernhard and Tracy Sulkin. “From *Legislative Style*.” Originally published in 2018. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 5.4 (pp. 197–205)

Reading Questions:

8 Thursday, October 6: Congress II—Pivotal Politics and Lawmaking

Readings (64 pages):

- [PDF](#) Keith Krehbiel. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, chapter 2 (pp. 20–48).
- [PDF](#) Jennifer Nicoll Victor. 2012. “Gridlock Lobbying: Breaking, Creating, and Maintaining Legislative Stalemate.” In *Interest Group Politics*, 8th ed., edited by Allan J. Cigler and Burdett A. Loomis, 243–263. Washington, DC: CQ Press
- [PDF](#) James M. Curry and Frances E. Lee. 2020. “Capacity in a Centralized Congress.” In *Congress Overwhelmed: The Decline in Congressional Capacity and Prospects for Reform*, edited by Timothy M. LaPira, Lee Drutman, and Kevin R. Kosar, 225–238. Chicago: University of Chicago Press

Tuesday, October 11: NO CLASS (Indigenous Peoples Day)

9 Thursday, October 13: The Presidency

Readings (61 pages):

- [PDF](#) Scott C. James. 2005. “The Evolution of the Presidency: Between the Promise and the Fear.” In *The Executive Branch*, edited by Joel D. Aberbach and Mark A. Peterson, 3–36. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press
- [PDF](#) Sharece Thrower. 2021. “What Is an Executive Order, and Why Don’t Presidents Use Them All the Time?” *The Conversation*, January 26, 2021. <https://theconversation.com/what-is-an-executive-order-and-why-dont-presidents-use-them-all-the-time-150896>
- [PDF](#) Casey Dominguez. 2021. “Assessing the Trump Presidency on Its Own Terms.” *The Forum* 19 (1): 5–26

Reading Questions:

- What are the constitutional bases of presidential power?
- How has political and technological change increased presidential power over time?
- To what extent can the president act unilaterally?
- How does presidential power differ across policy domains?

10 Tuesday, October 18: The Bureaucracy

Readings (53 pages):

- [PDF](#) Terry M. Moe. 1989. “The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure.” In *Can the Government Govern*, edited by John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson, 267–329. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, pp. 267–85 only
- James Q. Wilson. “From *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*.” Originally published in 1989. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 7.1 (pp. 273–286)

- Susan L. Moffitt. “From *Making Policy Public: Participatory Bureaucracy in American Democracy*.” Originally published in 2014. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 7.4 (pp. 302–321)

Reading Questions:

- What do elected officials gain by delegating decision-making authority to bureaucrats?
- What challenges do the president and Congress face in controlling the bureaucracy, and what strategies do they use to overcome these challenges?
- Why are bureaucracies sometimes unresponsive or inefficient?
- In what ways and circumstances does the bureaucracy not just implement policy but actually make it?

11 Thursday, October 20: The Judiciary

Readings (58 pages):

- [PDF](#) Gerald N. Rosenberg. 2005. “The Impact of Courts on American Life.” In *The Judicial Branch*, edited by Kermit L. Hall and Kevin T. McGuire, 280–312. New York: Oxford University Press
- [PDF](#) Lee Epstein and Jack Knight. 1998. “A Strategic Account of Judicial Decisions.” In *The Choices Justices Make*, 1–21. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- [PDF](#) Stephen Jessee, Neil Malhotra, and Maya Sen. 2022. “A Decade-long Longitudinal Survey Shows that the Supreme Court Is Now Much More Conservative than the Public.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119 (24): e2120284119

III Public Opinion and Mass Behavior

12 Tuesday, October 25: Foundations of Mass Behavior

Readings (55 pages):

- [PDF](#) Stimson, *Tides of Consent*, chapter 1 (pp. 1–19)
- [PDF](#) Philip E. Converse. 2004. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics.” In *Political Psychology Key Readings*, edited by John T. Jost and Jim Sidanius, 181–199. Abridged version of 1964 original. New York: Psychology Press.
- Arthur Lupia and Mathew D. McCubbins. “From *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?*” Originally published in 1998. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 9.1 (pp. 387–399).
- John R. Zaller. “From *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*.” Originally published in 1992. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 9.2 (pp. 400–404)

Reading Questions:

- How do the political attitudes and behavior of ordinary citizens differ from those of politicians, bureaucrats, and political activists?

- Are ordinary citizens equipped to participate in democratic politics? If so, how?

13 Thursday, October 27: Groups, Identities, and Interests

Readings (55 pages):

- Donald R. Kinder and Cindy D. Kam. “From *Us against Them: Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*.” Originally published in 2010. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 9.3 (pp. 405–411).
- Liliana Mason. “From *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*.” Originally published in 2018. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 9.6 (pp. 451–464)
- [PDF](#) Katherine Cramer Walsh. 2012. “Putting Inequality in Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspective.” *American Political Science Review* 106 (3): 517–532
- [PDF](#) Ismail K. White, 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* 108 (4): 783–800

📌 Sunday, October 30: Paper #2 Due

14 Tuesday, November 1: Policy Preferences and Opinion Dynamics

Readings (65 pages):

- [PDF](#) Stimson, *Tides of Consent*, chapters 2–3 (pp. 20–84)

15 Thursday, November 3: Mobilization and Participation

Readings (60 pages):

- [PDF](#) Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady. 1999. “Civic Participation and the Equality Problem.” Chap. 12 in *Civic Engagement and American Democracy*, edited by Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina, 427–459. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press / Russell Sage Foundation.
- [PDF](#) Fredrick C. Harris. 1994. “Something Within: Religion as a Mobilizer of African-American Political Activism.” *Journal of Politics* 56 (1): 42–68
- [PDF](#) Hahrie Han. 2016. “The Organizational Roots of Political Activism: Field Experiments on Creating a Relational Context.” *American Political Science Review* 110 (2): 296–307

Reading Questions:

- How do citizens’ political choices depart from standards of rationality, and why does this matter?
- How does variation in political participation across different social groups affect the kinds of voices and concerns that get “heard” in American politics?

16 Tuesday, November 8: Campaigns and the Media

Readings (79 pages):

- [PDF](#) Stimson, *Tides of Consent*, chapter 4 (pp. 85–124).
- [PDF](#) Diana C. Mutz. 2012. “The Great Divide: Campaign Media in the American Mind.” *Daedalus* 141 (4): 83–97
- Marisa A. Abrajano. “From *Campaigning to the New American Electorate: Advertising to Latino Voters*.” Originally published in 2010. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 14.2 (pp. 633–643)
- Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow. “From ‘Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election’, *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*.” Originally published in 2017. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 14.3 (pp. 644–656)

Reading Questions:

- To what degree, in what respects, and under what conditions can the media influence public opinion?
- Can citizens learn the information they need by following the cues provided by political elites?
- How has the rise of the Internet and of social media changed the media’s role in American politics?

17 Thursday, November 10: Voting and Elections

Readings (46 pages):

- [PDF](#) Shigeo Hirano and James M. Snyder Jr. 2019. *Primary Elections in the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press, chapter 1 (pp. 1–6)
- [PDF](#) John Sides, Michael Tesler, and Lynn Vavreck. 2017. “How Trump Lost and Won.” *Journal of Democracy* 28 (2): 34–44
- [URL](#) Andrew Prokop. 2022. “The presidential penalty: Why voters so often punish the president in midterm elections.” Vox, March 1, 2022. <https://www.vox.com/22899204/midterm-elections-president-biden-thermostatic-opinion>
- [PDF](#) Steven Rogers. 2016. “National Forces in State Legislative Elections.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 667 (September): 207–225

IV The American Political System

18 Tuesday, November 15: Responsiveness

Readings (42 pages):

- [PDF](#) Stimson, *Tides of Consent*, , chapter 6 (pages 146–57).

- Christopher Achen and Larry M. Bartels. “From *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*.” Originally published in 2016. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 13.4 (pp. 601–611)
- [PDF](#) Jeffrey R. Lax and Justin H. Phillips. 2012. “The Democratic Deficit in the States.” *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (1): 148–166

19 Thursday, November 17: Policy Making and Policy Feedback

Readings (57 pages):

- [PDF](#) Deborah A. Stone. 1989. “Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas.” *Political Science Quarterly* 104 (2): 281–300.
- Suzanne Mettler. “From *The Submerged State: How Invisible Government Policies Undermine American Democracy*.” Originally published in 2011. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 15.1 (pp. 657–671).
- Andrea Campbell. “From *How Policies Make Citizens: Senior Political Activism and the American Welfare State*.” Originally published in 2003. Reprinted in Kollman’s *Readings in American Politics*, chapter 15.2 (pp. 672–677).
- [URL](#) Leah C. Stokes and Matto Mildener. 2020. “The Trouble with Carbon Pricing.” *Boston Review*, September 24, 2020. <https://bostonreview.net/articles/leah-c-stokes-matto-mildener-tk/>

Sunday, November 20: First Draft of Long Paper Due

20 Tuesday, November 22: Federalism

Readings (43 pages):

- [PDF](#) Martha Derthick. 2001. “How Many Communities?” Chap. 1 in *Keeping the Compound Republic: Essays on American Federalism*, 9–21. Washington, DC: Brookings
- [PDF](#) Philip Rocco, Ann C. Keller, and Andrew S. Kelly. 2020. “State Politics and the Uneven Fate of Medicaid Expansion.” *Health Affairs* 39 (3): 494–501
- [PDF](#) James M. Buchanan. 1995. “Federalism as an Ideal Political Order and an Objective for Constitutional Reform.” *Publius* 25 (2): 19–27.
- [PDF](#) Jacob M. Grumbach and Jamila Michener. 2022. “American Federalism, Political Inequality, and Democratic Erosion.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 699 (1): 143–155

Thursday, November 24: NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

21 Tuesday, November 29: Democratic Backsliding

Readings (52 pages):

- [PDF](#) Julia R. Azari and Jennifer K. Smith. 2012. “Unwritten Rules: Informal Institutions in Established Democracies.” *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (1): 37–55

- [PDF](#) John M. Carey et al. 2019. “Searching for Bright Lines in the Trump Presidency.” *Perspectives on Politics* 17 (3): 699–718
- [PDF](#) Suzanne Mettler et al. 2022. “Democratic Vulnerabilities and Pathways for Reform.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 699 (1): 8–20

V Debates

22 Thursday, December 1: TBD

Readings (XX pages):

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23 Tuesday, December 6: TBD

Readings (XX pages):

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24 Thursday, December 8: TBD

Readings (XX pages):

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25 Tuesday, December 13: TBD

Readings (XX pages):

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📌 Tuesday, December 13: Final Draft of Long Paper Due

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If you enjoy this class, please consider a HASS concentration in Political Science. The department also offers a major and a minor in Political Science, as well as a minor in Public Policy and a minor in Applied International Studies. Internships and research opportunities too! Check out these programs and more at <https://polisci.mit.edu/undergraduate>.