American Politics and Policy: 1944-2024
Syllabus

Instructor: Fred Beuttler
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Quarter: Autumn 2024
Start – end date: September 30 – November 18
Session day/time: Monday, 6:00–8:30 pm CT
Course Code and Section: HUAS32006 24A1

Course Overview
In 2024, the American people will be electing its leaders for the next political cycle. This discussion course is designed to focus on American politics and policy in the post-World War II era, to provide context and background for the mid 2020s and beyond. After a brief Constitutional introduction, it will examine the framework and evolution of legislative and executive power, using primary documents and contemporary secondary sources. Taught from a non-partisan perspective, this historically focused class will examine structural factors and policies which show how American history can be seen as a struggle between the political branches for policy primacy. Some specific topics will include the growth of presidential power, the rise of the administrative state, and the increasing polarization within Congress and the larger American public.

Required texts

Primary source readings, to be emailed to students each week.

Course readings

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Assignment</th>
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| Week 1 | Intro: The American Political System and the Unwritten Constitution | Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Lincoln, Gettysburg Address, Amendments 13-15  
Lepore, c12 “The Brutality of Modernity” |
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|      | **The New Deal Order and the Administrative State** | Woodrow Wilson, “What is Progress?”  
FDR, State of the Union Speech, 1944 (Econ Bill of Rights) |
| **Week 2** | **War, Peace and the Slow Freeze, 1940s-1950s** | Lepore, c13 “A World of Knowledge”  
*Witness Readings, HUAC Investigates Hollywood*  
*Readings, Sen. McCarthy, The Internal Communist Menace*  
*Readings, Venona Project*  
Eisenhower Farewell Address |
| **Week 3** | **The Second Reconstruction, 1950s-1960s** | Lepore, c14, “Rights and Wrongs”  
*Brown v. Board of Ed*  
Southern Manifesto  
Pres Kennedy, Press Release on Civil Rights  
Sen Dirksen on Civil Rights  
Pres Johnson SOTU, 1964 |
| **Week 4** | **Coming Apart** | Lepore c15, “Battle Lines”  
Kennedy, Inaugural Address  
Johnson “Great Society speech”; other speeches  
Nixon First Inaugural  
Docs on Nixon Impeachment  
J. Carter, “Crisis of Confidence Speech” |
| **Week 5** | **Realignment: The Triumph of Conservatism? 1981-2001** | Lepore, c16 “America, Disrupted”  
Reagan, *First Inaugural*, 1991  
Evil Empire Address, 1983  
Clinton, *First Inaugural*, 1993  
Documents on the Gulf War, 1990-91  
Docs on Clinton Impeachment  
Washington, *Farewell Address*, 1796 (sic) |
| **Week 6** | **Hope and Change: The Obama Presidency** | Lepore, “Epilogue”  
Zelizer, *Pres of Obama*, Selections  
Obama, First Inaugural |
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<td>Obama, Cairo Speech</td>
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<td>Obama, Speech on Affordable Care Act</td>
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<td>Documents on the Affordable Care Act</td>
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<td>Week 7</td>
<td>MAGA and Beyond</td>
<td>Zelizer, Pres of Obama, Selections</td>
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<td>Trump, selected speeches</td>
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<td>Selected historians on Trump presidency, TDB</td>
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<td>Biden, First Inaugural</td>
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<td>“For the People Act,” 2021</td>
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**Accessing remote courses**

Remote courses are taught through our Canvas platform. Approximately two weeks before your class begins, we will add you to your canvas site using the email address you provided at the time of registration. An invitation will then be sent to that email. Click the “Get Started” button in the email to begin the Canvas login process. For step-by-step instructions, please visit [https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts](https://grahamschool.uchicago.edu/academic-programs/online/learning-resources/liberal-arts). Once you’ve created your Canvas account, you can access any Graham School canvas course for which you are registered at: [https://canvas.uchicago.edu](https://canvas.uchicago.edu).

**Accessibility information**

Student Disability Services (SDS) works to provide resources, support and accommodations for all students with disabilities and works to remove physical and attitudinal barriers, which may prevent their full participation in the University community. Students that would like to request accommodations should contact SDS in advance of the first class session at 773.702.6000 or disabilities@uchicago.edu.

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The University and its faculty are committed to creating a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all students. At the University, all faculty, staff, graduate student instructors, and teaching assistants are considered “Individuals with Reporting Responsibilities” and are required to let the University’s Title IX Coordinator know about any disclosures they receive from students about experiences of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment). This includes disclosures of experiences that happened before their time at the University. This is to ensure that all students who have experienced sexual misconduct receive support, options, and information about their rights and resources. Students are not obligated to respond to this outreach, and this will not generate a report to law enforcement.
For more information, please see this handout for students as well as the University’s Policy on Harassment, Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct and Policy on Title IX Sexual Harassment. You can also reach out directly for services and support from the Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Support by emailing titleix@uchicago.edu.

If you, or another student you know, wishes to speak to a confidential resource who does not have this reporting responsibility, please contact the Sexual Assault Dean on Call through the UChicago Safe App or at 773.834-HELP.

Questions? Contact Zoë Eisenman at zm1@uchicago.edu.