American Political Development

POSC 314, Fall 2018  
Persson 109, MW 1:20-2:35pm

Instructor: Sam Rosenfeld  
Office: Persson 120  
Office hours: Monday 9:30-11:30am, Wednesday 4:00-5:00pm, and by appointment  
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This course is an introduction to the study of American political development (APD). Although the precise boundaries of the field are difficult to define, at its core APD offers an analytical approach that melds the historical with the institutional, examining the growth and development of American political institutions over time and the evolution of state/society relations in this country. In this course, we will be concerned with analyzing, explaining, and understanding key transformative sequences in American politics, tracing the implications of these transformations for later American political and policy choices, and considering alternative possible paths of development. Key questions include: How distinctive or “exceptional” is the trajectory of state-building in the United States compared with other long-term democracies? What is the role of political culture in shaping American political institutions and explaining change over time? How has race figured historically in the articulation of state power? Our readings will address such questions from the perspective of political scientists, sociologists, and historians working on a broad empirical terrain that ranges over several centuries.

READINGS:

The following required texts are available at the bookstore for rental or purchase. All readings not included in the volumes below will be posted on Moodle.


PARTICIPATION, ASSIGNMENTS, AND GRADING:

This course will involve in-class discussion as a regular component of all meetings. Completed reading assignments, regular attendance, and active participation are all, thus, mandatory requirements. Active participation involves asking questions, answering questions, offering your opinions, and engaging in small-group work. To discuss American politics unavoidably means discussing contentious and controversial subjects. That makes it all the more important for us to
model thoughtful citizenship and deliberation by stating our opinions constructively and respectfully and listening carefully when fellow classmates are speaking.

Active reading involves paying attention not only to the questions that a text answers, but also the questions that it provokes. Those questions, in turn, provide the grist for analytically productive discussions in class. To keep you engaged with the reading and to help inform our in-class discussions, you will be asked to submit one question to me each week, by Sunday at 11pm, that concerns either reading from the prior week or reading done for this week’s first meeting. I ask that you strive to generate a question that meets both of the following criteria: 1.) You genuinely do not know an answer to this question; and 2.) You genuinely would like to know an answer to this question. Attendance, participation in discussion, and weekly submission of this discussion question will all count toward your participation grade.

The most effective route to clear and rigorous understanding of complex phenomena can be found in the challenge of analytical writing. Thus this course also includes two paper assignments—a 4-5-page response paper on course reading due October 5, followed by a 10-12-page paper due December 2. The latter assignment will ask you to apply themes from class as well as a limited number of outside sources to an argument-driven analysis of a historical episode of American state development. Details on both assignments and specific topics from which you can choose to write about will be coming soon.

In addition to the papers and regular participation in class, students’ grasp of the material will be assessed through a midterm and final exam.

Course grades are broken down as follows:

• 15% participation
• 15% paper 1
• 20% midterm exam
• 25% paper 2
• 25% final exam

CLASSROOM POLICIES:

• Students are expected to attend class. Three class absences lacking documented excuses (such as a medical issue, family emergency, or religious observance) will reduce your course grade by 1/3 of a letter. Students are also expected to arrive to class on time. Three consecutive instances of tardiness will result in a 1/3-letter-grade reduction in your overall course grade.
• Late submission of the paper assignment will result in a 1/3-letter-grade reduction in that paper’s grade for every 24 hours it is late.
• Cell phones, tablets, and laptops are prohibited in class. We will be making this a laptop-free class not merely because the internet presents temptations for distraction, but also because research has indicated that we absorb and retain information more effectively when taking notes by hand instead of by computer. If this policy presents a hardship for you, please discuss it with me during my office hours or by appointment.
• I expect you to abide by the Colgate Academic Honor Code. Violations will be reported to the Honor Court.
• If you feel you may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, meet with me to discuss your specific needs. Please also contact Lynn Waldman, Director of Academic Support and Disability Services (315-228-7375, lwaldman@colgate.edu), who reviews documentation to determine and help coordinate reasonable and appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities.

CALENDAR:

8/29 PROFESSOR AT CONFERENCE, NO CLASS

9/3 Introduction, Course Overview, and Discussion: What is American Political Development?

9/5 Taking Time Seriously
• Paul Pierson, Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis (Princeton, 2004), Chs 1 and 2

9/10 Seeing the American State
• Gerstle, Introduction

9/12 State Power—and States’ Powers—in Antebellum America
• Gerstle, Chs 1-2

9/17 Culture and Causation in APD
• Rogers Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” American Political Science Review 87.3 (Sept. 1993): 549-566
• Morone, Introduction, Part I Introduction, and Ch 3

9/19 Religion and Abolition
• Morone, Chs 4-6

9/24 The Nineteenth-Century “State of Courts and Parties”
• Stephen Skowronek, Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877-1920 (Cambridge, 1982), Ch 2
• Gerstle, Ch 5

9/26 Reconstruction as a Party Project
• Valelly, Chs 1-4

10/1 The Politics of “Redemption”
• Valelly, Chs 5-6

10/3 State Building in the Industrial Era
• Gerstle, Ch 3

—PAPER 1 DUE BY 5:00PM, OCTOBER 5—

10/8 FALL RECESS, NO CLASS

10/10 Gender, Morality, and Social Policy
• Morone, Part III Introduction, Ch 8

10/15 Prohibition and State Building
• Morone, Chs 10-11

10/17 IN-CLASS MIDTERM

10/22 Understanding the “Exceptional” American Welfare State
• Hacker, Introduction

10/24 Making a New Deal
• Gerstle, Chs 6-7

10/29 Sequencing and Path Dependence in Pensions Policy
• Hacker, Chapter 1 and Part II

10/31 Sequencing and Path Dependence in Health Care
• Hacker, Part III

11/5 The New Deal and Racial Stratification
• Katznelson, Chs 1-3

11/7 World War II and Racial Stratification
• Katznelson, Chs 4-5

11/12 Racial Realignment and the Party System
• Valelly, Ch 7
11/14 Explaining the Second Reconstruction
  • Valelly, Chs 8-10

--THANKSGIVING BREAK--

11/26 Rise of the Warfare State
  • Gerstle, Ch 8
  • Morone, Ch 13

11/28 Nationalizing American Power, Expanding Individual Rights
  • Gerstle, Ch 9

—SUNDAY, 12/2, 11:59 PM: PAPER 2 DUE—

12/3 Conservative Revolts
  • Gerstle, Ch 10
  • Morone, Ch 15

12/5 The New Deal Order in the Stream of American History
  • Jefferson Cowie and Nick Salvatore, “The Long Exception: Rethinking the Place of the New Deal in American History,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 74 (Fall 2008): 3-32

12/10 The Carceral State

12/12 TRUMP! Developmental Explanations
  • Robert Mickey, Steven Levitsky, and Lucan Ahmad Way, “Is America Still Safe For Democracy?,” *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2017)

12/18 3:00-5:00pm: FINAL EXAM