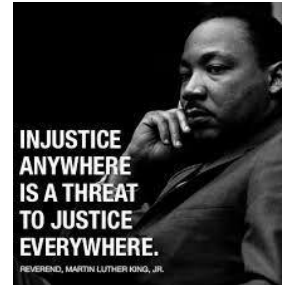


Politics and Policy in the US: POLS 233:500
Political Science * Texas A&M University * Spring 2021
Professor: Dr. Brittany N. Perry (she/her/hers)
Email: bnperry@tamu.edu



Time: Asynchronous with **OPTION to Zoom in on Wednesdays**

Course Description

This course provides a survey of institutions of American government, mass political behavior, and policymaking through the lens of **liberty, equality and justice**. Drawing from the philosophy of individuals such as Aristotle, John Stuart Mill, Rawls, and more, students will develop an understanding of these terms in the context of American history and politics today. To begin, we will explore the degree to which our institutions are guided “by the people, for the people.” Next, we will examine the extent of American liberty, focusing on the domains of speech, press, and privacy. To conclude, we will assess liberty in the context of immigration.

In our unit on equality and justice, students will delve into economic and educational (in)equality and uncover how socio-economic differences among the public affect political outcomes. The course will touch on the status of gender equality and explore how health and environmental policy affect various aspects of American life. This will include a discussion of how health policy is created and why it remains a complicated policy domain, especially amidst a global pandemic. Finally, we will finish the semester with a look at criminal justice in America and examine our adherence to the principle of “justice for all” in the 21st century.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, students will be able to:

- Assess philosophical principles guiding American democracy and how these principles have been institutionalized
- Examine the history and continued debate on the concepts of liberty, equality and justice in the United States
- Analyze decision-making and polity outcomes from the perspective of political science

Required Text

- There is no required textbook to purchase for this course. All articles/chapters will

be posted on the eCampus website. I will also post relevant news articles, data, etc. as they come up in class. **You WILL be responsible for this material.**

Course Structure and Expectations:

This course is designed to provide the material and flexibility you need to successfully complete POLS 233 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Below is what you can expect during this semester:

- **Reading and Audio/Visual Assignments:**
 - Each week, you will be assigned a set of material to read/watch/listen to, including book chapters, scholarly articles, podcasts, etc. It is highly recommended that you complete the assigned material by the end date of each subsection. Do not fall behind!
 - While lecture will cover key concepts, I will not go over everything mentioned in the readings. That said, **you will still be accountable for ALL assigned material** and you will be asked questions on the exam regarding what you read. Make sure you read carefully, that you understand key concepts, and can think analytically about the text. I highly recommend taking notes, discussing concepts with others in the course (including your course buddies (see below)) and scheduling Zoom office hours to clarify any questions you may have.
 - In addition to course reading, I also expect that you keep up with current events in American politics. We will be discussing current events periodically and questions regarding these events **may appear on the exams**. Some suggested news sources include: *NPR*, *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Roll Call*, and *The Hill*, among others. You may also listen to credible podcasts such as *The Daily* (New York Times) or *Up First* (NPR).
 - Be sure that whatever source you use is **credible**. Avoid conspiracy theory-based websites and opinion pieces. And always double check facts using sources such as <http://www.factcheck.org/> or <http://www.politifact.com/>.
 - I will periodically **post surveys** on eCampus for students to submit comments or questions about the reading. I will check these and follow-up on questions in lecture/office hours.
- **Lectures:**
 - Dr. Perry will post weekly **“mini-lectures.”** Each lecture will be no more than 15 minutes in length and will be available as a YouTube link on eCampus. for each unit (corresponding to each exam). There

will be multiple mini-lectures posted every week.

- o Dr. Perry will also post a **Key Terms** guide that you can use to follow along with lectures and reading assignments.

- **Note on copyrighted course materials:** Any material Prof Perry produces or uses in this course is copyrighted. This may include but is not limited to: course slides, online lectures, syllabi, exams and review sheets. Because these are copyrighted, you **do not** have the right to reproduce or distribute any of these materials, unless I expressly grant permission. Commercial use of any of these copyrighted materials is strictly prohibited

- **Quizzes**

- o There will be **5 quizzes** in this course (dates noted in the schedule below). Quizzes will be completed on eCampus and will consist of multiple choice and true/false questions. Students will have 24 hours to complete each quiz and they will be open note and open book, but are to be completed **independently**.

- **Surveys:** Dr. Perry will also be posting **class surveys** to gauge the level of understanding of course material. While responses are anonymous, you will receive a completion grade for your participation.

- o **You will have at least 48 hours to complete a survey.** For a survey completed on-time, you will receive 100%, each day the survey is late, you will be docked 25%. Your final survey score will be an average of your completion scores.

Grading

- **Final Grade Breakdown**

- o Quizzes 10% each (50% total)
- o Final Exam 25%
- o Survey completion 10%
- o Course Buddy final report 15%

- **Notes on Grading**

- o Any student who is not satisfied with a grade on a given assignment must submit a description of the issue in dispute **in writing** (i.e. what is allegedly mis-graded and why you believe your work is correct). If necessary, I will set up a meeting with the student to discuss the issue. I will then decide whether to raise, lower, or leave the grade unchanged.

- **Grading Scale**

A= 89.5-100

B= 79.5-89.4

C= 69.5-79.4

D= 59.5-69.4

F= Less than or equal to 59.4

- **Note: This scale is final and I will NOT be making adjustments at the end of the semester.** You will have numerous opportunities during the semester to discuss and improve your grade. I will not be having these discussions after grades are submitted.

Other Course Information/Policies

- **Contacting Professor Perry:** Outside of my Zoom office hours, the best way to reach me is via email at: bnperry@tamu.edu. (Note that I will be on Zoom EVERY Tuesday at 8:30am, barring any emergency.) As with all business related correspondence, please include an appropriate salutation (i.e. Dear Professor Perry,...), identify yourself and write in complete sentences. Please allow 24 hours for a response during the week. For emails sent on Saturday or Sunday, the 24-hour “clock” starts Monday at 8 am. If you have not heard from me after 24 hours, please send a follow-up email. Please make sure to e-mail me early if you have a time-specific question (e.g. about an exam or reading assignment).
- **Other campus resources:** Aside from email and office hours, there are other avenues of support at TAMU that I strongly recommend. If you are searching for additional academic support, check out the TAMU Academic Success Center: <http://successcenter.tamu.edu/>. They offer academic coaching, peer mentoring and more. And your student fees cover these services. TAKE ADVANTAGE!
- **Statement on Mental Health and Wellness:**
 - Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student’s academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in proper self-care by utilizing the resources and services available from [Counseling & Psychological Services](#) (CAPS). Students who need someone to talk to can call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.
- **Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality**
 - Texas A&M University and the College of Liberal Arts are committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws provide guidance for achieving such an environment. Although class materials are generally considered confidential pursuant to student record policies and laws, University employees — including instructors — cannot maintain confidentiality when it conflicts with their responsibility to

report certain issues that jeopardize the health and safety of our community. As the instructor, I must report (per Texas A&M System Regulation 08.01.01) the following information to other University offices if you share it with me, even if you do not want the disclosed information to be shared: Allegations of sexual assault, sexual discrimination, or sexual harassment when they involve TAMU students, faculty, or staff, or third parties visiting campus.

- o These reports may trigger contact from a campus official who will want to talk with you about the incident that you have shared. In many cases, it will be your decision whether or not you wish to speak with that individual. If you would like to talk about these events in a more confidential setting, you are encouraged to make an appointment with the Student Counseling Service (<https://scs.tamu.edu/>).
- o Students and faculty can report non-emergency behavior that causes them to be concerned at <http://tellsomebody.tamu.edu>.
- **Accommodations for Students with Disability:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact Disability Services, currently located in the Disability Services building at the Student Services at White Creek complex on west campus or call 979-845-1637. For additional information, visit <http://disability.tamu.edu>.
- **Code of Conduct:** The Department of Political Science at Texas A&M University is committed to fostering an environment of learning and scholarship that is open, respectful, and welcoming to all, regardless of race, religion, gender (identity), ability, age, socio-economic background, or sexual orientation. As outlined in the department's [Code of Conduct](#), we strive to create a positive climate for all students, faculty, and staff. We are dedicated to providing a harassment-free experience for all members and guests of the department.

Whereas, we expect members of the political science department to adhere to the departmental Code of Conduct in general, respectful behavior by all participants is especially important in the classroom and other course-related interactions (**virtual and in-person**). An environment conducive to learning and scholarship requires free speech and an open mind, but must be free of harassment¹, hostile, or threatening behaviors. Faculty, staff, and students ought to be proactive in helping others and speak up to avoid harm in the case that any of these unwelcome behaviors are observed.

- Please report all violations of this code to Dr. Perry or the departmental ombudsperson
- If you see or hear any student engaging in behavior that violates this code, you are also encouraged to report to: <https://stophate.tamu.edu>.

¹ As defined in the Society of Political Methodology Code of Conduct, harassment includes but is not limited to “degrading verbal comments, discriminatory jokes and language, deliberate intimidation, stalking, harassing photography or recording, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.”

- **Student Rule 21:** Despite the fact that we are learning online, student rule 21 will be strictly enforced in this class (<https://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule21/>). Any behavior that seriously interferes with either (1) the instructor's ability to conduct the class or (2) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program **will not be tolerated**. An individual engaging in disruptive behavior may be subject to disciplinary action.²
 - If a student is being disruptive or disrespectful (rude, inappropriate, unprofessional, and/or harmful to others) during *class-related communications*, Dr. Perry will first provide a written warning.
 - If negative behavior persists following the warning, Dr. Perry will request a Zoom meeting with the student and Assistant Department Head to discuss and document a plan for changing behavior. This plan will be signed by the student and forwarded to the Head of the Department of Political Science.
 - Further infractions will immediately involve the Department Head and the Academic Dean (per Rule 21)
- **The Aggie Honor Code is also taken very seriously in this class:**

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

- Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).
- You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.
 - Please note that sharing exam or quiz answers via platforms such as GroupMe is a violation of the Honor Code and you will be reported to the Honors Council.
- **The class will also adhere to a crowdsourced Course Code of Conduct, specific to this class, which will be developed and posted during the first days of the semester.**

COVID-19-Related Policies:

Campus Safety Measures

² You have an established right to free speech on this campus. However, as a student, you are also bound by the rules of this institution. This means acknowledging when your speech or behavior crosses a line to the point of being disruptive/uncivil and assuming the consequences of your actions.

- ___ To promote public safety and protect students, faculty, and staff during the coronavirus pandemic, Texas A&M University has adopted policies and practices for the Fall 2020 academic term to limit virus transmission. Students must observe the following practices while participating in face-to-face courses and course-related activities (office hours, help sessions, transitioning to and between classes, study spaces, academic services, etc.):
- ___ Self-monitoring—Students should follow CDC recommendations for self-monitoring. **Students who have a fever or exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 should participate in class remotely and should not participate in face-to-face instruction.**
- ___ Face Coverings—[Face coverings](#) (cloth face covering, surgical mask, etc.) must be properly worn in all non-private spaces including classrooms, teaching laboratories, common spaces such as lobbies and hallways, public study spaces, libraries, academic resource and support offices, and outdoor spaces where 6 feet of physical distancing is difficult to reliably maintain. Description of face coverings and additional guidance are provided in the [Face Covering policy](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) available on the [Provost website](#).
- ___ Physical Distancing—Physical distancing must be maintained between students, instructors, and others in course and course-related activities.
- ___ Classroom Ingress/Egress—Students must follow marked pathways for entering and exiting classrooms and other teaching spaces. Leave classrooms promptly after course activities have concluded. Do not congregate in hallways and maintain 6-foot physical distancing when waiting to enter classrooms and other instructional spaces.
- ___ To attend a face-to-face class, students must wear a face covering (or a face shield if they have an exemption letter). If a student refuses to wear a face covering, the instructor should ask the student to leave and join the class remotely. If the student does not leave the class, the faculty member should report that student to the [Student Conduct office](#) for sanctions. Additionally, the faculty member may choose to teach that day's class remotely for all students

Personal Illness and Quarantine

- Students required to quarantine must participate in courses and course-related activities remotely and **must not attend face-to-face course activities**. Students should notify their instructors of the quarantine requirement. Students under quarantine are expected to participate in courses and complete graded work unless they have symptoms that are too severe to participate in course activities.
- Students experiencing personal injury or illness that is too severe for the student to attend class qualify for an excused absence (See [Student Rule 7, Section 7.2.2.](#)) To receive an excused absence, students must comply with the documentation and notification guidelines outlined in Student Rule 7. While Student Rule 7, Section 7.3.2.1, indicates a medical confirmation note from the student's medical provider is preferred, **for Fall 2020 only, students may use the Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class form in lieu of a medical confirmation. Students must submit the Explanatory Statement for Absence from Class within two business days after the last date of absence.**

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments:

This schedule is subject to modification; keep track of updates on eCampus!

Week of August 20th: Introduction and Drafting Class Code of Conduct

- Syllabus
- Hoover Green, Amelia. "How to Read Political Science: A Guide in Four Steps."

UNIT 1: LIBERTY: "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness"

August 25th & 27th: Rule by the (tyrannical?) majority:

- Volokh, Eugene. 2015. Is the United States of America a republic or a democracy? *The Washington Post*.
- Gilens, M., & Page, B. I. (2014). Testing theories of American politics: Elites, interest groups, and average citizens. *Perspectives on politics*, 12(3), 564-581.
- Alternatives to Plurality Voting rules (interactive):
<http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/alternative-voting-systems.aspx>
 - Optional: *Foundations: Mill, John Stuart Mill (1859) On Liberty Chapter 1*

QUIZ POSTED September 1st Due September 2nd

September 3rd & 8th: Protection of the Individual: Speech, Press, and Privacy

- Goidel, Kirby et al. 2015. *Misreading the Bill of Rights*. Introduction.
- LISTEN: Dr. Matthew Hayes on POLSCast
- Graber and Dunaway. Chapter 3. "Press Freedom and Law" and Chapter 13. "Incivility, Negativity and Bias in the Media" from *Mass Media and American Politics*.
- Zuiderveen et al. (2018). Online Political Microtargeting: Promises and Threats for Democracy. *Utrecht L. Rev.*, 14, 82.

September 10th, 15th & 17th: Liberty in the context of immigration:

- Lazarus, Emma (1886) Poem on Statue of Liberty
- DeSipio and de la Garza. 2015. Chapter 2 "Defining Who We Will Be" from *US Immigration in the Twenty First Century*.

- Bacon, Tricia. Does 'zero tolerance' protect the U.S. from terrorism or crime? Monkey Cage.

QUIZ POSTED September 22nd; due September 23rd

UNIT 2: EQUALITY and JUSTICE..... *for all?"*

September 24th & 29th: *Defining concepts:*

- *Foundations:* Tocqueville, Alexis De. 1840. "Why Democratic Nations Show a More Ardent and Enduring Love for Equality Than Liberty" in *Democracy in America, Part II*.
- Sandel, Michael. Excerpt from *Justice: What's The Right Thing to Do*.

October 1st, 6th and 8th: *Socio-Economic (in)equality:*

- Falk, Gene and Karen Spar. 2014. "Poverty: Major Themes in Past Debates and Current Proposals" *Congressional Research Services*. pg 1-10.
 - o Video: *The Promised Land*
- Ingraham, Christopher. 2018. "How rising inequality hurts everyone, even the rich." *Washington Post*.
- Podcast: School Money: The Cost of Opportunity. NPR 3-part series
- Excerpt from Putnam, Robert. 2016. *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*.

QUIZ POSTED October 13th; due October 14th

October 15th & 20th: *SES and politics:*

- Koerth-Baker, Maggie. 2018. "How Money Affects Elections" *FiveThirtyEight*.
- Kalla, J. L., & Broockman, D. E. (2016). Campaign contributions facilitate access to congressional officials: A randomized field experiment. *American Journal of Political Science*.
 - o Optional: "The State of Campaign Finance Policy: Recent Developments and Issues for Congress" *Congressional Research Services*. pg 1-12.

October 22nd & 27th: *Gender Equality:*

- Dolan, Deckman, Swers. 2017. Women in Social Movements and Interest Groups. In *Women and Politics*.
- Optional: Quadlin, Natasha. 2018. The Mark of a Woman's Record: Gender and Academic Performance in Hiring. *American Sociological Review*.
- Lowande, Kenneth, Melinda Ritchie, & Erinn Lauterbach. "Descriptive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquires." *American Journal of Political Science*
- LISTEN: Dr. Sarah Fulton on *POLSCast*

QUIZ POSTED October 29th; due October 30th

NOVEMBER 3rd: ELECTION DAY

November 5th, 10th & 12th: Health and Environmental Policy:

- Kernell et al. 2019. Excerpt on Free Riding and Health Care. *Logic of American Politics*.
- Excerpt from *Healthier* by Sandro Galea. "At the heart of health: social justice"
<https://medium.com/thrive-global/at-the-heart-of-health-social-justice-49c52fbb3485>
- Schlosberg D. and Collins, L. (2014). From environmental to climate justice: climate change and the discourse of environmental justice. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*.
- Switzer, D., & Teodoro, M. P. (2018). Class, race, ethnicity, and justice in safe drinking water compliance. *Social Science Quarterly*, 99(2), 524-53

QUIZ POSTED November 17th; due November 18th

November 19th & 24th: Criminal Justice:

- BJS "What is the sequence of events in the criminal justice system?"
<https://www.bjs.gov/content/justsys.cfm>
- OPTIONAL: Koenig, Sarah. *Serial* Session 3 Episode 1: "A Bar Fight Walks into the Justice Center."
- Probable Causation: [Episode 10: Emily Weisburst](#)
- Doleac, Jennifer. 2018. "Strategies to Productively Reincorporate the Formerly-Incarcerated into Communities" *Institute of Labor Economics*.

FINAL EXAM December 3rd