

Cuttent Issues in Law, Politics, and Society
POLS 3397-03
15 Agnes Arnold Hall , TTh 1-2:30pm
Fall 2021

Instructor: Dr. Alex Badas

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Office Hours: Monday 1-2:30 in PGH 426, and available through Teams for virtual meetings by appointment

Course Description: This course analyzes current events in law, politics and society through the lens of social science research.

Required texts: There is no required textbook for this class. All readings will be posted to the course's blackboard page. Case summaries can be accessed online at www.oyez.com.

Course Requirements:

- Three essay exams: 15% each
 - o Students will complete three exams. Exams will not be cumulative. Exams will be short essay. Exams are designed to test students' underlying understanding of the concepts discussed.
 - Essay Exam 1: September 30
 - Essay Exam 2: November 4
 - Essay Exam 3: December 2
- Three multiple choice exams: 5% each
 - o Students will complete three multiple choice exams. Exams will not be cumulative. Exams are designed to test student' ability to identity key course concepts. Each exam will have roughly 25-35 questions.
 - MC Exam 1: September 28
 - MC Exam 2: November 2
 - MC Exam 3: November 30
- Final exam 20%
 - o A cumulative final exam will given. The exam will consist of 80-90 multiple choice questions.
 - December 9, 2-5

- Argumentative essay or research design proposal 20%
 - Students will complete a written assignment. Students will have a choice between two options. The first option is write an argumentative essay taking a position on one of the topics we covered in class. The argumentative essay must incorporate the social science research findings in support or whatever side you are arguing. The second option is to write a research design proposal. In this assignment, students will generate a testable hypothesis, discuss potential ways to test that hypothesis, and operationalize key variables of interests. Papers should be between 8-10 pages and follow conventional formatting.
 - Due date November 11
- Attendance
 - There is no attendance policy in this class.

Course Schedule and Readings

August 24 - Introduction to the course

Readings:

- The Syllabus and the FAQ. Seriously.

August 26 - Beyond the First Amendment: The Values and Problems of Free Speech

Readings:

- No assigned readings

August 31 - Supreme Court Decisions on Protests pt.1

Readings:

- *Cohen v. California* (1971)
- *Texas v. Johnson* (1989)
- *Snyder v. Phelps* (2012)

September 2 - Supreme Court Decisions on Protests pt.2

Readings:

- *Branenburg v. Ohio* (1968)
- *R.A.V v. City of St. Paul* (1992)
- *McCullen v. Coakley* (2014)

September 7 - Attitudes towards Protests pt.1

Readings:

- Zaller, J. and Feldman, S. (1992). A simple theory of the survey response: Answering questions and revealing preferences. *American Journal of Political Science*, 36:579–616
- Nelson, T. E., Clawson, R. A., and Oxley, Z. M. (1997). Media framing of a civil liberties conflict and its effect on tolerance. *The American Political Science Review*, 91(3):567–583
- Hsiao, Y. and Radnitz, S. (2021). Allies or agitators? how partisan identity shapes public opinion about violent or nonviolent protests. *Political Communication*, 38(4):479–497
- Utych, S. M. (2020). Race, dehumanization, and the nfl national anthem protests. *Journal of Experimental Political Science*, pages 1–16

September 9 - Attitudes towards Protests pt.2

Readings:

- Reynolds-Stenson, H. (2018). Protesting the police: anti-police brutality claims as a predictor of police repression of protest. *Social movement studies*, 17(1):48–63
- Epstein, L., Parker, C. L., and Segal, J. A. (2018). Do justices defend the speech they hate? an analysis of in-group bias on the us supreme court. *Journal of Law and Courts*, 6(2):237–262

September 14 - CLASS CANCELLED TROPICAL STORM

September 16 - No Class

Assignment:

- I will be out of town attending a conference. I will not be able to hold lecture on this date.
- Study for the exam next week. Email me with questions.

September 21 - Consequences of Protests

Readings:

- Reny, T. T. and Newman, B. J. (2021). The opinion-mobilizing effect of social protest against police violence: Evidence from the 2020 george floyd protests. *American Political Science Review*, pages 1–9
- Gillion, D. Q. (2012). Protest and congressional behavior: assessing racial and ethnic minority protests in the district. *The Journal of Politics*, 74(4):950–962
- Wallace, S. J., Zepeda-Millán, C., and Jones-Correa, M. (2014). Spatial and temporal proximity: Examining the effects of protests on political attitudes. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(2):433–448

September 23 - Consequences of Protests

Readings:

- Wrap up consequences of protest
- Exam review session

September 28 - Multiple Choice Exam 1

Assignments:

- Multiple choice exam 1

September 30 - Essay Exam 1

Assignments:

- Essay exam 1

October 5 - Supreme Court Voting Rights Cases

Readings:

- *South Carolina v. Katzenbach* (1966)
- *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013)
- *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board* (2008)
- *Richardson v. Ramirez* (1974)

October 7 - Research Studies on Voting Regulations

Readings:

- Feder, C. and Miller, M. G. (2020). Voter purges after shelby: Part of special symposium on election sciences. *American Politics Research*, 48(6):687–692
- Fraga, B. L. and MG, M. (2021). Who does voter id keep from voting? *Journal of Politics*
- Gronke, P., Hicks, W. D., McKee, S. C., Stewart III, C., and Dunham, J. (2019). Voter id laws: A view from the public. *Social Science Quarterly*, 100(1):215–232
- Valentino, N. A. and Neuner, F. G. (2017). Why the sky didn't fall: mobilizing anger in reaction to voter id laws. *Political Psychology*, 38(2):331–350

October 12 - Supreme Court Gerrymandering Cases

Readings:

- *Baker v. Carr* (1962)
- *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964)
- *Miller v. Johnson* (1995)
- *Rucho v. Common Cause* (2019)

October 14 - Research Studies on Gerrymandering

Readings:

- Stephanopoulos, N. O. and Warshaw, C. (2020). The impact of partisan gerrymandering on political parties. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 45(4):609–643
- Hayes, D. and McKee, S. C. (2009). The participatory effects of redistricting. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53:1006–1023
- Peterson, J. C. (2019). The mask of neutrality: Judicial partisan calculation and legislative redistricting. *Law & Policy*, 41(3):336–359

October 19 - Death Penalty

Readings:

- *Furman v. Georgia* (1972) skim

- *Gregg v. Georgia* (1976) skim
- Kovandzic, T. V., Vieraitis, L. M., and Boots, D. P. (2009). Does the death penalty save lives? new evidence from state panel data, 1977 to 2006. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 8(4):803–843
- Beim, D., Clark, T. S., and Lauderdale, B. E. (2021). Republican-majority appellate panels increase execution rates for capital defendants. *The Journal of Politics*, 83(3):000–000

October 21 - Political Implications of Ethnic, Gender, and Racial Representation

Readings:

- Mansbridge, J. (1999). Should blacks represent blacks and women represent women? a contingent “yes”. *The Journal of Politics*, 61:628–57
- McDonald, J. and Deckman, M. (2021). New voters, new attitudes: how gen z americans rate candidates with respect to generation, gender, and race. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, pages 1–21
- Scherer, N. and Curry, B. (2010). Does descriptive race representation enhance institutional legitimacy? the case of the u.s. courts. *The Journal of Politics*, 72(1):90–104
- Rocha, R. R., Tolbert, C. J., Bowen, D. C., and Clark, C. J. (2010). Race and turnout: Does descriptive representation in state legislatures increase minority voting? *Political Research Quarterly*, 63(4):890–907

October 26 Political Implications of Ethnic, Gender, and Racial Representation

Readings:

- Stauffer, K. E. (2021). Public perceptions of women’s inclusion and feelings of political efficacy. *American Political Science Review*, pages 1–16
- Badas, A. and Stauffer, K. E. (2019). Voting for women in nonpartisan and partisan elections. *Electoral Studies*, 57:245–255
- Campbell, D. E. and Wolbrecht, C. (2006). See jane run: Women politicians as role models for adolescents. *The Journal of Politics*, 68(2):233–247
- Boyd, C. L., Epstein, L., and Martin, A. D. (2010). Untangling the causal effects of sex on judging. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54:389–411

October 28 - Class Paper Advice Session

Assignment:

- Come to class with questions you have about completing the course paper. This class session will provide you with tips for completing your paper.
- Exam review session

November 2 - Multiple Choice Exam 2

Assignments:

- Multiple choice exam 2

November 4 - Essay Exam 2

Assignments:

- Essay exam 2

November 9 - Political Polarization and Negative Partisanship

Readings:

- [Read about Vote View and DW-Nominate](#)
- Sennewald, M. A., Manning, K. L., and Carp, R. A. (2017). The polarization of the judiciary. *Party Politics*, 23(6):657–665
- Hall, A. B. (2015). What happens when extremists win primaries? *American Political Science Review*, 109(1):18–42
- Abramowitz, A. I. and Webster, S. W. (2018). Negative partisanship: Why americans dislike parties but behave like rabid partisans. *Political Psychology*, 39:119–135
- Ridge, H. M. (2020). Enemy mine: negative partisanship and satisfaction with democracy. *Political Behavior*, pages 1–25
- Mason, L. (2018). Ideologues without issues: The polarizing consequences of ideological identities. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 82(S1):866–887

November 11 - Judicial Independence

Readings:

- Nelson, M. J. and Gibson, J. L. (2019). How does hyperpoliticized rhetoric affect the us supreme court's legitimacy? *The Journal of Politics*, 81(4):1512–1516
- Bartels, B. L. and Johnston, C. D. (2012). On the ideological foundations of supreme court legitimacy in the american public. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57:184–199
- Hazelton, M. L., Montgomery, J. M., and Nyhan, B. (2016). Does public financing affect judicial behavior? evidence from the north carolina supreme court. *American Politics Research*, 44(4):587–617

Assignments:

- Course paper due. Update to TurnItIn on Blackboard.

November 16 - Supreme Court Abortion Cases

Readings:

- *Roe v. Wade*
- *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*
- Kreitzer, R. J. (2015). Politics and morality in state abortion policy. *State Politics & Policy Quarterly*, 15(1):41–66

November 18 - Race and the Criminal Justice System

Readings:

- Williams, M. R. and Holcomb, J. E. (2004). The interactive effects of victim race and gender on death sentence disparity findings. *Homicide Studies*, 8(4):350–376
- Gelman, A., Shor, B., Nafumi, J., and Park, D. (2007). Rich state, poor state, red state, blue state what's the matter with connecticut. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 2:345–367
- Tyler, T. R., Fagan, J., and Geller, A. (2014). Street stops and police legitimacy: Teachable moments in young urban men's legal socialization. *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies*, 11(4):751–785
- Rehavi, M. M. and Starr, S. B. (2014). Racial disparity in federal criminal sentences. *Journal of Political Economy*, 122(6):1320–1354

November 23 - The Supreme Court and Native American Rights guest lecture by Billy Justus

Readings:

- To be determined

November 30 - Multiple Choice Exam 3 Assignment

- Complete multiple choice exam 3.

December 2 - Essay Exam 3 Assignment:

- Complete essay exam 3.

December 9- Final Exam

Exam time: December 9, 2-5

Face Covering Policy:

To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the University strongly encourages everyone (vaccinated or not) to wear face coverings indoors on campus including classrooms for both faculty and students.

Presence in Class:

Your presence in class each session means that you:

- Are NOT exhibiting any Coronavirus Symptoms that makes you think that you may have COVID-19
- Have NOT tested positive or been diagnosed for COVID-19
- Have NOT knowingly been exposed to someone with COVID-19 or suspected/presumed COVID-19

If you are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms that are not clearly related to a pre-existing medical condition, do not come to class. Please see Student Protocols for what to do if you experience symptoms and Potential Exposure to Coronavirus for what to do if you have potentially been exposed to COVID-19. Consult the (select: Undergraduate Excused Absence Policy or Graduate Excused Absence Policy) for information regarding excused absences due to medical reasons.

Late Assignments:

Late assignments will not be accepted. Students who do not submit work on time will receive zero credit for the assignment.

Academic Integrity:

I strictly enforce all of the policies regarding academic integrity such as cheating and plagiarism as determined by University of Houston. A copy of these regulations is available through the University's [website](#). Ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for violations. All assignments will be processed through plagiarism detection software. Please be aware that having knowledge of academic dishonesty and not reporting it is a violation of the university's academic dishonesty policies.

Disabilities:

The University of Houston is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for eligible students with disabilities, including students who have learning disabilities, health impairments, psychiatric disabilities, and/or other disabilities. If you believe you have a disability that requires accommodation, please contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD) at 713-743-5400 voice or 713-749-1527 (TTY).

Technology:

Many studies have demonstrated that using electronic device (laptops, tablets, etc) to take notes has a negative influence on student performance. Further, studies show that students who do not use electronic devices but sit near those who do have negative outcomes as well. For this reason, I **highly recommend but do not ban** the use of electronic devices for note taking. If you do plan to use an electronic device, I do ask that you sit in the back of the room to minimize the number of students potentially distracted by its use.

Recording lectures without permission is **strictly prohibited**—this includes video, audio, or photo recording. If you are caught recording lecture, I will ask you to leave class and you will be marked absent.

Sexual Assault & Gender Based Discrimination

The University of Houston is fully committed to supporting students and upholding an environment free of sexual violence and gender based discrimination. If a student chooses to confide

in faculty (or other entities on campus) regarding an issues of sexual violence, dating violence, domestic violence and stalking it should be understood that faculty members are required to report this information to authorities. Students can choose to disclose their experience confidentially to the following resources:

- University Counseling Center
- Student Health Center

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