

Manar Shorbagy

Fall 2018

Time: UW 2:00- 3:15 p.m.

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POLS 3403- American Government

“This is a dangerous time for America, that we have a president with no regard to the rule of law or for the truth”. These are the words of Carl Bernstein who, with Bob Woodward, broke the story of Watergate, which led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon in 1974. Indeed, the US is going through extraordinary times. With the alienation of allies abroad, the rise of white nationalism at home, the tension between the president and the media and the investigation into the alleged Trump campaign collusion with the Russian intervention in the US elections, many people in America and around the globe find the US a very different place today.

How did the US get to this point? Who voted for Trump? What was wrong with the Hillary Clinton candidacy? Was it just Clinton or is it about her party too? And who won the 2016 election anyway? More so, is the US president really breaking the law? Where are the famous ‘checks and balances’ and, more importantly, what are the prerogatives of the US president versus Congress and the courts?

These, and related questions, will be at the center of our work in this course. We will study the American political system in detail and work to understand the intricacies of its institutions and the complex processes they make possible i.e. we will struggle to understand how the political system works in theory and in practice. Throughout, however, we will also engage the broader theme of the likely fate of the American democratic experiment.

Course Requirements

The course material is designed in a way so as to deal with each topic from various angles, thus providing exposure to different points of view on the same issue. Therefore, class work and the material and *not identical*. What we do in class is we discuss *together* the topic, explore different dimensions thereof, and develop the links to other issues and topics. Therefore, attendance, prior reading and class participation are basic requirements for this course. Otherwise, you will miss the point of class discussion and may not be able to handle the material. Missing class, and thus the discussions, will negatively affect your performance in both presentations and exams.

Please do not hesitate to come and discuss with me any ambiguities as soon as they occur. The sooner you come the easier it will be for me to help you.

Grading

* Exams: Three exams (20% each)

* Dates of Exams

First Midterm: Oct. 10th.

Second Midterm: Nov. 7th

Third Midterm: Dec. 5th.

* Research and presentations (30%).

* Class performance and attendance 10% (including pop-quizzes)

- * All grades in this course are NON-NEGOTIABLE.
- * NO MAKE UPS in this course.

Attendance and Academic Integrity

* Please note that more than the equivalent of 3 weeks of absences can result in an F in this course.

* Students are expected to commit to the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another persons' work as one's own, using Internet or other sources without citation, fabricating field data or citations, stealing examinations, tampering with the academic work of another student, facilitating other students' acts of academic dishonesty, etc. Plagiarism for assignments and/or reports may result in a zero grade for the assignment and/or the report in question. Cheating during an examination may result in a zero grade for this examination. Further action, according to university regulations, would also be implemented. You should be aware that all written work might be submitted to "Turnitin.com", the detection prevention software. Any detected plagiarism will have to be reported. *The University's statement on academic integrity, from which the above statement is drawn, is available at <http://www.aucegypt.edu/academics/integrity/Pages/default.aspx>*

Readings

We will work mainly from the following:

1. Edwards, Wattenberg and Lineberry, Government in America, 11th edition, (Boston: Longman, 2011). Available in both the bookstore and on reserve in the library.
2. Chip Berlet and Mathew N. Lyons, Right Wing Populism in America, Too Close for Comfort, (New York: Guilford Press, 2000). (Copy Center).
3. Frank Rich, After Trump, New York Magazine, Nov. 2017, (Blackboard).
4. Jonathan Brater et al, Purges: The Growing Threat to the Right to Vote, Brennan Center for Justice, NYU School of Law, 2018. (Blackboard).
5. Lydia Wheeler, Court Strikes Down North Carolina Congressional Map as Unconstitutional, The Hill, August 27, 2018. (Blackboard).

Please note that we will be doing our work in class while events unfold. We will be watching closely the Congressional election. New material will be added via blackboard or as handouts. The months ahead promise to be exciting and important. Ongoing developments will be used to illustrate broader course themes and hopefully will make class discussions lively and engaging for us all.. Therefore, you are advised to follow events as they unfold mainly through reliable American sources.

Course Outline

We will proceed according to the following plan. Any changes will be announced well ahead of time. (Please note that we will give time in class to discussing important unfolding events. Therefore the outline will remain somewhat flexible).

The US Constitution:

Edwards Chapter 2 and Chapter 9: pp. 288- 294

Race in America

Edwards Ch.5

Berlet and Lyons: 'New Faces for White Nationalism.'

Political Parties: Edwards Chapter 8

Frank Rich, After Trump.

Jonathan Brater et al, Purges.

Interest Groups: Edwards, Chapter 10

Congress: Edwards, Chapter 11

Lydia Wheeler, The Hill.

Presidency: Edwards, Chapter 12

National Security: Edwards et al, Chapter 17