

PP 319I: Special Topics in American Politics: Critically Evaluating Democracy in America –Backsliding?

CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY

Summer 2023

Seminar: Mondays & Tuesdays, 1:00-3:50PM (PST)

Course Location: Zoom Room [<https://cgu.zoom.us/j/89081924825>]

Instructor: Carlos Algara, Ph.D.

Office: 227 McManus Hall

Office Hours: Please email me to schedule.

Course Structure: Online synchronous seminar discussion.

✉ carlos.algara@cgu.edu

🌐 <https://calgara.github.io>

Course Objectives: How democratic is the United States and how does this vary over time?

In comparing the American democratic experiment to Europe during the 19th century, Alexis de Tocqueville remarked that “the position of the Americans is quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one.” In doing so, de Tocqueville noted the seemingly democratic impulses found in the United States were an outlier compared to the autocratic regimes found in Europe. Indeed, America’s democratic impulses, and emphasis on equality, has long been its defining feature and a key normative framework comprising the American identity.

However, recent commentators question the degree of democracy in contemporary America given the perceived domestic (and worldwide) rise of populism and erosion of democratic cornerstones, such as societal equality and access to the ballot box. In this course, we critically evaluate this claim by evaluating to what extent is the characterization of America as a country with strong democratic impulses warranted? Moreover, we also critically evaluate whether the democratic nature of America changes over time, particularly considering the expansion of voting rights in the 20th century and recent scholars decrying “democratic backsliding” across the U.S. states.

This course draws on historical, legal, and political science work to examine democratic performance, both in theory and in practice, in the United States. We begin by examining the theoretical foundations of democratic representation that underpins the American experiment. Second, we evaluate the degree to which access to this system of representation changes over-time, with particular focus on efforts to extend the franchise on gender, class, and racial grounds. Lastly, we critically evaluate the thesis brought forth by contemporary commentators of American democracy, which posits that the United States is currently undergoing a period of “democratic backsliding” fueled, in part, by the rise of populism domestically. Readings will address both

empirical and normative questions regarding the nature of American democracy.

Course Expectations

This course is designed for both Master’s-level and Ph.D.-level students, with varying course outcome expectations for each. Master’s students will get acquainted with the main findings across various lines of inquiry towards the goal of demonstrating their ability to read, critique, and articulate the state of the research in the field. For doctoral students in this course, the expectation is that many of you are planning to teach courses and conduct original research on American politics. In either case, students are expected to arrive in class prepared to discuss the readings and may be asked to summarize what they read at the beginning of each seminar. I do not expect students to fully understand every detail of the material, particularly those that contain complicated statistical methods or formal models, but I expect students to be prepared to work through these facets of empirical work by coming prepared to understand these questions—which requires initial engagement with the material. This seminar will be taught in a *dynamic* fashion which will require full participation from *everyone* in the seminar.

Lastly, students are expected to **treat each other with respect**, listen attentively when others are speaking, and avoid personal attacks. At the same time, all students should feel comfortable expressing their opinions, political or otherwise, as long as they do so in an appropriate manner. Students will be evaluation in the following grading scheme consistent with CGU policies.

Claremont Graduate University Course Grading Scheme

Letter Grade Grade	Grade Point	Grade Description	Learning Outcome
A	4.0	<i>Complete mastery of course material and additional insight beyond course material</i>	<i>Insightful</i>
B	3.0	<i>Complete mastery of course material</i>	<i>Proficient</i>
C	2.0	<i>Gaps in mastery of course material; not at level expected by the program</i>	<i>Developing</i>
U	0	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>	<i>Ineffective</i>

Note that grades may contain pluses or minus designations as appropriate.

Course Logistics & Requirements

This section of the syllabus serves as a guide for course expectations (both for me and for you) and logistical information such as grade breakdown and course texts.

Course Texts, Materials, & Announcements: I will provide all readings for this course. The [Course Canvas Page](#) contains all relevant readings for this seminar.

Supplemental Course Podcast Playlist: Each course session will feature an accompanying set of *optional* podcasts that are congruent with that session's course readings. While not mandatory to engage with or listen to, these podcasts are very helpful in that they provide additional commentary on the subject theme of a given course meeting. You can find the links of the podcasts on each meeting section of this syllabus or here in a comprehensive playlist form: [PP318I Summer 2023 Podcast Spotify Playlist Link Here](#).

Grade Breakdown & Schedule:

- ★ 10% Classroom Discussion Participation
- ★ 40% Reading Synthesis Papers
- ★ 15% Research Proposal Annotated Bibliography
- ★ 35% Final Research Proposal

Class Discussion Participation (10%): To make the seminar a useful experience, you **must** come to class prepared to discuss the readings and engage with other course material. This means you should already be familiar with each of the readings and be ready to raise (and answer) interesting questions about their arguments, findings, methodological strategies, etc., during class discussion.

Reading Synthesis Papers (40%): Beginning in the second week of the course, students are responsible for turning in a short 1.5-2 page double spaced synthesis paper **engaging** a given or set of readings used in the week's seminar via the Canvas assignment portal. These synthesis essays are due the day of seminar over the Canvas Portal. These synthesis papers must address the following points:

1. **Identifying the Research Topic:** What is the overarching research question addressed by the reading(s) and how do they relate to this week's thematic topic?
2. **Assessing Theory:** What is the reading(s) main argument towards answering the overarching research question?
3. **Assessing Research Methodology:** What research design is used to answer the research question and what are the strengths/weaknesses of the design?
4. **Assessing The Point:** How does this research fit in the overall literature?

5. **Assessing Research Significance & Quality:** If you had advice for the author(s) to redo or extend their study, what would you suggest?

Students are welcome to complete this exercise for every week during lecture, but note that I will take **the top four graded synthesis papers** in calculating this grade component. In other words, students need to formally complete four of these assignments for full credit and need not turn in this assignment every meeting, but rather every other meeting. No late work will be accepted on this component given the inherent flexibility in when student's may turn in a synthesis paper. These synthesis papers **may** incorporate the main numbered points on the *How to Read Social Science Research Articles* at the end of this syllabus.

Research Proposal Annotated Bibliography (15%): During the week of Meeting 7 & 8, students will complete an annotated bibliography by identifying a research idea in the study of American democracy that interests them and assess our collective knowledge in answering the question identified. To begin, students will write an introductory paragraph identifying your broad research question of interest. Next, students will begin the annotated bibliography analysis by finding the *earliest article* addressing the broad research idea in: (1) The American Political Science Review, (2) American Journal of Political Science, and (3) Journal of Politics. In one paragraph, you will answer the following questions for each article:

1. What was the research question of the article?
2. What is the theoretical argument present in the article?
3. What data & methodology was used to evaluate the theoretical argument addressing the research question?
4. What previous work, if any, was mentioned in the article and how does this article contribute towards the knowledge in the field regarding the research topic?

After finding the *earliest* article on the broad research topic, repeat the process for the *most recent* article on the topic. After summarizing the article, write a short concluding paragraph addressing the following questions:

1. What scientific progress has been made on the research topic that interests you since the publication of the earliest article identified for each journal?
2. Was there a key development in answering this question through the advancement of data or methodology?
3. Is there a scholarly consensus on the answer to the research question or is there a standing debate in the literature?

This annotated bibliography will be the course assignment for the conference week of no seminar and will be due on Saturday 6/10.

Research Proposal (35%): Building off the annotated bibliography assignment, students will complete a 12-15 page research proposal evaluating the research topic identified in the previous

assignment. The proposal ought to identify a question or puzzle on an important topic in the study of American Democracy, summarize relevant research on the question or debate, and discuss a strategy for answering the question or moving the debate forward. The discussion of relevant research ought to address the most recent scholarship available, as well as the more seminal work on the topic. A minimum of 12 sources is expected. ***Good research proposals will build an empirical model discussing how outcome variables are measured, how the main independent variable explaining variation in outcome variable is measured, and what data sources may contain the necessary data to evaluate the research question posed in the research proposal.*** The strategy for answering the question ought to include a preliminary argument, testable hypotheses derived from this argument, and a well-developed research design that could feasibly be undertaken with sufficient time and resources. ***Given the condensed nature of this summer course, the proposal is due no later than June 28th at 11:59pm with no exceptions.***

Course Policies

Course Attendance: Students are expected to attend all classes. Students who are unable to attend class must seek permission for an excused absence from the course director or teaching assistant. Unapproved absences or late attendance for three or more classes may result in a lower grade or an “incomplete” for the course. If a student has to miss a class, he or she should arrange to get notes from a fellow student and is strongly encouraged to meet with the teaching assistant to obtain the missed material. Missed assignments will not be available for re-taking unless *prior arrangements are made with the course instructor.*

Course Late Work & Incomplete Policy: Late assignments will not be accepted except in the event of a medical or family/personal emergency and with coordination with the instructor. Any request for an incomplete must be approved prior to the last day of class or accompanied by a doctor’s note or evidence of a family emergency. No incompletes will be given after the conclusion of the semester and without completion of over half the course work assigned.

CGU Academic Policies

Class Policies: The CGU institutional policies apply to each class offered at CGU. Students are encouraged to review the student handbook for their program as well as policy documentation in the Bulletin and on the Registrar’s webpages: <http://bulletin.cgu.edu/> and <http://www.cgu.edu/registrar>. The protocols defined by the CGU’s Student Conduct Code must be upheld in all classes. For more information, please visit for [CGU’s Basic Code of Conduct](#) (Links to an external site.).

Credit Hour: Credit hour refers to the units or credits earned by a student for the successful completion of a course at CGU. These are the units recorded on transcripts and the units that are counted toward degree requirements. For CGU courses, a single unit or credit is determined by 10.5 hours of instructional activity per semester. Instructional activity includes direct instructor

contact in a physical or virtual classroom as well as asynchronous instructional content for online or hybrid courses. See the full policy [here](#).

Academic Integrity: The work you do in this class must be your own. Information on CGU's Policy and Procedures for Violations of Standards of Academic Integrity can be found [here](#). In addition, the Claremont Colleges Library has a number of resources on academic honesty and integrity, including the following online tutorial: [here](#).

CGU Accommodations

Accommodations for Students with Different Abilities: CGU is committed to creating courses that are inclusive and accessible. If you would like to request academic accommodations due to temporary or permanent disability, contact the CGU Dean of Students and Coordinator for Student Disability Services at DisabilityServices@cgu.edu or (909) 607-9448. Reasonable accommodations are considered after you have conferred with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) and presented the required documentation of your disability to the ODS. Planning is essential, so please communicate to the ODS as soon as possible.

Religious Accommodations: Students who expect to miss classes or assignments as a consequence of their religious observance shall be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete such academic responsibilities.

Mental Health and Well Being: Graduate school is a context where mental health struggles can arise or be exacerbated. If you ever find yourself struggling, please ask for help. If you wish to seek out campus resources, here is some basic information: services.claremont.edu/mcaps/. Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services (MCAPS) is committed to promoting psychological wellness for all students at The Claremont Colleges. Professional and well-trained psychologists, psychiatrists, and post-doctoral and intern therapists offer support for a range of psychological issues in a confidential and safe environment.

Phone (909) 621-8202
After hours emergency (909) 607-2000
Tranquada Student Services Center, 1st floor
757 College Way
Claremont, CA 91711

Title IX: Title IX. One of my responsibilities as an instructor is to help create a safe learning environment. I am a mandatory reporter. Thus, if I learn of any potential violation of CGU's gender-based misconduct policy (e.g., rape, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking) by any means, I am required to notify the CGU Title IX Coordinator at Deanof.Students@cgu.edu or (909) 607-9448. Students can request confidentiality from the institution, which I will communicate to the Title IX Coordinator. If students want to speak with someone confidentially, the following resources are available on and off campus: EmPOWER Center (909) 607-2689, Monsour

Counseling and Psychological Services (909) 621-8202, and The Chaplains of The Claremont Colleges (909) 621-8685. Speaking with a confidential resource does not preclude students from making a formal report to the Title IX Coordinator if and when they are ready. Confidential resources can walk students through all of their reporting options. They can also provide students with information and assistance in accessing academic, medical, and other support services they may need.

Your Physical Health: . I am also committed to ensuring the health and safety of the CGU community. Information on CGU's COVID Semester protocol can be found here: <https://info.cgu.edu/emergency/> and I suspect it will be updated, as needed, as we progress.

Campus security: Campus security can be reached 24 hours/day at (909) 607-2000. Please download the [CGU Safety Resource Card](#) to your phone's contacts.

Tech Issues: The Office of Information Technology has a helpdesk to support you with CGU wireless access and email issues. They also have good documentation you can use to learn to connect and use online resources. Website: <https://mycampus.cgu.edu/web/it>.

Center for Writing and Rhetoric (CWR): CGU has a graduate studies-focused Center for Writing and Rhetoric that works with you no matter where you are in the writing process. The CWR is not just for remediation of your writing, but for all writers to provide partnership and consultation to improve your academic work at all levels. The CWR can work with you in planning, outlining, drafting, and final review of documents and presentations for class work, conferences, and publications. Website: <https://mycampus.cgu.edu/web/writing-rhetoric>.

Library: The Claremont Colleges Library has a wealth of resources, including subject specialist librarians, to support your academic work. Use the library for class work and research to access and use data-bases for articles, books, and data sets, to understand how to conduct effective searches and evaluate sources, use digital tools, and much more. The library offers workshops and 1-1 consultations with students as well. Website: <https://library.claremont.edu/>.

Course Road-Map

1. Meeting 1 (5/15/2023): Introduction to the Course, Syllabus, & Canvas

Theoretical Foundations: American Democracy & Representation

2. Meeting 2 (5/16/2023): Theoretical Foundations: What is “Democracy” and How Do We Measure it?

- ★ Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, David Altman, Michael Bernhard, Steven Fish, Allen Hicken, Matthew Kroenig et al. 2011. “Conceptualizing and Measuring Democracy: A New Approach.” *Perspectives on Politics*. 9(2) 247-267.
- ★ Coppedge, Michael, John Gerring, Staffan I. Lindberg, Svend-Erik Skaaning, and Jan Teorell. 2017. “V-Dem comparisons and contrasts with other measurement projects.” *V-Dem working paper* 45.
- ★ Vanhanen, Tatu. 2000. “A New Dataset for Measuring Democracy, 1810-1998.” *Journal of Peace Research* 37:251-265.
- ★ Högström, John. 2013. “Does the Choice of Democracy Measure Matter? Comparisons between the Two Leading Democracy Indices, Freedom House and Polity IV.” *Government & Opposition* 48(2):201-221.
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast, note in audio form on Spotify Playlist:** “Measuring Democracy: The Power of Data.” 2021. *Consortium for Elections and Political Transitions YouTube*.
Video Link: <https://youtu.be/8eBJ0hAHNMc>

3. Meeting 3 (5/22/2023): Situating our Democratic Institutions I: Federalist 10 & Principal-Agent Foundations

- ★ Madison, James. 1787. “Federalist 10.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)
- ★ Madison, James. 1787. “Federalist 57.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)
- ★ Miller, Gary J. 2005. “The Political Evolution of Principal-Agent Models.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 8(1): 203-225.
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Federalist 10: ‘Mischiefs of Faction’ | Madison on Faction, Representations, and the Benefits of an Extensive Republican.” 2021. *Sunwater Institute: Federalist Papers Podcast*. Podcast Link: <https://sunwater.org/research/rights-and-liberties-podcast-federalist-10/>
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Federalist 57: “‘Bound to Fidelity and Sympathy’ | Madison on What Binds of Members of the House of Representatives to Their Constituents.” 2022. *Sunwater Institute: Federalist Papers Podcast*.
Podcast Link: <https://sunwater.org/research/federalist-57-bound-to-fidelity-and-sympathy-madison-on-what-binds-of-members-of-the-house-of-representatives-to-their-constituents/>

4. Meeting 4 (5/23/2023): Situating our Democratic Institutions II: Federalist 51, Shared Powers Foundation, & Situating the Status Quo Bias within American Democracy

- ★ Madison, James (or Alexander Hamilton). 1788. “Federalist 51.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)
- ★ Madison, James. 1788. “Federalist 52.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)
- ★ Madison, James. 1788. “Federalist 53.” In [United States Congress Resources](#)
- ★ Shugart, Matthew S. 2006. “Comparative Executive–Legislative Relations.” In Sarah A. Binder, R. A. W. Rhodes & Bert A. Rockman eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* New York, NY: Oxford University Press 2008.
- ★ United States Constitution. 1789. Articles I & II.
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Federalist 51: ‘These Inventions of Prudence’ | Madison on Separation of Powers, Human Nature, and Republican Government.” 2022. *Sunwater Institute: Federalist Papers Podcast*.
Podcast Link: <https://sunwater.org/research/federalist-51-these-inventions-of-prudence-madison-on-separation-of-powers-human-nature-and-republican-government-2/>
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Federalist 52: ‘A Fundamental Article of Republican Government | Madison on Elections and the House of Representatives.’” 2022. *Sunwater Institute: Federalist Papers Podcast*.
Podcast Link: <https://sunwater.org/research/federalist-52-a-fundamental-article-of-republican-government-madison-on-elections-and-the-house-of-representatives/>
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Federalist 53: ‘The Authority of a Paramount Constitution: Madison’s Defense of Biennial Elections to the House of Representatives.’” 2022. *Sunwater Institute: Federalist Papers Podcast*.
Podcast Link: <https://sunwater.org/research/federalist-53-the-authority-of-a-paramount-constitution-madisons-defense-of-biennial-elections-to-the-house-of-representatives/>

5. Meeting 5 (5/29/2023): *No meeting due to Memorial Day Holiday.*

6. Meeting 6 (5/30/2023): Tocqueville on Democracy in America: Visions of History, Associations, Society and Tyranny of the Majority

- ★ Tocqueville, Alexis De. 1845. “Democracy in America.” Volume 1. Part I: Author’s Introduction, Chapters 3-4, Part II: Chapters 4, 7, Conclusion.
- ★ Tocqueville, Alexis De. 1845. “Democracy in America.” Volume 2. Introduction. Part I: Chapters 1-2, 11. Part II: Chapters 5-7.
- ★ **Suggested Skim:** Tocqueville, Alexis De. 1845. “Democracy in America.” Volume 2. Part II: Chapters 1-4, 13-15. Part III: Chapters 5-12, 17, 19, 21. Part IV: Chapters 1-3, 6-8.
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Tocqueville: Democracy in America.” 2018. *British Broadcasting Company: In Our Time Podcast*.
Podcast Link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b09vyw0x>
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Tocqueville’s America Revisited, Part1 .” 2016. *Canadian British Broadcasting Company: Ideas Podcast*.
Podcast Link: <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/tocqueville-s-america-revisited-part-1-1.3803726>

7. Meeting 7 (6/5/2023): *No meeting due to 2023 Center for Effective Lawmaking Conference, Annotated Bibliography Work Session I*
8. Meeting 8 (6/6/2023): *No meeting due to 2023 Center for Effective Lawmaking Conference, Annotated Bibliography Work Session II*

★ **Annotated Bibliography Due Saturday, June 10th** ★

Democracy for Whom? Historical Variation in Citizenship

9. Meeting 9 (6/12/2023): Democracy for Whom I? Establishing the Historical Narrative & Class Inequality to the Ballot Box in the Early American Republican
 - ★ Ratcliffe, Donald. “The Right to Vote and the Rise of Democracy, 1787-1828,” *Journal of the Early Republic*. 33(2): 219-254.
 - ★ Sparrow, Bartholomew H. “The Other Point of Departure: Tocqueville, the South, Equality, and the Lessons of Democracy,” *Studies in American Political Development*. 33(1): 178-208.
 - ★ Valelly, Richard M. 2016. “How Suffrage Politics Made—and Makes—America,” in *Oxford Handbook of American Political Development*. 445-472.
 - ★ Steinfeld, Robert J. 1989. “Property and Suffrage in the Early American Republic,” *Stanford Law Review*. 335-376.
 - ★ Einstein, Katherine Levine & Maxwell Palmer. 2021. “Land of the Freeholder: How Property Rights Make Local Voting Rights,” *Journal of Historical Political Economy*. 1(4): 499-530.
 - ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Voting Rights: The Big Picture (ft. Carol Anderson).” 2021. *Cafe: VoxMedia Podcast Network*. Podcast Link: <https://cafe.com/now-and-then/voting-rights-the-big-picture-ft-carol-anderson/>
 - ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Voting Rights.” 2021. *Civics 101: A Podcast*. Podcast Link: <https://www.civics101podcast.org/civics-101-episodes/ep104>
10. Meeting 10 (6/13/2023): Democracy for Whom II? The Fight for Women’s Suffrage & Against Gender Discrimination in Access to Democracy
 - ★ McConaughy, Corrine M. 2013. “The Woman Suffrage Movement in America: A Reassessment.” Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 (Bringing Politics Back In: Suffrage), 3 (Programmatic Enfranchisement: Coalitional Strategies for Voting Rights), & 4 (Strong Leverage: Third Party Support).
 - ★ Corder, J. Kevin & Christina Wolbrecht. 2006. “Political Context and the Turnout of New Women Voters after Suffrage.” *Journal of Politics*. 68(1): 34-49.
 - ★ Klinghoffer, Judith Apher & Lois Elkis. 1992. “The Petticoat Electors: Woman’s Suffrage in New Jersey, 1776-1807.” *Journal of Early Republic*. 12(2): 159-193.

- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “The Woman Suffrage Movement in America.” 2020. *End Notes*. Podcast Link: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5xkft8E9FRsOA8YAI3dqzx>
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Origins: The 19th Century Woman’s Movement.” 2020. *NPR Hindsight: Looking Back at 100 Years of Women’s Suffrage*. Podcast Link: <https://www.npr.org/podcasts/811050365/hindsight-looking-back-at-100-years-of-women-s-suffrage>

11. Meeting 11 (6/19/2023): Democracy for Whom III? Racial Discrimination, The American South, & Against Race-Based Disenfranchisement in American Democracy

- ★ Key Jr., V.O. 1949. “Southern Politics in State and Nation.” University of Tennessee Press. Chapter 1: Of the South & Part V: Restrictions on Voting.¹
- ★ Keele, Luke, William Cubbison, & Ismail White. 2021. “Suppressing Black Votes: A Historical Case Study of Voting Restrictions in Louisiana.” *The American Political Science Review*. 115(2): 694-700.
- ★ Gray, Thomas R., & Jeffrey A. Jenkins. 2022. “Estimating Disenfranchisement in U.S. Elections, 1870-1970.” *Working Paper*.
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “The Jim Crow South: Myths & Realities.” 2022. *The Andrea Mitchell Center For the Study of Democracy*. Podcast Link: <http://mitchellcenter.libsyn.org/episode-312-the-jim-crow-south-myths-and-realities-adolph-reed>
- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “The Most Sacred Right.” 2020. *NPR Thoroughline Podcast*. Podcast Link: <https://www.npr.org/2022/11/01/1133302141/the-most-sacred-right-2020>²

Democratic Backsliding: Institutions, Partisanship, & Populism

12. Meeting 12 (6/20/2023): The Gutting of Voting Rights & Representation in America: The Role of the Contemporary Supreme Court

- ★ McGann, Anthony J., Charles Anthony Smith, Michael Latner, & Alex Keena. 2016. “Gerrymandering in America: The House of Representatives, the Supreme Court, and the Future of Popular Sovereignty.” Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 (The Unnoticed Revolution) & 2 (The Jurisprudence of Districting).
- ★ Schroedel, Jean, Melissa Rogers, & Joseph Dietrich. 2023. “Structural Racism, the USPS, and Voting by Mail On- and Off-Reservation in Arizona.” *Studies in American Political Development*. 1-16.
- ★ Elmendorf, Christopher S. & Douglas M. Spencer. “The Geography of Racial Sterotyping: Evidence and Implications for VRA Preclearance after Shelby County.” *California Law Review*. 1123-1180.

¹Please note that this reading contains very dated language given the age of the manuscript.

²**Please note that this podcast contains violence and language that is upsetting. Specifically, this podcast contains unabridged passages from “Narrative of the Life of Fredrick Douglass.”**

- ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “How Data is Helping Us Understand Voting Rights After Shelby County.” 2015. *Harvard Kennedy School: Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation*.
Podcast Link: <https://ash.harvard.edu/event/how-data-helping-us-understand-voting-rights-after-shelby-county>
 - ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Weeds Time Machine: The Voting Rights Act.” 2023. *Vox The Weeds*. Podcast Link: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6QmrqsqDPKdiNNUtKSIYaZ>
13. Meeting 13 (6/26/2023): Turning to the States: Party Politics & The Restriction of Voting in Contemporary American Politics Across the States
- ★ Grumbach, Jacob. 2022. “Laboratories Against Democracy: How National Parties Transformed State Politics.” University of Chicago Press. ***Skim the entire book.***
 - ★ Grumbach, Jacob M. 2022. “Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding.” *American Political Science Review*. 1-18.
 - ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “There’s Been a Massive Change in Where American Policy Gets Made.” 2022. *The Ezra Klein Show*.
Podcast Link: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/06/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-jacob-grumbach.html>
 - ★ **Supplemental Podcast, note in audio form on Spotify Playlist:** “Author: Jacob M. Grumbach with Corrine M. McConaughy.” 2022. *Princeton Public Library*. Podcast Link: <https://youtu.be/3tmTUlszNYQ>
14. Meeting 14 (6/27/2023): Voter Demands for Restricting Democratic Equity? Rise of Populism & Future of American Democracy
- ★ Graham, Matthew H. & Milan W. Svobik. 2020. “Democracy in America? Partisanship, Polarization, and the Robustness of Support for Democracy in the United States.” *American Political Science Review* 114(2): 392-409.
 - ★ Clayton, Katherine, Nicholas T. Davis, Brendan Nyhan, Ethan Porter, Timothy J. Ryan, & Thomas J. Wood. 2021. “Elite rhetoric can undermine democratic norms.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118(23): 1-26.
 - ★ Carey, John M., Gretchen Helmke, Brendan Nyhan, Mitchell Sanders, and Susan Stokes. 2019. “Searching for bright lines in the Trump presidency.” *Perspectives on Politics* 17(3): 699-718.
 - ★ Bartels, Larry M. 2020. “Ethnic antagonism erodes Republicans’ commitment to democracy.” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117(37): 22752–22759.
 - ★ **Supplemental Podcast:** “Trump, Power Politics, Populism, & Democracy.” 2022. *How Do We Fix It?* Podcast Link: <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/trump-power-politics-populism-democracy-darrell-west/id1002910818?i=1000578154225>

This syllabus was last updated on: May 25, 2023

How to Read Social Science Research Articles

Summer 2023

CARLOS ALGARA

Many students may not have prior experience to reading substantive social science research. To mitigate these concerns, I prepared the following questions that students may rely on to assess and critique the political science research that we will encounter in this course. This guide can also be used to identify key components of articles that can then be used to develop the thesis statement required for your response paper and final essay exam. I **strongly** recommend using this template to assess the literature that we are assessing in this course and more generally across the social sciences.

1. **Assessing Theory:** What is the research's (i.e., article or book) main argument?

- ★ What political phenomena does the article or book **ask** try to explain/address? (i.e., what is the research question?)
- ★ What is the theoretical model advocated by the book in terms of the main **independent variable(s)** and **dependent variable(s)**.
- ★ What is the main causal mechanism(s) argued in the piece with respect to how the **independent variable(s)** exerts an effect on the **dependent variable(s)**.

2. **Assessing The Point:** How does the research fit in the overall literature?

- ★ What standing literature in political science does the piece try to speak to?
- ★ How well does this research add to our collective understanding of this literature?
- ★ Are there any implications of this research that speak to a **broader literature** within political science?

3. **Assessing Research Methodology:** What research design is used in this research?

- ★ What is the **dependent variable(s)** in the study?
- ★ How well is the **dependent variable(s)** measured?
- ★ How do the authors **operationalize** the **dependent variable(s)** in the survey? For example, on what scale is the dependent variable derived from a survey question measured?
- ★ What are the **independent variable(s)** in the study and how well are they measured?
- ★ What are the main **independent variable(s)** in the study as opposed to simple "control" **independent variable(s)**?
- ★ Does the research design try to make a **causal** argument or a **correlational** argument in terms of inference?
- ★ What specific **method** (i.e., specific statistical model? causal identification? qualitative methods?) is used in the research design?
- ★ What data is used to assess the research design outlined in the work?

- ★ Is the method appropriate given the research question asked, any strengths or weaknesses?

4. **Assessing Research Significance & Quality:** If you had advice for the author(s), what would you suggest?

- ★ Are there any shortcomings to the study in terms of the **theoretical argument** or **research design**?
- ★ Are there alternative explanations to the research findings of this work and are these alternative explanations accounted for in this researcher?
- ★ What are the implications of this research?
- ★ Are there any future avenues of research that this study points us to?
- ★ Should this study be replicated, either in terms of **theoretical argument** or **research design**, in other contexts?