The Politics of Public Affairs (PA 5012 Online)
Varieties of Politics: Political Change and Accountability

Lawrence R. Jacobs
ljacobs@umn.edu
Fall 2020

Tuesday and Thursday 1-2:15PM
Office Hours by phone or Zoom –
Please make appointments by email

Teaching Assistant: Emily Anderson
Email: and05231@umn.edu Phone: 612-875-8432
Office Hours via Zoom: Tuesday and Thursday from 2:30 to 3:30 and by appointment

America has witnessed four massive surges of protests and political organizing over the past
decade: The Tea Party (started in 2010), Occupy Wall Street (occurred in September 2011),
grassroots resistance following President Trump’s election in 2016, and the ongoing
demonstrations sparked by George Floyd’s killing in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020. Each
promised deep, enduring political change -- but what normative and legal impacts did they
produce?

Sophisticated agents of change appreciate that there are “varieties of politics,” which offer
discrete and interconnected avenues. Elections, legislation, and administrative and legal
accountability – along with protests and community organizing – are used by political activists
and policy entrepreneurs to produce or thwart change. Each modality of politics is distinctive,
varying in terms of the types of actors involved; the resources that are required; the scope of
political debate; the visibility of the policy design; and their potential consequences. If political
change is the objective, which variety of politics is most feasible and potentially impactful?

Time is a critical – often overlooked – dimension in politics. President Barack Obama’s health
reform and the conservative movement’s attack on estate taxes not only produced change at one
point in time but also influenced subsequent politics by generating new public expectations,
interest groups, and government agencies committed to ongoing implementation. Politically
astute reformers design progressive and conservative policies to secure change in the first
instance and then to influence politics downstream.

How do we assess or measure political change? Changes in social policy and fiscal and
regulatory policy can often be tracked by statistical measures. Change can also alter our
normative understandings of social problems and government or community responsibilities.
Occupy Wall Street did not cut taxes, lower the uninsurance rate, or directly produce a legislative
agenda but it impacted America’s way of thinking about economic fairness and its slogan, “We
are the 99%,” became a progressive rallying cry that gained public support.

While government can be a tool for desired change, it can also interfere with individual freedoms
and threaten the constitutional order and interfere with the pursuit of change. Holding
government accountable is another dimension of politics. The FBI’s interference with the
constitutional rights of Martin Luther King Jr to lead the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s
and the unilateral actions by presidents to seize privately owned steel mills and order targeted killings of US citizens abroad who are suspected of supporting terrorists are examples of government action that require scrutiny.

This course blends academic analyses of politics with attention to real-world politics and the perspectives and insights of practitioners from across the partisan spectrum. I am taking advantage of our Zoom format to arrange regular visits by guests from the academy and the world of politics. I am also recommending videos to further bring to life the issues we discuss. In addition, we are breaking into small working groups to stimulate discussion and engage in collaborative group projects.

Grading Policy: Students will be graded on the following basis:

1. Participation (25 points total)

   ➢ Please come to class having completed the assigned readings and prepared to participate in class discussions.

   ➢ Thoughtful and bold questions that are anchored in the readings and evidence are the lifeblood of our discussions in class. Please pitch in and, as you do, be respectful – a range of perspectives and ideas is likely and should be treated with civility and tolerance. Also, let’s work together to encourage wide participation in the class discussions; this may entail holding off from making multiple comments during a class in order to allow other students to participate.

The course touches on three levels of analysis: (1) description (what is the argument of a reading or presenter?); (2) interpretation (what are the weaknesses, strengths, and interrelationships among readings and presentations?); and (3) application of frameworks of political analysis to contemporary politics and policy. Learning and applying these skills to engage across all three levels of analysis will improve the class and it will also help you develop the ability to make cogent, impactful arguments in public – a valuable tool for public affairs work.

   ➢ Five discussion memos by groups are a third component of participation. Students will be assigned to occasionally rotating groups; they will meet before class to formulate half-page discussion memos that raise questions across the three levels of analysis described above. These discussion memos will be submitted at least an hour before class. Members of the groups are expected to raise questions and help lead the discussion during the week in which their discussion memos are submitted. Emily Anderson will randomly assign students to the groups and assign particular class sessions to the groups.

We will be tracking participation across these three dimensions to assign participation grades.

2. Paper (20 points)
The paper will assign a real-world instance of attempted political change and ask you to develop a clear and balanced political feasibility analysis. You will be asked to integrate and apply the materials from the first sections of the course in a five-page memo; extensive new research will not be necessary.

The assignment will be distributed in class on **September 17** and must be turned in at the beginning of class on **September 29**.

3. **Group Project #1 (10 points)**

The session on **October 20** will be devoted to discussing the readings in class and working within groups; the groups will continue to collaborate after class to write a five-page paper on a topic that will be distributed in class. The paper is due **October 27**.

4. **Group Project #2 (20 points)**

Groups will prepare a political feasibility memo to bring about change of a tangible, specific, and remedial economic, social, or political problem by applying the general models and analyses of the course. Students will select which problem they write about through a **November 12** “research caucus” in which particular problems are submitted; part of a class period will be set aside to allow students to discuss the suggested topics they’d like to analyze and choose a few. Group projects are expected to identify the core question presented by the chosen problem, the model of change that is most feasible, and the opportunities and hurdles this model presents.

The groups are expected to work on their projects outside of class; **November 19** is a research seminar during which students will work on the group projects and provide an interim report on progress. Group projects will be presented on **November 24** in class. Each group will submit before class on **December 1** a written report that incorporates class comments.

5. **Final Exam (25 Points)**

A closed-book, two hour, take-home exam will be available to take by **12:30pm on December 22** and will be submitted electronically. The exam will ask you to answer a handful of descriptive questions and to write a synthetic essay that uses the political analyses covered in class. More information will be provided in class.

**Canvas:** The readings are available on Canvas. Find the site at canvas.umn.edu, or go to “Key Links” on MyU.umn.edu and scroll down to Canvas. For help with Canvas, go to https://z.umn.edu/CanvasHelpandSetup or click the “Canvas Help” link on our course Canvas site.

Because Canvas will be used to communicate with students, please set your Canvas “notification preferences” to choose how and when you’d like to receive messages via text, email, or both. Find easy-to-follow instructions at “How do I set my Canvas notification preferences as a student?: https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-10624-4212710344.
COURSE OUTLINE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

This is a tentative outline of the course, which may change during the semester. You are responsible for announcements in class including changes in readings, scheduling, and assignments.

Politics By What means? September 8


Varieties of Politics September 10


Guest: Theda Skocpol (Victor S. Thomas Professor of Government and Sociology, Harvard University)

I. Models of Political Change

A. Direct Citizen Mobilization September 15

Ø Democracy and Inequality
**Video:** “The Minnesota Paradox” [Watch video before class]
https://youtu.be/ZwjAHZhxeBY


- @Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward. [find discussion of barriers to change in Poor people’s movement or Regulating]


---

**Community Organizing  September 17**

- Video. *Selma* [section shown in class]


---

**Paper Assignment Distributed**

**Mobilizing for Progressive and Conservative Causes  September 22**

- **Guest:** Sarah Stoesz (CEO of Planned Parenthood of Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota)


- **Guest:** @Ben Golnick Jobs Coalition or Bryan Strawser@ (Chair, Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus) Article?

- **Guest:** Hahrie Han (Inaugural Director, Agora Institute, and Professor of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University)
Hahrie Han, Elizabeth McKenna, and Michelle Oyakawa. 2020. Prisms of the People: Power and Organizing in Twenty-First Century America, pp. @

➢ “The process of ending the Minneapolis Police Department”  September 24


- Gary Cunningham. “@”

  Guest: Gary Cunningham (President & CEO, Prosperity Now)

B. “Give Us the Ballot”: The Power and Place of Elections

➢ Democratic Accountability and Elite Governance  September 29


Paper Due Before Class

➢ 2020 elections  October 1

- Video: Black Lives Matter and 2020 Election https://youtu.be/14sQyiq-7u4 [Watch video before class]


• Guest: Vin Weber

➢ **Popular Democracy and American Politics**  
   October 6

   • Video: “Why policy decisions may not reflect perceived public opinion” [Watch video before class] https://bit.ly/3fFLhpE


   • Madison, Federalist Papers 10 and 51

II. Legislative Change

➢ **Passing the Affordable Care Act and Pleasing Few**  
   October 8

   Why no National Health Insurance in America?

   • History: Video https://youtu.be/ryxbnSqN2Xo [Watch video before class]


   **The Origins and Development of the Affordable Care Act?**


   • Guest: Joel Ario

➢ **The Legislative Graveyard**  
   October 13


➢ **Group Project #1**  

October 20


Group assignment distributed in class

➢ **Lawmaking in Time**  

October 22


• **Why do taxes dominate political debate in America?**


• **Why did Social Security expand from a limited and exclusionary program to a generous and inclusive program?**


➢ **Reforming Minnesota Policing**  

October 27

“[Y]ou can always do more, but… this is a good bill… [and] is a beginning, this is not the end” (Representative Rena Moran, DFL-St Paul)


• Legislative Roundtable

  Guest: Rep. Rena Moran @ (Invite)
  Guest: GOP Invite@

  **Group Project #1: Paper Due**

**III. Accountability**

- **Workshop: What is Accountability?** October 29

- **#1: Trust and Verify - Performance and Measurement**


- **#2: Horizontal Accountability**


- **#3: Presidential power threatens the established order but is necessary**


**A. U.S. Constitution, Civil Liberties, and the Power of the State**

  FBI Violation of the Civil Liberties of Martin Luther King, Jr. November 3 and Black Activists?

- Video: “Church Committee” https://youtu.be/E7H9Sp1sD3s [Watch video before class]
• Video: “COINTELPRO: Why Did the FBI Target Black Activists Fighting for Equality?  
https://youtu.be/cmuqmP50mRc [Watch video before class]

• Church Committee, “Introduction and Summary” from Intelligence Activities and the 
Rights of Americans, Book II, Final Report of the Select Committee to Study 
Governmental Operations with respect to Intelligence Activities, U.S. Senate. April 26, 


• U.S. Constitution, Fourth and Fifth Amendment

Guest: Vice President Walter F. Mondale

B. Holding Presidents Accountable

Can Presidents Unilaterally Seize Steel Mills?  November 5

➢ William Chafe, The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II, 5th Ed. (New 
York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pages 53-75 and 242-249.

➢ David McCullough. Truman (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), pages 857-865 and 
894-903.

➢ Youngstown Sheet & Tube Co. v. Sawyer. Reprinted in Pyle and Pious, pages 125-135 
(especially, Justice Jackson's Concurring Opinion).

➢ Guest: Vice President Walter F. Mondale

Presidential Power and Constitutional Checks  November 10

• Hamiltonian Tradition:
  Minority Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the Iran-Contra Affair by 
Congressmen Cheney, et al in Report of the Congressional Committees Investigating the 

➢ Madisonian Tradition:
  U.S. Constitution, Articles I, II, and III
  Federalist Paper 70. Review Federalist Papers 10 and 51

➢ The Neutrality Debate of 1793: Alexander Hamilton (Pacificus) and James Madison 
(Helvidius). Reprinted in The President, Congress, and the Constitution edited by 
“The President of the United States needs to have his constitutional powers unimpaired” (VP Richard Cheney) 

- **Reagan and the Support of the Nicaraguan Contras**

**Research Caucus**

**Targeted Killings by Pilotless Drones, U.S. Constitution and Law**

- **Lawsuit filed by Aulaqi family and Obama administration defense:**
  Obama Administration argument in court to drop Al-Aulaqi family lawsuit:

**Guest:** David Lillehaug

**Research Seminar**


**Group Project: Group presentations and class discussion**

**Holiday**

**The President’s “Exclusive Authority” in Domestic Affairs**


Group Project Papers Due Before Class

Checking Presidents: Cumbersome, Incomplete and, at times, Effective December 3


• President George W. Bush and the detention of “Enemy Combatants”

  http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/pdf/03-6696P.ZO

  Boumedience v. Bush, June 12, 2008 (esp., pages 1-2, 8-15, 64-70)
  http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/pdf/06-1195P.ZO

IV. “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please” (Karl Marx)

A. Politics and Markets December 8


B. Presidential Communications, Framing, and Deception December 10

Lyndon Johnson: Unilaterally Escalating the War in Vietnam


“The test we must set for ourselves is not to march alone but to march December 15 in such a way that others will wish to join us” (Hubert Humphrey)


Additional Information on course:

Policy on incomplete grades and makeup examinations
There will be no incomplete grades or makeup examinations given except for standard University policy reasons (for example, illness with a note from a doctor).

Disability services
The University of Minnesota is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. Disability Services (DS) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical), please contact DS at 612-626-1333 to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations. If you are registered with DS and have a current letter requesting reasonable accommodations, please contact me early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in the course.

Mental health services
As a student, you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via www.mentalhealth.umn.edu.
Access to readings and materials after semester
Student may lose access to Canvas sites and course reserves at the end of the semester. If you’d like to download class material (depending on copyright) or your own work for personal use, please do so during the semester.

University and Humphrey School policies
For links to University of Minnesota and Humphrey School policies, please click the “U of M Policies” link on our course Canvas site, or see https://z.umn.edu/PolicyStatements. Policies include information on student conduct, scholastic dishonesty, sexual harassment, equal opportunity, disability accommodations, and more.