

COLBY COLLEGE
Government 315: Minority Representation in American Politics

Instructor, Carrie LeVan
Spring 2022
T/H: 1:00 – 2:15 PM
Location: Diamond 145

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Course Description

Does it matter whether government looks like us? This is the central question of this course.

Despite the fact that the 117th Congress is the most racially diverse in history, inequalities persist throughout everyday life and remain apparent within American political institutions. For example, Congress is most typically composed of members of the top 5 percent most wealthy Americans, women make up just about 28 percent of Congress, and the Senate has never had more than 2 Black members until now. There are currently 3 Black Senators. This course will examine how these inequalities manifest in American Political Institutions (ex. U.S. Congress, and the Judiciary) and why they matter.

The course is split into three parts. In the first part, we'll explore the multifaceted nature of representation, paying close attention to demographic (racial, ethnic, gender, LGBTQ, economic, and religious), institutional, policy, and symbolic representation. In the second part, we'll examine the current state of descriptive representation, the source and consequences of underrepresentation, and the potential solutions to improve representation for three minority groups: women, racial/ethnic, and working class. In the final part, we'll examine the future of representation, paying close attention to current and future levels of political engagement and potential reforms.

Course Learning Outcomes/Goals

There are two types of Learning goals in this class. The first is "Substantive," which describe the content I hope you learn by the end of this class. The second is "Skill-Development," which describe the critical skills that I hope you develop or improve upon by the end of this class. They are as follows:

Substantive Outcomes:

- To explain how Descriptive Representation—whether government looks like the public—subsequently affects (a) substantive—policy outcomes—representation, (b) symbolic—how we feel about/towards government—representation, and (c) formalistic—the rules to the game—representation at the Federal, State and Local levels.
- To assess how Descriptive Representation impacts the political behaviors of political actors: candidates, politicians, judges, bureaucrats, voters, and citizens/residents in the United States.
- To differentiate between the "cause" of underrepresentation for certain groups: gender, class, race/ethnicity, etc. Not all groups are underrepresented for the same reasons, what are those differences?
- To develop potential solutions to the current lack of minority representation at the Local, State, and Federal levels of government.

Skill-Development Outcomes:

- To utilize Case Study Methodology to test a hypothesis:
 - Observe the current state of descriptive representation in a US city
 - Pose a question: what do you want to know more about what you've observed
 - Connect to the course reading and develop a Hypothesis: what have we learned are the causes of descriptive representation or the lack thereof.
 - Collect evidence
 - Interpret the evidence
 - Synthesize results in a conclusion
- To improve the clarity—Planning, Organization, Language Choice—of writing
- To practice public speaking skills
- To develop Team Working skills
 - Leadership: organizing team meetings, setting team goals, holding individuals accountable to those goals
 - Delegating Responsibilities: allocating pieces of a larger project to individual team members
 - Reliability: following through with assigned tasks, making deadlines, producing high quality results

Requirements

The course will have the following requirements:

Class Attendance and Participation: This course will be taught in a seminar discussion format. In order for students to maximize their learning, they must attend class and engage in class discussion of the assigned readings. Attending class is critical to a student's success in this class.

Homework: Most weeks, a mini assignment will be posted to the Course Moodle page on the Friday before our first meetings. The assignment, for most weeks, will be due the upcoming Thursday. Students must have the assignment complete before class on Thursday, as we will use the assignment in Thursday's class. The goals of these assignments are as follows:

- To **guide** students through the assigned reading. There is a lot of reading in this course and it has the potential to become overwhelming. The weekly homework assignments are designed to help you focus your reading and improve your reading comprehension.
- To **improve** class discussion. This class is designed to be student directed. Through the homework assignments you will be better prepared to serve as both a leader of class discussion and a participant.
- To **stimulate** reading retention. So much of assigned reading goes in and out of readers' minds. The homework challenges students to engage with what they just read, which leads to better cognitive learning.
- To **assess** reading comprehension. Through the homework assignments, I will be able to assess what students understood in the reading and where we need to spend more time unpacking challenging concepts.

Notes on Submitting Homework Assignments:

- You will submit your homework assignment through Moodle.
- Rename the file using the following format: LastName_FileName; save as .PDF.
- All homework is to be submitted before Thursday's class; otherwise, they will be counted as late. Partial credit will be given for late homework assignments.

City Reports: Throughout the semester, students will work in groups of 3-4 to conduct a case study of a city government. Specifically, groups will focus their attention examining a city's legislative branch (i.e. city council, board of selectmen, etc.). This case study will be submitted in three short reports. I will provide students with a more detailed description of each report during the semester. Below, is a brief description of each report and their due dates:

- *Report 1—Demographic Report:* Using census data, each group will track the socio-demographic composition of their city over the last decade (2010 to 2020). Groups should answer the following question: *How has the city changed or stayed the same overtime?*
Due: Tuesday, February 22nd (uploaded to Moodle before class)
- *Report 2—Descriptive Representation Report:* In this report, groups will examine the current state of descriptive representation in the city's local government. They will need to reflect on the current socio-demographic characteristics of the people who live in the city, in order to determine whether local government is or is not descriptively representative. Groups should answer the following question: *What is the current state of descriptive representation in the city's local government?*
Due: Tuesday, March 15th (uploaded to Moodle before class)
- *Report 3—Formalistic Representation Report:* In this report, students will unpack the current rules regarding the procedures for selecting local representatives. Groups should answer the following question: *How are local representatives selected in the city and how might the rules be affecting the level of descriptive representation?*
Due: Tuesday, April 12th (uploaded to Moodle before class)

City Poster—Executive Summary and Recommendations: Students will put all of their findings together in a Poster that they will present on the last day of class (Thursday, May 5th). They will propose recommendations to the city for how it could improve the current state of descriptive representation of its local government. Students will rely first on their **previous reports** to restate what they have already found. They will then also use the **course readings** to inform the recommendations they make. The purpose of this Poster is to answer: *How can this city improve descriptive representation of underrepresented groups or how can it maintain the status quo (if descriptive representation already exists)? What changes to the rules might you recommend?* Note: students will need to submit a works cited page in addition to the poster.

Final Reflection: In place of a final exam, students will have conduct a low stakes reflection. The reflection will be distributed on the last day of class (Thursday, May 5th). Students will have one week to complete it and submit it to me (Thursday, May 12th).

Grade Distribution

The weights of grades are distributed as follows:

Participation	5%
Homework	20%
City Report 1	15%
City Report 2	15%
City Report 3	15%
City Poster	20%
Final Reflection	10%

Grading Scale:

94-100 = A
90-93.9 = A-
87-89.9 = B+
84-86.9 = B
80-83.9 = B-
77-79.9 = C+
74-76.9 = C
70-73.9 = C-
67-69.9 = D+
64-66.9 = D
60-63.9 = D-
Below 60 = F

Required Texts

- Lawless, Jennifer L. and Richard L. Fox. 2018. *Women, Men & U.S. Politics: Ten Big Questions*. NY: W.W. Norton & Company
Shorthand: WMP
-Possibly add excerpts from *Good Reasons to Run: Women and Political Candidacy*
- Carnes, Nicholas. 2018. *The Cash Ceiling: Why Only the Rich Run for Office—and What We Can Do About It*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Note: E-Book version available through the library
Shorthand: CC
- Griffen, John D. and Brian Newman. 2008. *Minority Report: Evaluating Political Equality in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
Note: E-Book version available through the library—Perhaps keep this and then just use Dangerously divided as supplementary data for more contemporary results, because you like the normative argument this book makes about the need to
Shorthand: MR
- Fraga, Bernard L. 2018. *The Turnout Gap: Race, Ethnicity, and Political Inequality in a Diversifying America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Note: E-Book version available through the library
Shorthand: TG

Optional Texts:

- Hajnal, Zoltan L. 2020. *Dangerously Divided: How Race and Class Shape Winning and Losing in American Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Note: E-Book version available through the library
Shorthand: DD
- Hajnal, Zoltan L. 2010. *America's Uneven Democracy: Race, Turnout, and Representation in American Cities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Note: E-Book version available through the library
Shorthand: DD—Possibly Use this instead of Turnout Gap, but use Turnout Gap info in lectures
- Katrina McNally, 2021 *Representing the Disadvantaged*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Note: E-Book version available through the library

Additional readings will be posted to the course website

Student Hours/Office Hours

Student hours (a.k.a. Office Hours) are available on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Students may also schedule a time to see me via email.

Student hours are an opportunity for you to discuss with me the following: (1) questions about course content, (2) conflicts with class schedule, (3) opportunities for internships, research, jobs, etc. (4) graduation requirements, (5) crazy stuff happening in the news, (6) problems with campus climate, (7) struggles with physical/mental illness, (8) drama with roommate/partner/friends/teammates, (9) just to say, “What up”, (10) all of the above and anything in between.

In other words, you don’t need a reason to stop by and talk, just do it.

Late Work

Assignments should be submitted to the course Moodle when they are due in order to avoid penalties. Students should not provide hard copies of assignments, unless otherwise told. Students should not email copies of assignments to me, unless otherwise told. Any work submitted late receives a *penalty of one-third of one letter grade* for every day it is late (starting immediately after the work is due).

Academic Dishonesty

All work completed in this course is expected to be your own. If you are unfamiliar or have questions regarding the College’s policy on academic dishonesty, see <http://www.colby.edu/academicintegrity/academic-integrity-on-the-syllabus/>

Students With Disabilities

Students with College documented disabilities should inform me as soon as possible, so that I can help meet their needs. If you have question or concerns about your disability or suspect that you may qualify for services, you should contact that Associate Director of Student Access and Disability Services, Kate McLaughlin at kate.mclaughlin@colby.edu or by calling at (207) 859-4567

Online Course Evaluations

Every student should complete an evaluation during the evaluation period near the end of the semester. I ask that you provide feedback so that I can improve the course and my teaching in general.

For more information, see

<http://www.colby.edu/deanofthecollege/deanofstudents/support/support-services/>

Schedule of Course

PART I: THE MANY FACETS OF REPRESENTATION

Week 1: Introductions to the Course

February 3: Does it Matter Whether Government Looks Like Us?

Reading: (ONLINE)—“117th Congress Profile”

-(Optional) “Political Powerlessness”

Week 2: Approaches to Representation and Types Representation

February 8: How do we want our representatives to represent us?

Reading: (ONLINE) Article(s):

-“Rethinking Representation”

-“The Public Paradox of Leadership”

In-Class: Distribute Report 1 Assignment and Practice Data Collection (Bring Laptop)

February 10: What is Substantive, Formalistic, and Symbolic Representation?

Reading: (ONLINE) Article(s):

-**Descriptive:** “Should Blacks Represent Blacks and Women Represent Women? A Contingent ‘Yes’”

-**Substantive:** “Minority Group Interests and Political Representation: Gay Elected Official in the Policy Process”

-**Symbolic:** “Minority Representation, Empowerment, and Participation”

-**Formalistic:** “Electoral Rules and Minority Representation in U.S. Cities”

HW: HW 1: Mapping Representation

PART II: GROUPS AND REPRESENTATION

Week 3: Gender and Representation

February 15: The Current State of Gender Representation

Reading: WMP—Chapters 1 & 2

February 17: Diagnosing the Problem: Why so few women representatives?

Reading: WMP—Chapters 3, 4, & 5

Optional: “Gender Stereotyping and the Electoral Success of Women Candidates: New Evidence from Local Elections in the United States,” (2022) Sarah F. Anzia and Rachel Bernhard. (ONLINE)

HW: HW 2: Examining Representation of Women

Week 4: Gender and Representation (continued)

February 22: Consequences: Substantive and Symbolic

Reading: WMP—Chapters 6 & 7

***Due:* Report 1 Due today, upload to course Moodle before class begins.**

February 24: Solutions: How to Get More Women in Office?

Reading: WMP—Chapter 10

In-Class: Distribute Report 2 Assignment

HW: HW 3: Reflection—How to Solve the Gender Gap?

Week 5: Class and Representation

March 1: The Current State of Class Representation

In-Class: Bonnie Paige Coming in to Demonstrate Strategies for Demographic Searches

Reading: CC—Chapters 1 & 2

March 3: Diagnosing the Problem: Why so Few Working Class Representatives?

Reading: CC—Chapters 3 & 4

HW: HW 4: Mind the Gap—Gender vs. Working Class Representation

Week 6: Class and Representation (Continued)

March 8: Consequences: Substantive and Symbolic

Reading: (ONLINE) Excerpt from *White Collar Government*, by Nick Carnes—Chapters 2 & 5

March 10: Solutions: How to Get More Working Class in Office?

Reading: CC—Chapters 5 & 6

HW: HW 5: Reflection—How to solve the Class Gap?

Week 7: Racial/Ethnic Minorities and Representation

March 15: The Current State of Racial/Ethnic Representation

Reading: DD—Chapters 1 & 2

In-Class: Distribute Report 3

Due: Report 2 Due today, upload to course Moodle before class begins.

March 17: Causes and Consequences

Reading: MR Chapters—3 & 4

HW: HW 6: Proportional Representation of POC

Week 8: Spring Break—NO CLASS March 21-25

-NOTE: Work on your delegated tasks for Report 3

Week 9: Racial/Ethnic Minorities and Representation (continued)

March 29: Causes and Consequences (continued)

Reading: MR—Chapters 5 & 7

March 31: Solutions: How to Get More Racial/Ethnic Minorities in Office?

Reading: MR—Chapters 6 & 8 (chapter 9 is optional)

HW: HW 7: Reflection—How to Solve the POC Gap?

PART III: ENGAGEMENT AND SOLUTIONS

Week 10: Minority Participation

April 5: Voter Turnout and Descriptive Representation

Reading: TG—Chapters 3, 4, & 5

-Optional Chapter 2: provides history of voter suffrage in the U.S., if you don't know this, you should read.

In-Class: Distribute Poster Assignment

***Due:* Report 3 Due today, upload to course Moodle before class begins.**

April 7: How Rules Effect Turnout?

Reading: TG—Chapters 6 & 7

-(ONLINE) Optional: "The Effect of Alabama's Strict Voter Identification Law on

Racial and Ethnic Minority Voter Turnout", Zoltan Hajnal, University of CA, San Diego

HW: HW 8: Electoral Influence—Beyond Racial/Ethnic Minorities

Week 11: Group Identity and Civic Engagement

April 12: Effects of Group Consciousness on Political Behavior

Reading: (ONLINE) Article(s):

-“The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans: Mosque Involvement and Group Consciousness”

-“Somos Mas: How Racial Threat and Anger Mobilized Latino Voters in the Trump Era”

- “Group-Based Resources and Political Participation Among Asian Americans.”

- “Intersectionality in Electoral Politics: A Mess Worth Making”

April 14: Theories of Successful Social Movements

In Class: Start Farm Workers Doc

Reading: None

HW: None

Week 12: Social Movements of the Past and Social Movements Today

April 19: Social Movements and Their Effects

In Class: finish Farm Workers Doc and Discuss

Reading: (ONLINE) Articles:

-“Can Violent Protest Change Local Policy Support? Evidence from the Aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Riot”

-“Black Lives Matter for Whites’ Racial Prejudice: Assessing the Role of Social Movements in Shaping Racial Attitudes in the United States”

-“A Year Ago, They Marched. Now a Record Number of Women are Running for Office”

April 21: Inter-Minority Coalitions: A Strategy for Success?

Reading: None

HW: HW 9: Social Movements Today: Do You See Signs of Success?

Week 13: Solutions: Changing Strategy and Changing Rules

April 26: Which Rules: Multi-Member, At-Large, Voter-ID, Redistricting?

Reading: (ONLINE) Article(s):

- “Context Matters: The Effects of Single-Member vs. At-Large Districts on City Council Diversity”
- “Electoral Rules and Minority Representation in U.S. Cities”
- “Comparison of Cumulative Voting and Generalized Plurality Voting”
- “Gender Pools and Puzzles: Charting a ‘Women’s Path’ to the Legislature”
- “Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes”
- “Democratic Contraction? Political Consequences of Felon Disenfranchisement in the United States”
- “All-mail voting in Colorado increases turnout and reduces turnout inequality” (link to

synopsis: <https://www.democracydocket.com/2021/08/in-colorado-all-mail-voting-is-a-step-toward-equity/>)

HW: HW 10: Which New Rule Rules?

April 28: **No Class—Mental Health Day**

Reading: None

Week 14: Reforming the System: Do we need Public Support?

May 3: Attitudes Towards Minorities and Support of Descriptive Representation

Reading: (ONLINE) Article:

- “A Change is Gonna Come: Generational Membership and White Racial Attitudes in the 21st Century”

HW: HW 11: Impressionable Years and Descriptive Representation

May 5: City Solutions—Groups Present Their Posters

Reading: None

In-Class: I will distribute the Final Reflection

***Due:* Posters Due Today—Come early to hang them**

Week 15: Final Exam

Final Exam will be Take-Home, Due to the Moodle Page: **? PM.**