PSC 3192W · FALL 2025

Nationalization of U.S. Politics

Wednesday 12:45–3:15pm · Monroe Hall (GOV) 101

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 3-4pm, and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will cover a topic of increasing salience in American politics: the "nationalization" of state and local political processes and behavior. What "nationalization" entails is still a topic of active debate, but descriptions typically suggest the phenomenon involves national-level political topics, debates, and divisions influencing institutions, attitudes, and behavior in lower levels of government. Such nationalization touches on core features of American politics: partisanship, federalism, representation, and more. In this course, we will engage with contemporary issues and research related to nationalization and its downstream consequences, and in doing so will gain a deeper understanding of American state and local government.

You should expect this course to take 2–2.5 hours of class time a week and an average of 5–7 hours of work per week outside of class.

Learning Outcomes

As a result of completing this course, students will be able to:

- Synthesize political concepts across levels of government
- Engage with and critique cutting-edge social science research
- Write more like a (good) political scientist
- Apply research techniques used by social scientists to conduct your own research project
- Gain writing and research skills that will be useful in your future career

Course Prerequisites

This course is restricted to PSC & PSC policy juniors & seniors. While not formally required, it will be useful to have taken a research methods course prior to (or concurrently with) this one.

Materials

There are two required books for this course:

- Hopkins, Daniel J. (2018). *The Increasingly United States: How and Why American Political Behavior Nationalized*. (referred to as IUS in the syllabus)
- Carson, Jamie L., Joel Sievert, and Ryan D. Williamson (2023). *Nationalized Politics: Evaluating Electoral Politics Across Time*. (available digitally for free via library login, referred to as NP in the syllabus)

Other materials will be available on Blackboard via PDF and linked in the schedule below.

Software

You will be required to obtain a CCAS Qualtrics license (a cloud-based survey application) to complete the survey assignment(s). Follow the instructions here to request free access through GWU IT, and please make sure to do so early in the course, as IT response times are not automatic.

General Expectations

- Class attendance and participation are mandatory (see below for specific evaluation criteria).
- This class will have a lot of reading, much of it from leading quantitative scholars in political science. As such, it is expected that some of the more technical components of the readings will be beyond your current level of understanding. That is okay! Just do your best and come to class with questions; as long as you understand the argument, we can fill in the details later.

- Laptops are acceptable for use in class. Please only use them to consult with class readings or to take notes. Phone use is prohibited unless for medical or emergency purposes.
- Late work will only be accepted for 48 hours after the due date and will be deducted a full letter grade penalty. Extensions must be requested well in advance of the due date and are not guaranteed to be granted. Please notify me of any last-minute emergencies.
- This syllabus is subject to change with prior notification.

Evaluation

Because this is a writing intensive course, almost all evaluation will be done on your writing, of which there will be a significant amount. But not all writing takes the form of an essay (nor should it). The evaluation of this class will reflect such heterogeneity through 4 different writing exercises. Details of all exercises are provided in brief below and provided in full in separate documents that will be distributed in class.

- **In-Class Reflections/Attendance/Participation (20%):**
  - The actual classroom portion of this course will typically take the form of a seminar (with occasional lectures sprinkled throughout). Your attendance and participation are expected and required.
  - At the beginning of each class period, I will present you with a simple, open-ended prompt. We will spend the first 10 minutes completing written reflections on the prompt (handwritten or typed are both acceptable). These will kick off our discussions, and I'll collect the reflections during class (graded credit/no credit).
- **Practical Response Papers (30%):**
  - The topics of this class should be relevant to real-world, ongoing debates and policy issues. Therefore, you will be required to engage with real-world issues with this writing evaluation, which will be completed through the following:
    - *2x Critical Applications:* For two separate academic articles from two separate weeks, you will submit a short (3–4 page) paper critically applying the findings of the paper to a news story (published in the last 2 years). Given the findings of the paper, is the news story surprising or expected? Where does the paper feel relevant, and where might the story be incomplete?
    - *1x Field Report:* a short (3–4 page) report of a local government meeting you attended during the semester. What happened during the meeting? Did the meeting involve any topics we discussed in class? What appeared to be the divisions?
  - You are responsible for completing these by the last day of class.
- **Mock Survey (10%):**
  - Writing is an act of communication, which requires interaction with and listening to others. In the social sciences, one of the most frequent forms of writing we do is in crafting and fielding surveys. Therefore, during the "public opinion" section of our course, you will be asked to create a functional survey (using Qualtrics) that complements your research question. Details will be provided in a separate document.
- **Final Research Paper (40%):**
  - The "meat" of this course will be a fully-fledged, independent research project completed over the full length of the semester, written as a traditional social science research paper. The paper will be evaluated in discrete parts, listed below:
    - *October 3:* Topic Memo (5%)
    - *October 24:* Literature Review (5%)
    - *November 7:* Initial Findings (10%)
    - *November 21:* First Draft (not graded)
    - *December 3:* Lightning Talk (5%)
    - *December 10:* Final Paper (15%)

Artificial Intelligence Usage

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GAI) technologies continue to be developed, advanced, and adopted in an increasing number of contexts and industries. While the technology undoubtedly has several industry benefits, both potential and realized, its role in the classroom appears conditional. This is a writing-intensive course, and the expectation is that you will be doing the writing. In this course more than others, the act of writing is the act of learning. Therefore, I have the following expectations regarding AI usage in this class:

- You MAY use AI to:

  - Check spelling, grammar, or identify synonyms
  - Generate ideas and identify sources
  - Rephrase sentences/reorganize writing that you have already drafted
  - Recommend tweaks to outlines you have drafted yourself
  - Generate snippets of example code that you integrate into your research
- You may NOT use AI to:
  - Write entire sentences/paragraphs without citation
  - Generate complete code for your research project

University Policies

Academic Integrity Code

Academic integrity is an essential part of the educational process, and all members of the GW community take these matters very seriously. As the instructor of record for this course, my role is to provide clear expectations and uphold them in all assessments. Violations of academic integrity occur when students fail to cite research sources properly, engage in unauthorized collaboration, falsify data, and otherwise violate the Code of Academic Integrity. If you have any questions about whether particular academic practices or resources are permitted, you should ask me for clarification. If you are reported for an academic integrity violation, you should contact Conflict Education and Student Accountability (CESA), formerly known as Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR), to learn more about your rights and options in the process. Consequences can range from failure of assignment to expulsion from the University and may include a transcript notation. For more information, refer to the CESA website at students.gwu.edu/code-academic-integrity or contact CESA by email (cesa@gwu.edu) or phone (202-994-6757).

Observance of Religious Holidays

Students must notify faculty during the first week of the semester in which they are enrolled in the course, or as early as possible, but no later than three weeks prior to the absence, of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. If the holiday falls within the first three weeks of class, the student must inform faculty in the first week of the semester. For details and policy, see provost.gwu.edu/policies-procedures-and-guidelines.

Use of Electronic Course Materials and Class Recordings

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Contact Disability Support Services at disabilitysupport.gwu.edu if you have questions or need assistance in accessing electronic course materials.

Academic Support

Academic Commons. Academic Commons is the central location for academic support resources for GW students. To schedule a peer tutoring session for a variety of courses visit go.gwu.edu/tutoring. Visit academiccommons.gwu.edu for study skills tips, finding help with research, and connecting with other campus resources. For questions email academiccommons@gwu.edu.

GW Writing Center. GW Writing Center cultivates confident writers in the University community by facilitating collaborative, critical, and inclusive conversations at all stages of the writing process. Working alongside peer mentors, writers develop strategies to write independently in academic and public settings. Appointments can be booked online at gwu.mywconline.

Support for Students In and Outside the Classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS), 202-994-8250. Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services at disabilitysupport.gwu.edu to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Student Health Center, 202-994-5300, 24/7. The Student Health Center (SHC) offers medical, counseling/psychological, and psychiatric services to GW students. More information about the SHC is available at healthcenter.gwu.edu. Students experiencing a medical or mental health emergency on campus should contact GW Emergency Services at 202-994-6111, or off campus at 911.

GW Campus Emergency Information

GW Emergency Services: 202-994-6111. For situation-specific instructions, refer to GW's Emergency Procedures guide.

GW Alert. GW Alert is an emergency notification system that sends alerts to the GW community. GW requests students, faculty, and staff maintain current contact information by logging on to alert.gwu.edu. Alerts are sent via email, text, social media, and other means, including the Guardian app. The Guardian app is a safety app that allows you to communicate quickly with GW Emergency Services, 911, and other resources. Learn more at safety.gwu.edu.

Protective Actions. GW prescribes four protective actions that can be issued by university officials depending on the type of emergency. All GW community members are expected to follow directions according to the specified protective action. The protective actions are Shelter, Evacuate, Secure, and Lockdown (details below). Learn more at safety.gwu.edu/gw-standard-emergency-statuses.

- **Shelter:** Protection from a specific hazard. The hazard could be a tornado, earthquake, hazardous material spill, or other environmental emergency. Specific safety guidance will be shared on a case-by-case basis.
  - *Action:* Follow safety guidance for the hazard.
- **Evacuate:** Need to move people from one location to another. Students and staff should be prepared to follow specific instructions given by first responders and University officials.
  - *Action:* Evacuate to a designated location. Leave belongings behind. Follow additional instructions from first responders.
- **Secure:** Threat or hazard outside of buildings or around campus. Increased security, secured building perimeter, increased situational awareness, and restricted access to entry doors.
  - *Action:* Go inside and stay inside. Activities inside may continue.
- **Lockdown:** Threat or hazard with the potential to impact individuals inside buildings. Room-based protocol that requires locking interior doors, turning off lights, and staying out of sight of corridor windows.
  - *Action:* Locks, lights, out of sight. Consider Run, Hide, Fight.

Classroom emergency lockdown buttons. Some classrooms have been equipped with classroom emergency lockdown buttons. If the button is pushed, GWorld Card access to the room will be disabled, and GW Dispatch will be alerted. The door must be manually closed if it is not closed when the button is pushed. Anyone in the classroom will be able to exit, but no one will be able to get in.

Course Schedule

August 27 — Course Introduction

- IUS Chapter 1
- NP Chapters 1 and 2

September 3 — Nationalization Past and Present

- Amlani and Algara (2021 Electoral Studies). "Partisanship & nationalization in American elections: Evidence from presidential, senatorial, & gubernatorial elections in the U.S. counties, 1872–2020"
- IUS Chapters 2 and 3
- NP Chapter 3

September 10 — Federalism and State/Local Politics Crash Course

NO CLASS (APSA Conference). A lecture video will be posted on Blackboard for you to watch during this class period. Readings below are still required.

- Not Another Politics Podcast: "Why Are Cities Hiring Lobbyists?"
- Barber and Dynes (2023 AJPS). "City-State Ideological Incongruence and Municipal Preemption"
- Kogan, Lavertu, and Peskowitz (2016 AJPS). "Performance Federalism and Local Democracy: Theory and Evidence from School Tax Referenda"

September 17 — Contemporary Examples

- Conevska et al. (forthcoming APSR). "How Partisan are U.S. Local Elections? Evidence from 2020 Cast Vote Records"
- Shah, Weinschenk, and Yiannias (2024 SPPQ). "Schoolhouse Rocked: Pandemic Politics and the Nationalization of School Board Elections"
- NP Chapter 8

September 24 — Geography and Place

- Brown and Enos (2021 Nature HB). "The measurement of partisan sorting for 180 million voters"
- IUS Chapters 5 and 8

October 1 — Research Paper Meetings

Due Topic Memo due October 3 by 5pm

- IUS Chapter 4

October 8 — Policy and Ideology (+ Qualtrics Demonstration)

- Orr and Huber (2020 AJPS). "The Policy Basis of Measured Partisan Animosity in the United States"
- Holliday and Rudkin (2025). "D.C. On My Mind: National Considerations in State and Local Political Decisions" – see Blackboard for paper
- Anzia (2021). "Party and Ideology in American Local Government: An Appraisal"

October 15 — Affect and Social Identity

Due Mock Survey due October 22 by 5pm

- Trujillo and Crowley (2022 PolGeo). "Symbolic versus material concerns of rural consciousness in the United States"
- Iyengar et al. (2019 ARPS). "The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization in the United States"
  - Optional: Not Another Politics Podcast, "Is Polarization Pushing Us To Hate Each Other?"
- The Science of Politics Podcast: "When partisanship forms our identity"

October 22 — Information

Due Literature Review due October 27 by 5pm

- Moskowitz (2021 APSR). "Local News, Information, and the Nationalization of U.S. Elections"
  - Optional: Not Another Politics Podcast, "Nationalized Elections, the End of Local News, and Government Accountability"
- Martin and McCrain (2019 APSR). "Local News and National Politics"
- IUS Chapter 9

October 29 — Gerrymandering and Voting

- Kenny et al. (2023 PNAS). "Widespread partisan gerrymandering mostly cancels nationally, but reduces electoral competition"
- Grumbach (2023 APSR). "Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding"
  - Response (required reading): Hopkins (2023 PSQ). "'Laboratories of Democratic Backsliding' and the Case Against Federalism"

November 5 — Research Paper Meetings

Due Initial Findings due November 7 by 5pm

- IUS Chapter 10

November 12 — Political Institutions

- Butler and Sutherland (2023 JOP). "Have State Policy Agendas Become More Nationalized?"
- Carreri, Payson, and Thompson (2025). "When Progressives Took Power: The Limited Economic Effects of Municipal Reform in U.S. Cities"

November 19 — Democracy and Representation

Due First Draft due November 21 by 5pm

- Reckhow et al. (2017 UAR). "Outsiders with Deep Pockets: The Nationalization of Local School Board Elections"
- Warshaw (2019 ARPS). "Local Elections and Representation in the United States"
  - Optional: Beach et al. (2024 AEJ: Econ Policy). "Racial and Ethnic Representation in Local Government"

November 26 — NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)

December 3 — Lightning Talks

Due Final paper due December 10 at 5pm