

Teaching U.S. Politics to Support Multiracial Democracy

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Prepared for Presentation at the Biennial Meeting of the American Political Science Association

Teaching and Learning Conference

Alexandria, VA

February 2025

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Abstract

Students in political science classes seek knowledge to understand and navigate the political world. Teaching U.S. politics to support and participate in multiracial democracy requires acknowledging and making explicit our commitment to inclusive democracy. In addition, we must interrogate the normative framework in which empirical research is done and confront the exclusionary biases in much research in the subfield. Without connecting empirical findings to normative assumptions and biases, we cannot equip students to be citizens. Here, I provide three curricular interventions to situate empirical evidence in the normative values of inclusive democracy and to critique the exclusivity of the discipline.

First, I make the case for beginning Introduction to U.S. Politics with Indigenous presence and the settler-colonial origins of the colonies that became the United States. By beginning with the territory as inhabited land, discussing the relationships colonists had with Indigenous people, examining the experiences of enslaved people, and learning about the many origins of colonists; it is possible to situate the Revolution, Articles of Confederation and Founding in a more complete framework. Multiple cultures and peoples of many backgrounds lived in the territory; the Revolution through the Founding is a time when people were seeking to implement a government with normative commitments to democracy, equality and liberty. At the same time, people debated whom to include and exclude. This sets the stage for learning how

these decisions continue to be negotiated and re-negotiated (both peacefully and violently) throughout U.S. politics.

Second, interrogating concepts underlying variables of race and ethnicity (as well as other variables) is necessary. This can be done in various U.S. politics courses; I provide an example of doing it in the course Politics of Economic Inequality in the U.S. Much U.S. politics research utilizes measures asking individuals to self-identify as a race/ethnicity. Before considering findings from this data, students need to understand the context in which these measurements were developed. Intersectionality, self-identified versus researcher identified race/ethnicity, racial classification as a way of denying or conferring rights, requirements that respondents choose one racial identity, changing definitions of race, changing propensities to identify with categories, heterogeneous categories, and other reasons why identity variables may not measure the concepts and ways concepts are shaped by researchers and imposed on respondents are key to understanding the limits of this research. Additionally, it is important to interrogate causality. Race doesn't cause outcomes; race is an indicator for numerous barriers that impede economic success.

Third, acknowledging we don't have data to assess multiracial democracy, and that the lack of data is a result of intentional choices and biases is critical. Again, this can be done in multiple classes, but I provide an example of doing so in Politics of Economic Inequality in the U.S., in which students often ask two questions. How do findings about economic inequality between White and Black Americans apply to Latina/o Americans? How do findings about economic inequality regarding gender apply to LGBTQ+ individuals? Instead of replying, "we don't have the data" it is important to interrogate why. Why do we lack data on many racial and ethnic groups? What are the implications of not having data? Why is economic data focused on

the heterosexual nuclear family as a “household”? How does this affect our understanding of economic inequality?

For departments with a subfield-based curriculum, sometimes it is difficult to think about how to integrate changes throughout the subfield curriculum in ways that support helping students understand the normative commitments of democracy and the biases both in the political system and in the political science discipline that are barriers to achieving the goals of multiracial democracy. This paper includes concrete ways we can weave the normative foundations and flaws of the U.S. politics subfield in our teaching and encourage others to share their own ways of reforming teaching in the U.S. politics subfield to support multiracial democracy. In part, this requires going beyond the traditional subfield boundaries to reintegrate political theory into the teaching of U.S. politics.

Literature Review

Political science in general, and the U.S. politics subfield in particular, has always struggled with the reality that political science is both empirical and normative *at the same time*. Although normative and empirical research and teaching can be separated in order to allow people to specialize in answering particular parts of the big questions, the questions that animate the discipline cannot be understood and interrogated without putting the normative and empirical pieces back together. In her Presidential Address to the American Political Science Association, Jane Mansbridge asked the question, “what is political science for”? Her answer is that the answer is “to help us govern ourselves.” (2014, p. 8). In considering the U.S. politics subfield, the logical addendum to Mansbridge’s statement would be “in the United States.” In 2008, political scientists at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association debated

whether or not the American politics subfield should be abolished. Though the panelists disagreed on whether or not the field itself should be abolished, they all agreed that the way in which the American politics subfield is formulated and the questions and answers being produced are flawed and incomplete. Included in the criticisms are that the subfield is too narrow, too unwilling to take on issues of race, has chased out scholars of race to the political theory subfield, has studied Congress for methodological reasons while ignoring the problematic increase in presidential power, lacks comparative context, and that subfield divisions are based on a Cold War view of the world that may no longer be useful or relevant (Jaschik 2008). In addition to being empirical and normative at the same time, U.S. politics is focused on the United States, but comparison is always implied; and in most cases, that comparison assumes that the United States is an exemplar of democracy against which other countries should be measured. Again, it is necessary to break our inquiries down in order to specialize in particular parts of the enterprise of political science, but in our teaching, thinking, and presentation of our work to the public, we need to be able to put our pieces into the context of the larger puzzles that we study.

Three normative assumptions are implied in the U.S. politics subfield that I argue need to be made explicit in order to teach U.S. politics in a way that supports multiracial democracy. The first is that we are not just looking for help in governing ourselves, we are looking for the *best* way to govern ourselves. The second is that part of this answer is *democracy*. The third is that the subfield has a history of ignoring the roles and problems of multiple racial and ethnic groups, women, LGBTQ+ people, disabled people, and other individuals and groups (King and Smith 2005; Hero and Tolbert 1996).

In terms of implied comparison, there are aspects of the comparative nature of studying American politics that also need to be made explicit. We need to be more explicit about how we are defining democracy in our teaching, and use concepts and measures that are rooted in theory rather than considering the U.S. an exemplar. At the same time, this needs to be done in a way that appreciates the difficulty of democracy and the ways in which U.S. democracy *is* an example and an inspiration. Additionally, we need to be more willing to look to other democracies, rather than other points in the U.S. or U.S. constitutionalism or founding principles in solving some of the political problems in the U.S.

And, I suggest that in order to meet our goal of supporting multiracial, inclusive democracy, in teaching U.S. politics we need to engage in reform of the entire curriculum, rather than adding classes or units within classes to “patch the holes” in the status quo of teaching U.S. politics. People learn through stories; narratives are an important part of how we frame U.S. politics (National Civic Review 2021). I suggest that our current narratives begin at the wrong place, are overly-confident in our ability to measure political phenomena with our existing methods and measures, and fail to acknowledge that we are missing key data and that the fact that the data that is missing is intentional. By beginning the teaching of U.S. politics earlier in time, being more humble and reflective about how we know what we know, and by acknowledging the ways in which our lack of including all relevant perspectives has been both intentional and damaging to our understanding of the U.S. political system, we can more effectively help our students learn about the remarkable and flawed U.S. political system.

In this endeavor, achieving the right balance is both necessary and extremely hard. Teaching U.S. politics in a way that supports civic engagement and political participation in our diverse democracy requires inspiring skepticism and critical thinking, but also appreciation and

awe for a system that has the potential to fulfill its promise of liberty, equality, and opportunity for all the people.

Intervention 1: Beginning Introduction to U.S. Politics with Indigenous presence and the settler-colonial origins of the colonies that became the United States.

When reconsidering the U.S. politics subfield curriculum, it makes sense to start at the beginning. Both at the beginning of the United States and at the beginning of the curriculum. In a standard political science curriculum, Introduction to U.S. Politics and Government (or a similarly named course), is often the beginning of training in the subfield. For many students who are not political science majors, this is often the only political science course they ever take. For majors, minors, or students looking to fulfill additional general education requirements; it both introduces the area of study and is a gateway through which some students navigate to take additional courses and others walk away from the subfield. This is the very beginning of the pipeline of political science majors interested in studying the United States who may go on to provide expertise in politics in their careers or going on to graduate work and perhaps even teach and research in the field someday. It is important to consider what happens at the front door of the subfield.

But what is the beginning of the United States? The introductory course usually starts either with the Constitution and the debates surrounding it, with a brief look back at the Articles of Confederation, the ideals of the Revolution, and in some cases including a paragraph or two about English common law, John Locke, and/or the Magna Carta (see, as examples, Krutz and Waskiewicz 2021; Bianco and Canon 2023). Textbooks using a critical approach (for example,

Katznelson, Kessleman and Draper 2013) start during the same time period. This is completely logical, as this is the beginning of the United States as a country. But is it the beginning of U.S. politics?

I have concluded that the best place to begin is with the beginning of European colonization in the parts of North America that would become the United States. We all know that time is limited in this course; this intervention is also limited, taking roughly two class-periods of time, with the content intermingled with other content over three class periods.

Narrative of the Intervention

The politics that led to the unification of the colonies, the Revolution, the Articles of Confederation, and the overthrow of the government of the Articles for the Constitution begin, I find, at this beginning. The colonies were a great experiment in which England and later Great Britain developed their portion of the Atlantic trading system and both involuntarily and voluntarily sent colonial settlers, religious dissenters, prisoners, African captives, and others to lands occupied by many groups of Indigenous people with various languages, governing structures, and traditions. In essence, European countries, including England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, France, Switzerland, Holland, Belgium, Germanic areas, Poland, and more sent their poor, their troublemakers and their dissenters to the English/Great British colonies. In doing so, those countries became more homogeneous. At the same time, they created perhaps the most heterogeneous mix of people to have ever occupied the same space on earth.

If we consider the narrative of U.S. politics from this perspective, it is a narrative of diverse peoples learning to live together and becoming a nation. It is a struggle to determine whether the U.S. should be a nation of hereditary hierarchy, ascriptive hierarchy, meritocratic

hierarchy, equals, constant struggle, or something else. These conflicts were there from the beginning, and changing ideas and collective experiences surrounding how to navigate this unprecedented set of circumstances led to the unification of the colonies, the Revolution, the government under the Articles of Confederation, the Constitution, and the subsequent changes in the U.S. over time.

Content of the Intervention

Here, I simply include what I introduce in class and some of the readings I have used in this intervention. Practically, this intervention comes early in the semester when students are still dropping and adding the course, and when students do not always have the textbook or access to the course learning management system. For this reason, this content is mostly introduced in class through lecture and class discussion. The current reading I use in this section is Smith's (1993) multiple traditions article, but I have also used King and Smith (2005) on racial orders in American political development. In terms of ideas introduced in class, for simplicity, I will list the major topics I cover in this section.

Colonial period 1607-1776 (almost 170 years before revolution)

- Colonies founded to provide trade goods to the British Empire as part of the Atlantic System
- Settler colonialism
- Religious dissent and/or religious liberty were a reason for the founding of some colonies
- All colonies relied on unfree labor, although some were moving away from it by the Revolution, while others were becoming more reliant on unfree labor
- Indentured servitude, convict labor, enslavement of Indigenous Americans, and enslavement of people of African descent

- Slavery in all the colonies- Vermont was first to abolish slavery in 1777, but didn't officially become a state until 1791. Prior to that it was in rebellion against New York, in part because of slavery
- Variations in governance of the colonies
- Governors (executives) appointed by the Crown, colonial suspicion of executive power
- Local councils and assemblies were established but could always be overruled by the governor or the Crown. Colonial preference for legislative power
- Colonies were caught up in the struggles of British government, including the deposing and beheading of King Charles, the rule of Oliver Cromwell, and the Restoration of the monarchy
- Rebellions were always a problem. Bacon's Rebellion in 1676- Indentured servants and slaves joined together in an attempt to overthrow the government. In part because they wanted to end peace agreement governor had made with Indigenous Americans

Reasons for Constitutional Convention

- Shay's Rebellion and other civil unrest, which led to state legislatures becoming more democratic in a way that elites considered radical
- Debts of national and state governments
- Economic depression after the war
- Need to build markets and an economy, conflicting ideas over what kind of economic system
- Fear of being re-conquered by a colonial power
- Conflicts over westward expansion
- Conflicts over relations with Indigenous Americans
- Conflicts over slavery

From this point, the content of the class picks up where most courses do, with the conflicts over ratification and then the Constitution itself. However, this context is woven throughout the class.

Methods of the Intervention

I teach and serve as the Director of Undergraduate Studies in a large department with just over 1,000 majors. As such, I teach the Introduction to U.S. Politics course with approximately 400 students. In its current iteration, I am teaching it without recitations, but with TA assistance in class in which we are integrating class discussion and group activities with the lecture component of the course in the large classroom. This particular content is taught through a combination of lecture, full-class discussion using both traditional discussion and participation through mentimeter, and a full-day in-class activity based on the Smith article, in which student groups post group answers to question prompts on Canvas which we then discuss as a class.

Intervention 2: Interrogating concepts underlying variables of race and ethnicity (as well as other variables) in Politics of Economic Inequality in the U.S.

The Introductory course is an important place to begin the narrative of the United States as a diverse country that has always struggled with how to understand national identity and governance among heterogeneous groups that do not always live together easily or even voluntarily. Weaving the idea throughout the subfield curriculum that this is an ongoing project that does not have an even trajectory, and as a defining characteristic of U.S. politics, is important. In addition, and the focus of this intervention, is that as a discipline and a subfield, the study of U.S. politics has been shaped by the aspiration and struggle to live together in a multiracial democracy and that the problems in doing so have sometimes been exacerbated by political science. The shortcomings of our work to create multiracial democracy are often also

vulnerabilities in the study of U.S. politics. Although I address this issue in many ways in most of the upper-division U.S. politics courses that I teach, here I will focus on just one intervention in one course: interrogating our concepts and measurements of race and ethnicity, and identifying the gaps, errors, and problems in the ways in which we theorize about how race and ethnicity shape U.S. politics, and particularly U.S. elections.

In popular narratives such as news coverage, in research, and in teaching, we are all familiar with considering voting patterns of different racial and ethnic groups in elections. However, what do we mean by race? Ethnicity? Do our measurements accurately capture these concepts? And what are our theories, our causal stories, about why/how these concepts we are measuring cause (explicitly or usually implicitly) differences in voting behavior? I find that often there is little or no discussion of the causal relationship. Here I will interrogate a key body of work that we look at in *Politics of Economic Inequality in the U.S.* Black voters overwhelmingly vote Democratic in U.S. elections and White voters are more likely to vote Republican than other racial and ethnic groups.

Narrative of the Intervention

Especially in undergraduate courses, there is a tendency to present research or tables from research papers without a lot of discussion of what the concepts mean or what the causal story is. Therefore, I slow down the discussion of at least a few readings to drill down on these concepts in ways that are meant to stay with students throughout the course and throughout their time as a student of U.S. politics and hopefully out into the world. The simple narrative that we currently have on this topic at best leaves students wondering what is the causal mechanism that leads people of different races to vote differently and at worst is a story of racial essentialism; that

somehow it is Blackness or Whiteness that leads people to vote a particular way. This narrative is also simplified in mostly being a story of Black voting and White voting and leaving out other racial and ethnic groups and/or minimizing both their importance and in how the voting behavior of other racial and ethnic groups complicates this narrative, as is discussed further in intervention three.

People who identify as Black or White have different voting patterns because they have different life experiences, interests, networks of interaction, largely separate educational and religious institutions, and are geographically segregated from each other, among other considerations. Race, as a causal variable, is a stand-in for a much more complicated set of life-condition factors than its short-hand would indicate. Sociologists (as discussed below) do a good job of interrogating the ways in which race is socially constructed, but political science does a poor job of interrogating the ways in which different political attitudes and voting behaviors are shaped by political development, political institutions, and the actions of political actors. In short, race does not cause people to vote for one party or the other; the politics of race in the United States cause variations in racial and ethnic voting patterns.

Content of the Intervention

The upper-division politics of economic inequality in the U.S. course that I teach is divided into four sections: When is economic inequality a problem? (normative perspectives), How unequal are we? (empirical evidence of economic inequality), What is the relationship between political inequality and economic inequality? (empirical evidence of causal connections), What policies contribute to economic inequality and what policies alleviate economic inequality (policy solutions). Throughout the course is woven the normative idea that

economic inequality may be a problem when it is either caused by ascriptive discrimination or causes unequal outcomes along ascriptive divides. In the third section, we look at differences in policy responsiveness along socio-economic lines. In this section, I introduce this discussion of the causal story behind looking at racial and ethnic variables. Currently, we read Sen and Wasow's (2016) "Race is a Bundle of Sticks," which addresses this issue, but more narrowly and in a way that is really too advanced for undergraduates and the sociology article, "Conceptualizations of Race: Essentialism and Constructivism" by Roth, Stee and Regla-Vargas (2023). Then we read political science work which I believe does a good job of causally discussing race: two chapters from Ellis (2017), Flavin (2015), and Griffin (2017).

Methods of the Intervention

Since I created this course in 2016, I have been the only person at our institution to teach it. It is either taught in sections of 45-50 people without a TA, or in sections of 8-90 students with a TA, most recently in the latter format. I am highlighting three methods of intervention here.

First, in election-year semesters, we begin the third section of the course in the first week of November, which corresponds with federal elections in even years, and elections every year. A transition between the second and third section of the course involves looking at either real-time election returns, or historic coverage of elections, that breaks down voter behavior by many categories, including race and ethnicity. Students have the background of having considered both normative concerns about economic inequality and having read research findings on how equal we are along various faults in U.S. politics.

In class, we discuss election returns along racial and ethnic lines and look at exit polls and news articles regarding election outcomes. As part of that, we discuss questions about what it means that there are racial and ethnic divides, and then move into the readings discussed above. After reading the materials on conceptualizations of race, we have a group activity in which the class is broken into groups of 5-8 students and discuss how we might consider what we have read and what it means for the causal explanation for differences along racial and ethnic lines, and then we move into the Ellis, Flavin, and Griffin readings discussed above.

Intervention 3: We don't have the Data to Assess Multiracial Democracy, and much of that Lack of Data is Intentional

Again, although this is an intervention that is important in all upper-division classes, and should be integrated across the subfield curriculum, my example here is in the Politics of Economic Inequality in the U.S. course. Two of the questions that always come up in this course are *why don't these articles comparing Black and White economic outcomes and political behavior include other racial and ethnic groups?*; And *why are the only family-types in these economic inequality articles heterosexual married families or single-mother headed households? What about LGBTQ+ families and families who do not have children?* The short answer, including for researchers who care deeply about those who are not included, is that we do not have longitudinal data on races other than Black and White and that we don't have longitudinal data on family types beyond heterosexual two parent families and single-mother headed households. Additionally, if we are honest about the data, data on White and Black families has been kept with an implicit understanding that the reason for keeping this data is that Black family outcomes are not as "successful" as White family outcomes. Data on two-parent heterosexual families has been kept with the implicit understanding that

outcomes for those families are “better” than those of single-mother headed households. Taking this even further is an understanding that Black families are more likely to be headed by single-mothers, and that individual choices are to credit and blame for better and worse outcomes. This is because these are individual-level variables in both political science and economics, and both of these disciplines in the social sciences are more focused on individual agency as a driver of social phenomenon and less focused on the role of institutions in the agency-structure divide in the social sciences.

Narrative of the Intervention

Racial and ethnic identity are complicated. In social science research, it is important to understand that how researchers measure race and ethnicity and how people experience race and ethnicity do not always match up; the categories imposed by social science reflect the experiences of social science, as well as historical operationalizations of race that are maintained in order to preserve the ability to use longitudinal data. The two categories that have been most consistently maintained are mutually exclusive categories of Black and White; measures of Hispanic/Latino/Chicano and other ways of conceptualizing and measuring peoples with ancestral connections to Central and South America have changed significantly over time, as has the ways in which people tracing their heritage to those areas experience and conceptualize their own identities; Asian-American identities are conceptualized and measured by researchers in ways that are generalized to the point that they bear little relationship to the experience of people included in those categories; Indigenous identities are measured with little or no input by Indigenous people. Further, in most datasets, there aren't enough respondents in any racial group other than White to ensure the inclusion of the varieties of experience within those categories. When it comes to family structure, government and economic research has created categories in a way that continue to contain implicit normative biases in favor of married, heterosexual families with children as the standard to which all other family formats are compared. Single-mother headed households are found wanting, and LGBTQ+ families, co-habiting parents, co-parenting friends, and partners without children

are rendered invisible. Mixed-race people are rendered invisible; respondents answering racial and ethnic identity questions with “other” or “none of the above” are mostly excluded from data analysis altogether.

So where does this leave us? We need to learn what we can from quantitative social science research on topics like the politics of economic inequality in the U.S., but we also need to identify the shortcomings in the data. In doing so, we can extrapolate from the data we do have, fill in missing parts of the puzzle with qualitative research, and acknowledge that there are a lot of things we just don’t know because we don’t have empirical evidence to examine people who have been rendered invisible by data, nor do we have the level of nuance necessary to fully understand that experiences of many people and groups.

Content of the Intervention

Most of the content of this intervention is helping students learn to see who is not there, who is missing in the work that we read. Additionally, asking students to consider why those who are included are included. We also read work from multiple disciplines, perspectives, and ideological approaches in the class. Two readings that explicitly deal with the problems of measurement include, Brown and Mannings (2009) article in *Demography* on how failure to measure cohabitation affects research on family structure and Zubari (2000) “Deracializing Social Statistics: Problems in the Quantification of Race” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. We also discuss how Massey (1990) looking at Black/White segregation and White/Puerto Rican segregation is an example of using the data that is available to complicate an area of research that has mostly looked at Black/White segregation only. We read the qualitative case study book *Worlds Apart* by Duncan in (2014) in part to get a richer view of how gender, race and class intersect in rural communities with high levels of intergenerational poverty. We extrapolate from what we know from existing findings to hypothesize what findings for lesbian and gay families would be. And, we sit with the understanding that what we are reading doesn’t tell us that much about how

Indigenous people fare economically and politically in the United States, and that our data on Asian-American families cannot help break down the many different communities that are included in those measures. In a subfield in a discipline that often over-emphasizes the certainty of our findings, we learn to live with uncertainty.

Methods of Intervention

As noted above, Politics of Economic Inequality in the U.S. is a fairly large course either taught with around 50 students or around 80 students. This is a course that always has an extensive waitlist, as it is very popular and we do not have the personnel to teach more than one section per semester or to teach it at all in many semesters. The class is a combination of group discussions and activities, class discussions, and lecture. Helping students to see the missing people and data is best accomplished in “think, group, share” activities in which students are asked to think individually about questions like “who is missing in this article and why?” and then discuss their thoughts in groups and share with the class as a whole. More complicated readings like the Massey reading, however, are best set up through lecture and then full class discussion. In essay exams, the prompt ask students to think about flaws in the research or additional research that needs to be done to truly understand the politics of economic inequality in the U.S.

Discussion

Teaching U.S. political science to support diverse democracy is an ongoing process; the three areas for action and the interventions included here are among many that both departments and individuals might consider. Beyond these interventions, keeping courses current to appeal to

students who often balk at reading research that is just a few years old, and to include research that takes some of these critiques of the subfield into account, and to include the more diverse set of authors studying U.S. politics today is important. Thinking about our audience is also critical. I teach at a predominantly White institution (PWI), and our largest racial and ethnic minority groups are Latino/a and Asian-American students; acknowledging their invisibility and mischaracterization in research is important because they see it whether we make it explicit or not. For Black students, and for students who either head or come from single-mother headed households, calling out the biases in the research that implicitly or explicitly scolds people from their communities is important because they see it whether we discuss it or not. For all students, including White students, making clear that these tendencies or trends that vary across communities do not mean that every person in a community is represented by a large portion of that community is important, because they feel alienated by that lack of representation whether we vocalize it or not. We need more people thinking and writing and sharing about how to make the American politics subfield more inclusive not for show, but because without making it more inclusive, our research and teaching is simply inaccurate.

It is also important to consider that we can only do so much to reform the subfield to support diverse democracy from the teaching side. Many of us working on these questions have predominantly teaching positions and rely on the work of our colleagues with research-intensive appointments. We need research that considers American political development with a lens that considers the role of diverse people trying to live together over time in shaping our institutions, processes, and behaviors. We need research that conceptualizes and measures race in ways that are more consistent with how people live these identities. We need research that clearly and explicitly theorizes about race in ways that do not fall into the trap of false racial essentialism.

We need research that acknowledges that we need many methods and perspectives to truly answer the big questions of the subfield. And, we need research in the U.S. politics subfield that integrates normative concerns and comparative perspectives in our single-case empirical subfield.

I have intentionally *not* included methods of assessing these interventions. In this paper, I have focused on theorizing about how to reform the U.S. politics subfield curriculum in ways that support multiracial democracy, recognize the shortcomings of research in the subfield, and help students think critically about social science findings. These are certainly things that could be measured, and the proper level for measuring would be at the program-level in program learning outcomes. Part of what I would like to push back on is the tendency to put measurement before theorizing and conceptualizing. The work of creating an inclusive U.S. politics curriculum to support diverse democracy is, from my perspective, not at the measurement stage yet. Trying to jump to that stage makes it more likely departments and instructors will choose interventions that can be easily assessed rather than those which are theoretically and conceptually most helpful.

Conclusions

The land area that makes up the current United States has been a land of diverse people since the beginning of European colonization as people from three continents, many nationalities, many languages, and a wide variety of religious and cultural beliefs were brought together on the same lands; sometimes voluntarily but often involuntarily or with few choices. The experiment of diverse people living together began then, and our U.S. politics curriculum should reflect that. The experiences of the European colonial period, along with ideas that

developed in response to this new reality of human interaction, led to the Revolution and the choice of a representative democracy in the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution. Since then, the experiment of diverse people living together has continued, and the forms of diversity have expanded; the question of how should be included in democracy and who should be excluded has animated U.S. politics since the Founding. Consistently, normative beliefs about representative democracy and human equality have confronted ascriptive biases and people who wish to consolidate power among a few. The struggle for inclusive democracy is a normative struggle that should be integral to the U.S. politics curriculum. These struggles are informed by interactions with other countries, as well as by comparing ourselves to other countries; this comparison should be systematic and explicit.

The U.S. discipline of political science grew out of our desire, as a nation, to improve our governance. At the same time, political scientists have shared the biases in society and have created ways of describing, conceptualizing, measuring, theorizing and analyzing politics that often bake these biases in and create findings that reinforce rather than expose the flaws in the political system.

As George Washington stated in his *Circular to the States* (1783) and John Adams in *Thoughts on Government* (1776), the Founders and Revolutionaries founded a government that was designed to be the best government that science and philosophy could create, and its purpose was to create happiness among the people through representative government and sovereignty of the people. The nation was formed in ideals, has been shaped by experiences over time, and struggles like all nations with irrational biases and those more concerned with their own power than the good over the people. The struggle to create, maintain, and expand inclusive democracy is the story of the United States. It is the empirical, normative, comparative story of an

aspirational people who continue to learn how to live together in a diverse society in a way that creates the greatest possible happiness among the people.

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