

AMERICAN POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

SPRING 2024

POS 6933

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Office Hours: Office Hours: Wednesdays 11:45-1:45 and Thursdays 11:15-12:15

The subfield of American political development (APD) is a relatively new subfield in American politics, dating back roughly to the early 1980s. It has several distinguishing features. First, political scientists working within this tradition often use a methodological approach that is historical and comparative to assess both continuity and change in American politics. Some use conventional quantitative methods such as multivariate regression to explain phenomena of interest, but many--arguably, most--do not. Works in APD tend to provide detailed historical accounts, through the use of primary and secondary source material, in order to explain policy outcomes and political puzzles. APD scholars also tend to emphasize the role of political institutions as an explanatory variable. Compared to behavioral political scientists, they devote substantial attention to the state, as both an independent and dependent variable. Many works in APD focus on questions of state development, especially the development of bureaucratic and regulatory capacity. Another important question that links the different research efforts within the APD tradition is the question of American "exceptionalism." Many of the important works in the APD literature seek to explain why and how the American state and American policies differ from the states and policies of other advanced industrialized democracies.

We will proceed both chronologically and thematically. We start by devoting two weeks to the theoretical frameworks that animate the study of American political development, considering the role of institutions, culture, and economics, and addressing the question of patterns and periodicity in American politics. Then we turn to the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian eras, and move through the Civil War, Reconstruction, Populism, Progressivism, the New Deal, and the Great Society, and modern welfare and health care form. We will also consider race, gender, conservatism, and labor.

Since much of the literature in APD focuses on social policy, this course will devote substantial attention to social policy before and after the New Deal, including a section on national health insurance and welfare reform as they played out in the 1990s (with attention to the historical roots of the debates and resolution of the conflicts). However, the main focus of the course will be on American political history prior to 1950. We will consider both the origins and the legacies of various transforming changes in American politics. Throughout the semester as we examine both critical turning points and periods of continuity, we will assess the contribution that political

culture, political institutions, political leaders, economic factors, and demographic changes, have made to American political development.

The goals of the course are several. First, the course aims to provide students with a basic historical knowledge of the main periods or eras in American politics. In doing so, we will aim to identify the features or characteristics that separate one “era” from another. Second, the course provides an overview of the main debates in the APD literature. We will look at the big questions and different answers that have been offered on topics including the meaning and impact of the Jacksonian era, of Populism and Progressivism, of the New Deal and the Great Society. We will also address the role that is played by labor, race, and gender in American politics. Third, over the course of the semester, we will evaluate the thesis of American “exceptionalism,” by assessing just how exceptional American politics really is, and what the causes of this exceptionalism might be. We will do this most directly with regard to social policy, again because this has been a central focus of APD scholars (as opposed to, for example, environmental or tax policy).

There are three main course requirements. First, you must come to class having done the readings for that week and be prepared to discuss them. The class will be a mixture of lecture and discussion. In order for discussion to be productive, students need to come prepared to talk about what they have read.

Second, you must complete 5 short papers on the weekly course readings (7-9 pps. each) on topics to be handed out. You can pick the weeks for which you write the papers. You do not need to do additional readings beyond the assigned readings for that week. The papers are due by 9 a.m. via email (rosenson@ufl.edu) on the day of the week that you write them (i.e. you must email me your paper by 9 a.m. on the day that class meets). **Topics are at the end of the syllabus, starting on page 12; they are NOT the questions listed for each section - those are just questions to think about while reading. The prompts for the paper are on the last two pages of the syllabus.**

Finally, you will be expected to do five brief presentations (each one will be on one reading during the semester). You should come prepared to talk for 10 minutes, first briefly summarizing the reading and then presenting a critical analysis of the work, highlighting the interesting aspects or problems that you saw and laying the groundwork for class discussion. You will choose 3 and I will assign 2.

Grades will be based on your papers and participation:

PAPERS (5) = worth 17 points each = 85%

PRESENTATIONS (5) = worth 3 points each = 15%

REQUIRED READINGS FOR CLASS:

All readings are in a Dropbox except required textbook #1, #3 and #12. The ones not in the Dropbox will be made available to you on Pages on Canvas (textbook #1 and #12) and as an E-book at UF Library West (textbook #3). The link to the Dropbox is

<https://www.dropbox.com/home/APD%202022%20To%20Share>

Required Textbooks

- 1) Stephen Skowronek, *Politics Presidents Make* (Belknap/Harvard: 1997)
- 2) Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State* (Cambridge University Press: 1982)
- 3) Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals* (Yale, 1997)
- 4) Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (Vintage/Knopf/Random House: 1955)
- 5) Doug McAdam, *Political Process and Black Insurgency* (University of Chicago: 1985)
- 6) James Morone, *Hellfire Nation* (Yale, 2002)
- 7) Jonathan Schoenwald, *A time for choosing: the rise of modern American conservatism* (Oxford, 2002)
- 8) Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (Cambridge, 2004)
- 9) Jane Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (University of Chicago, 1986)
- 10) Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (Belknap/Harvard, 1992)
- 11) Theda Skocpol and Vanessa Williamson, *The Tea Party and The Remaking of American Conservatism* (Oxford: 2013)
- 12) Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (The New Press: 2012)

January 8: **SESSION 1: Introduction and Overview**

January 15: **NO CLASS (MARTIN LUTHER KING HOLIDAY)**

January 22: **SESSION 2: Perspectives on American Political Development: Cultural, Institutional, Economic, American Political Economy (Focus on Inequality and Race)**

Note: The Huntington and Steinmo readings will be a review for those of you who took my American Field Seminar (as will one of the readings for the following week).

Questions to think about when reading (these are NOT the prompts for the essay – those are at the end of the syllabus): What if anything do these various perspectives under-emphasize or miss? How does the American Political Economy (APE) perspective differ from, or build upon, the institutional perspective of Pierson/Skocpol and Steinmo?

The Cultural Perspective

1. Samuel Huntington, American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 31–60
2. Rogers Smith, Civic Ideals (required text), pp. 1-39 (E-book through UF library -read pages in actual book, not pages in E-book)
3. James Morone, Hellfire Nation (required text), pp. 1-33

The Institutional Perspective

4. Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol, “Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science,” In Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner, eds., Political Science: The State of the Discipline (New York: Norton, 2002), pp. 693-721
5. Sven Steinmo, “American Exceptionalism Reconsidered,” in L. Dodd and C. Jillson, eds., The Dynamics of American Politics (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), Ch. 5, pp. 106-131

The Economic Perspective

6. Richard Benschel, Sectionalism (University of Wisconsin, 1984), pp. 3-25
7. Thomas Ferguson, Golden Rule: The Investment Theory of Party Competition (University of Chicago: 1995), Introduction (pp. 17-38) (coursepack)

American Political Economy Perspective (Institutional, Economic and Racial Perspective Combined)

8. Jacob Hacker, Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Paul Pierson and Kathleen Thelen, “The American Political Economy: Markets, Power and the Meta Politics of US Economic Governance,” *Annual Review of Political Science* (May 2022 publication date, Published online November 16, 2021). Will share with class via Canvas (on Pages).

January 29: **SESSION 3: Patterns and Temporality in American Political Development: Looking for Regularities, Dividing History into Periods, and Considering Time**

Questions to think about while reading: What patterns, cycles, or era characterize American political development? Does Skowronek's categorization of presidents in political and secular time provide a useful framework for thinking about patterns in American political development? What are the criticisms of approaches that assume ordered regularity in American politics? What does the concept of path dependence suggest about change in American politics?

1. Walter Dean Burnham, Critical Elections (Norton: 1970), ch. 1, pp. 1-10
2. Stephen Skowronek, Politics Presidents Make, chs. 2 and 3 (To be shared on Canvas in Pages)
3. Calvin Jillson, "Patterns and Periodicity in American Politics," in Larry Dodd and Calvin Jillson, eds., Dynamics of American Politics (Boulder: Westview, 1994), pp. 24-58
4. Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," American Political Science Review, Vol. 94, No.2 (June 2002), pp. 251-167 (on J-STOR through the UF Library Webpage)
5. Orren and Skowronek, The Search for American Political Development, chapters 1, 3, and 5

February 5: SESSION 4: Race and American Political Development

Questions to think about: What role does race play in American politics? What explains the emergence and successes of the civil rights movement, and the difficulties that civil rights activists ran into after 1965? What are the strengths and weaknesses of McAdam's "political process model"? What is gained in terms of our understanding of American politics by considering race? How does race factor into the study of criminal justice policy? How does "race policy" differ between the U.S. and other countries?

1. Rogers Smith and Desmond King, "Racial Orders in American Political Development" (with Desmond S. King), *American Political Science Review* 99, pp. 75-92 (February 2005). (Available at <http://www8.georgetown.edu/centers/cdacs/RacialOrders.pdf>).
2. Julie Novkov, "Rethinking Race in American Politics," *Political Research Quarterly* December 2008, Vol. 61, pp. 649-659 (available through UF library website)
3. Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, chs. 5-8
4. Vesla Weaver, "Frontlash: Race and the Development of Punitive Crime Policy," *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol. 22, Issue 2, pp. 230-265 (Available at www.ebonterr.com/site_editor/assets/EBONTERR_41.pdf).
5. Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (The New Press: 2021), Chapters 4 and 5 (To be shared on Canvas on Pages)
6. Robert Lieberman, "Weak State, Strong Policy: Paradoxes of Race Policy in the United States, Great Britain and France," *Studies in American Political Development* Vol. 16, No. 2 (2002), pp. 138-161 (available at <http://politics.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/4754/lieberman.pdf>).

February 12: SESSION 5: Gender and American Political Development

Questions to think about while reading: What role has gender played in the development of social policy? How does using gender as a category enrich our understanding of American political development compared to a non-gendered approach? What explains the success of the women's movement in achieving some favorable legislation since the 1950's? What explains the failure to ratify the ERA?

1. Theda Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers* (required text), chs. 6-9
2. Anne Costain, *Inviting Women's Rebellion* (Johns Hopkins: 1992), chs. 1-2, pp. 1-43
3. Jane Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA* (required text), ch. 1-11

February 19: **SESSION 6: The Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Periods (August 27)**

Questions to think about while reading: How did the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian eras represent a break in time or departure from previous periods in American politics? What features characterize each of these periods?

Jefferson and the origins of the party system

1. Martin Shefter, "Party, Bureaucracy and Political Change," in Louis Maisel and Joseph Cooper, eds., Political Parties: Development and Decay (Sage, 1978), pp. 214-218
2. Skowronek, Politics Presidents Make chapter on Jefferson, pp. 61-85
3. Rogers Smith, Civic Ideals, Chapter 7

Jackson and Jacksonian democracy

4. James Morone, The Democratic Wish, pp. 74-96
5. Skowronek, Politics Presidents Make, chapter on Jackson, pp. 129-154
6. Rogers Smith, Civic Ideals, Chapter 8

February 26: **SESSION 7: The Civil War, Reconstruction and Populism**

Questions to think about while reading: What were the causes of the Civil War? How do we explain Lincoln's actions? How do we explain the policies that were enacted during Reconstruction? What was the relative role of moral factors, economic factors, and political factors in explaining the outbreak of war and the Reconstruction period which followed? What was the vision and what were the goals of the Populists? Why did Populism not succeed in the electoral arena?

1. Barrington Moore, Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy (Beacon: 1967), pp. 115-149
2. Kenneth Stampp, ed., The Causes of the Civil War (Prentice Hall: 1974), pp. 45-51, 70-74, 85-91, 104-105
3. Eric Foner, Free Soil: Free Labor (New York: Oxford Press, 1970), pp. 1-10
4. Skowronek, Politics Presidents Make, chapter on Lincoln
5. Seth Steiner, ed., Reconstruction: A Tragic Era? (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. 1-8, 13-17, 29-36
6. Richard Hofstadter, Age of Reform, ch. 2
7. Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America (New York: Oxford Press, 1978), Intro and Chapter 8
8. Richard Hofstadter, Age of Reform, chapter 3

Recommended additional readings on Reconstruction: John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction after the Civil War* (University of Chicago Press: 1994), Kenneth Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (Vintage: 1965) or Eric Foner, *Reconstruction* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

****NO CLASS MARCH 4 – PROF. ROSENSON OUT OF TOWN**

****NO CLASS MARCH 11 – SPRING BREAK****

March 18: SESSION 8: The Progressive Era

Questions to think about while reading: What was the vision and what were the goals of the Progressives? How were they different from the Populists? How were they similar? Why were they more successful? What were the Progressives' main accomplishments in terms of social reform, electoral reform and institutional change?

1. Stephen Skowronek, *Building A New American State*, chs. 1, 3, 6, 5, 8 (READ IN THIS ORDER)
2. Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*, pp. 131-148, 215-271
3. Arthur S. Link and Richard L. McCormack, *Progressivism* (Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc.), pp. 26-66
4. Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals*, chapter 12
5. Eileen McDonagh, "Race, Class and Gender in the Progressive Era," in Sidney Milkis, ed., *Progressivism and the New Democracy* (University of Massachusetts: 1999), p. 145-191
6. James Morone, *The Democratic Wish*, p. 97-128

March 25: **SESSION 9: Social Policy I: Theories and Policy History Prior to the New Deal**

Questions to think about while reading: What explains the emergence of social policies in the United States? Is the U.S. exceptional, and if so, why? What were the main features of social policy prior to the New Deal?

Theoretical Perspectives/Scholarly Approaches to Social Policy Making

1. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, Poor People's Movements (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977), pp. xiii-xvii
2. Theda Skocpol, Margaret Weir and Ann Orloff, Politics of Social Policy (Princeton: 1988), pp. 3-27
3. Chloe Thurston, "Racial Inequality, Market Inequality, and the American Political Economy," in Jacob S. Hacker, Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Paul Pierson, and Kathleen Thelen, eds., The American Political Economy: Politics, Markets, and Power (Cambridge University Press, 2022), pp. 133-157 (Will share on Canvas)
4. Peter Baldwin, "Beyond Weak and Strong: Rethinking the State in Comparative Policy History," Journal of Policy History, Vol 17, No. 1, 2005 (On J-STOR through the UF Library Webpage), pp. 12-33

Social Policy Initiatives Before The New Deal

5. Theda Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers, chapters 2, 5
6. Skowronek, Politics Presidents Make, chapter on Hoover (To be shared on Canvas on Pages)
7. James Morone, Hellfire Nation, Chapters 8 and 10

Recommended: Edward Berkowitz and Kim McQuaid, Creating the Welfare State

April 1: **SESSION 10: Social Policy II: The New Deal and the Great Society**

Questions to think about while reading: What explains the emergence of the New Deal? Was Roosevelt an ideologue, a pragmatist or something else? How do we explain the particular mix of policies that constitute the New Deal? What/who were the key forces or actors behind the New Deal? How did the New Deal build upon, and depart from, the Progressive era? What is the connection between the New Deal and the Great Society? Did the Great Society succeed, or fail, and in what ways?

New Deal

1. Ann Orloff in Politics of Social Policy, pp. 65-79
2. Jill Quadagno in Politics of Social Policy, pp. 237-247
3. Skowronek, Politics Presidents Make, chapter on Roosevelt
4. Thomas Ferguson, Golden Dome, chapter 2, pp. 113-172
5. Russell Hanson, "Liberalism and the Course of American Social Welfare Policy," in Larry Dodd, ed., Dynamics of American Politics (Boulder: Westview, 1994), pp. 132-159

Great Society

6. Brendon O'Connor, A Political History of the American Welfare System: When Ideas Have Consequences (Rowman and Littlefield: 2003), Chapter 2, pp. 49-69
7. Ira Katznelson, "Was The Great Society a Lost Opportunity?" in Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, eds., Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order (Princeton University Press: 1989), pp. 185-211

Recommended: Richard Goodwin, Remembering America, chapter 15 (an autobiographical account by one of Johnson's speechwriters of the Great Society and other Johnson initiatives).

April 8: **SESSION 11: Social Policy III: The 1990s and beyond – Welfare Reform and National Health Insurance (October 8)**

Questions to think about while reading: What are the continuities between social policy in the 1990s and prior American history? Why did welfare reform occur? Why did national health insurance fail under Clinton and succeed under Obama, and what important limitations have been imposed on health care reform by American institutions, history and/or culture? How does an APD perspective help us understand the nature of health care reform, as well as welfare reform?

1. Brendon O'Connor, A Political History of the American Welfare System: When Ideas Have Consequences (Rowman and Littlefield: 2003), chapters 8-10
2. Kent Weaver and Bert Rockman, Ending Welfare As We Know It, chapters 5, 10-12
3. Theda Skocpol, Boomerang: Clinton's Health Security Effort and the Turn Against Government in U.S. Politics (W.W. Norton: 1996), Chs. 3 & 5, pps. 74-106, 133-172
4. Jacob Hacker, The Divided Welfare State (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 191-269
5. Marie Gottschalk, The Private Welfare State (Cornell, 2002), chapter 3, pp. 39-64
6. Andrew S. Kelly, "Health Reform in the Trump Era: Will Politics Unmake Policy?" The Forum: a journal of applied research in contemporary politics, Vol. 15, Issue 2 (2017), pp. 345-362 (on Canvas on Pages, also available on UF library website)

April 15: **SESSION 12: Conservatism in American Politics: Old Style and New Style**

Questions to think about: What are the roots of modern conservatism? What factors facilitated the growth of the conservative movement? How important have ideas been, and how important have particular individuals been? What linkages exist between Cold War conservatism and more recent conservatism? What challenges did Ronald Reagan face in trying to implement a conservative agenda? How did the rise of Trump affect the Republican party? What factions did it create or deepen?

1. Jonathan Schoenwald, A Time for Choosing, pp. 35-77, 84-99, 124-161, 190-250
2. Skowronek, Politics Presidents Make, chapter on Reagan (to be shared on Canvas)
3. Strahan, Randall and Daniel J. Palazzolo. 2004. "The Gingrich Effect." *Political Science Quarterly* 119, Vol. 1, pp. 89-114 (J-STOR)
4. Skocpol and Williamson, The Tea Party and the Making of Modern Conservatism, Introduction, pp. 19-32 pp. 40-44, Chapter 3 all, pp. 127-134, pp. 197-205.
5. Andrew Pieper and Jeff R. Dewitt, The Republican Resistance: #NeverTrump Conservatives and the Future of the GOP (Lexington Books: 2021), Chapter 1 and Chapter 12 (to be shared with class on Canvas)

Recommended on Reagan: Paul Pierson, Dismantling the Welfare State (Cambridge University Press: 1994) and our own Prof. Richard Conley's edited volume Reassessing the Reagan Presidency (Rowman and Littlefield: 2003)

April 22: **SESSION 13: Labor in American Political Development**

Questions to think about while reading: Is American labor exceptional? What accounts for the relative weakness of American labor and the difficulties it has encountered?

1. Eric Foner, "Why Is There No Socialism in the United States?" History Workshop 17, Spring 1984, pp. 57-80
2. Victoria Hattam, "Institutions and Political change: Working-class formation in England and the United States, 1820-1896," in Sven Steinmo, Kathleen Thelen, and Frank Longstreth, eds., Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)
3. Elizabeth Clemens, The People's Lobby (University of Chicago: 1997), p. 100-144
4. Michael Goldfield, The Decline of Organized Labor in the United States (University of Chicago: 1987), Chs. 10, 11, pp. 221-245
5. Nelson Lichtenstein, State of the Union: A Century Of American Labor (Princeton: 2003), chapters 6 and 7
6. Tracy Roof, American Labor, Congress and the Welfare State, 1935-2010 (Johns Hopkins: 2010), chapter 6

Paper topics to choose from

SESSION 2: Perspectives on APD

Which of the perspectives – cultural, institutional, economic, or American political economy – do you find most compelling as a way to account for outcomes in American politics? If you find a combination of them to be convincing and useful, you can discuss more than one perspective. Be explicit about why you prefer one perspective over another, or why you are not convinced by a particular perspective.

SESSION 3: Patterns and Temporality

What patterns, cycles, or era characterize American political development? Does Skowronek's categorization of presidents in political and secular time provide a useful framework for thinking about patterns in American political development?

SESSION 4: Race and APD

Choose ONE of the two following questions:

1. What factors explain 1) the successes and failures of the civil rights movement discussed by McAdam and 2) differences in anti-discrimination policy in three countries, discussed by Lieberman? Make sure to analyze McAdams' "political process" model and explain whether you find it useful and accurate. How might the political process model be applied to more current political developments that implicate race or civil rights, such as the efforts of #BlackLivesMatter?
2. Are you convinced by Smith and King, Novkov, Weaver, and Alexander that much in American politics can be explained by placing race front and center in one's explanation? (for example, Smith and King's application of "racial orders" to the bureaucracy or immigration policy, or Weaver's and Alexander's discussion of criminal justice policy)?

SESSION 5: Gender and APD

Choose ONE of the following two questions:

1. How does using gender as a category (as Skocpol does in her book *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*) enrich our understanding of American political development, compared to a non-gendered approach? Second, how is Costain's political process approach useful to understanding gender politics in the United States?
2. What explains the successes of the women's movement since the 1950s (Costain) and what explains the failure to ratify the ERA (Mansbridge)?

SESSION 6: Jefferson and Jackson

In what way did the Jefferson and Jacksonian era represent a break in time, or departure from previous periods in American politics? To what extent did they represent not change but continuity in political, cultural or economic arrangements?

SESSION 7. Civil War, Reconstruction and Populism

Choose ONE of the two following questions:

- 1) What was the role of moral factors, economic factors, and political factors in

explaining both the outbreak of the Civil War and the Reconstruction period which followed? Which explanations of the Civil War and Reconstruction are most convincing to you?

2) What was the Populist movement about? Why did Populism not succeed in the electoral arena?

SESSION 8: Progressivism

What were the Progressives' main accomplishments in terms of social reform, electoral reform and institutional change? What are the most compelling critiques of the Progressives?

SESSION 9: Social Policy I

What explains the emergence of new social policies in the United States? Are we exceptional, and if so, why?

SESSION 10: Social Policy II (New Deal and Great Society)

What explains the emergence of the New Deal? How do we explain the particular mix of policies that are associated with the New Deal; why did Social Security and AFDC take the form that they did?

SESSION 11. Social Policy III

Choose ONE of the following two questions:

- 1) Why did national health insurance fail in the 1990s while welfare reform succeeded?
- 2) How does an institutionalist perspective such as that of Skocpol, Hacker, Gottschalk, and Kelly explain the fate of health care reform, before, during and after the Clinton administration?

SESSION 12: Conservatism in American Politics

Choose ONE of the two following questions:

1. What were the driving factors that facilitated and moved forward the conservative movement in the 20th and 21st centuries? Which individuals and groups have been particularly important in the conservative movement (both in the present and in earlier years)? How does Trump fit in to the Republican party as it stands today?
2. How does modern conservatism in the form of the Tea Party analyzed by Skocpol and Williamson compare to the "earlier" conservatism discussed by Schoenwald? What are the similarities and what are the differences? To what extent was the Tea Party a top-down phenomenon (run and dominated by national elite actors) and to what extent was it "bottom up" (dominated by local, "ordinary" citizens)? How does Trump fit in to the Republican party as it stands today?

SESSION 13. Labor in APD

What accounts for the relative weakness of American labor and the difficulties it has encountered in the American political system?