

# THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE: CREATION, EVOLUTION, CONTROVERSY

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Description

The 2024 election looms. Up for grabs are the House of Representatives, one-third of the Senate, and most important, the Presidency. The presidential election immediately leads to questions about the uniquely American method of electing our chief executive. Is the Electoral College a good fit for 21<sup>st</sup> century America or a relic of a distant past? This course will explore the creation of the Electoral College and its evolution over nearly two-and-a-half centuries of American political history.

As the course unfolds, participants are encouraged to keep the following two rather contrasting quotes in mind.

Alexander Hamilton, principal author of The Federalist Papers and Washington's Secretary of the Treasury: "If the manner of it [the Electoral College] be not perfect, it is at least excellent." (1788)

Jamie Raskin, Congressman, Maryland 8<sup>th</sup> District: "We spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year exporting American democracy to other countries and the one thing they never come back to us with is the idea that, oh, that Electoral College thing you have, that's so great. We think we'll adopt that too." (2022)

### Session Topics

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| Session 1 | 1787 – the Constitutional Convention. Article II of the Constitution. Hamilton, Federalist Papers #68.  |
| Session 2 | 1800 and 1824 – two contingent elections. The 12 <sup>th</sup> Amendment.                               |
| Session 3 | 1860 – Lincoln elected. The fracturing of the Democratic Party and (only slightly later) the Union.     |
| Session 4 | 1876 – the Disputed Election, Hayes v. Tilden. The Compromise of 1877. The Electoral Count Act of 1887. |
| Session 5 | The 20 <sup>th</sup> century. Elections of 1912, 1948, 1968, 1992.                                      |
| Session 6 | The election of 2000 – Bush v. Gore. The Independent State Legislature Theory.                          |