

## AMERICAN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

PL SC 540  
TR 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM  
236 Pond Laboratory

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Office Hours: TR 11:00-Noon

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

The University Bulletin says this class is a “[s]urvey of basic literature in major fields of U.S. government: public opinion, parties, voting, interest groups, presidency, congress, [and the] judiciary.” More broadly, this course introduces graduate students to the core concepts and controversies in the study of American politics. We will discuss the evolution of research on American political institutions and behavior through discussions of both current and classic readings. We will consider both how these readings contribute to our knowledge of politics in the United States and how researchers designed and executed their studies.

Students in this course are expected to complete the assigned readings, to contribute meaningfully to class discussions, and to complete a variety of formal and informal writing assignments.

### OBJECTIVES

This course has three central aims: (1) to help students find feasible research questions that they can investigate throughout their graduate careers, (2) to begin to prepare students for the field examination in American politics, and (3) to ready students for more advanced seminars in American political institutions and behavior.

### COURSE MATERIALS

We will read a variety of books and articles. The articles are available online; I have not placed any of the books on order at the bookstore. If you have trouble finding copies of any assigned reading, please let me know.

### COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The requirements for this course involve both (1) the completion of reading assignments and written work on your own outside of our class meetings and (2) your active and informed contributions to our course discussions when we meet. This course is a seminar. You are expected to come prepared to talk.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (20%).** For most weeks, each student will prepare two discussion questions. These must be submitted to me and circulated to the class **by noon on Monday or Wednesday**, depending on whether you are assigned questions for Tuesday or Thursday, respectively. We will discuss your questions during class, and you will be expected to facilitate discussion around your question. This does not mean that you need to have an answer to your question (indeed, you might not); rather, you should be prepared to articulate your motivation behind the question and to direct us to relevant sections of the assigned readings that could help us to answer your question.

EXAM (25%). Students will take a midterm and a final exam that mirrors in its design a portion of the comprehensive exam in American Politics. I will distribute two questions to you; you will have four answers to answer one of the two questions. Each question will ask you to synthesize the literature and our class discussions to answer a broad question about American politics.

Comprehensive exam answers can be deceptively hard. Here are some tips to tackle these in the future:

- Your goal, first and foremost, on any comprehensive exam answer is to make a convincing case that you know the literature in American politics and can synthesize it into something coherent. You do this in three ways: by citing the appropriate literature, by summarizing it correctly, and by telling us a story about how that literature fits together (e.g. how it has developed over time). By nature, a comprehensive exam asks you to synthesize the literature.
- Your second goal on most comprehensive exam questions is to craft and defend a clear argument. Weak comprehensive exam answers read like undergraduate literature reviews: each paragraph discusses a new source and there is little conversation among the sources until a final paragraph. Great comprehensive exam answers employ the literature to support and defend an argument, using it as evidence to bolster their thesis.
- The best way that you meet these two goals is to spend the first portion of your time with any answer making an outline. If you don't know what evidence you have, you can't figure out what claim to make, and if you don't start writing with a clear claim/thesis, you are going to have problems with the organization of the essay (see: undergraduate literature review). Clear organization is extremely important; if your reader cannot follow the argument you are making, you're in trouble. Subheadings can be really helpful.

GRANT PROPOSAL (35% Total). This course culminates with the production of an original research design, mirroring part of the requirements for a Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant. You may choose any topic in political science that interests you, though my hope is that this project will help you start to think about the sorts of research projects that will interest you as you progress through graduate school. A research design is a well thought-out plan that "sells" your research question as an essential one, explains why that original question is motivated by the extant research, clearly explains the testable, falsifiable hypotheses you hope to examine, and explains the data with which you plan to test those hypotheses, including both the data collection and analysis stages of the process. Basically, you should think about this as a highly detailed overview of a research project that likely lacks the empirical analysis that would enable one to actually test the proposed theory (though some preliminary data analysis, if available, may be useful as proof of concept). The maximum length of the grant proposal is 10 single-spaced pages (not counting references).

I will grade the preliminary checkpoints (#1 and #2) on completion. *You should also plan to meet with me sometime during the month of September to discuss your proposed topic.*

**CHECKPOINT #1: ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY.** The bibliography should cover 5 individual works that are not part of the assigned reading list for the course. You will provide an introduction (approximately 1000 words) defining the topic, why it is important, summarizing the general state of the literature, and briefly proposing a theory/hypothesis suggested by the literature around which you intend to focus your grant proposal. Then, summarize each of the individual works in paragraphs of about 250 words each. Your summaries should identify the research question, the author's theoretical argument, the evidence that supports (or rebuts) the argument, and the conclusion drawn by the author.

**CHECKPOINT #2: DATA REPORT.** Each student will write a report on data that they would use to test their theory. The report should be 3-5 pages long and discuss the availability of data, how key concepts in the theory would be measured, and the reliability and validity of those measurements (or how reliability and validity would be assessed).

**FINAL SUBMISSION AND PRESENTATION.** Using the annotated bibliography and data report, prepare a completed grant proposal (again, no more than 10 single-spaced pages in length, not counting references). On the last two course meetings each of you will present your research design for your colleagues. You will distribute a draft of your grant proposal before your presentation, and you are expected to provide feedback to your peers on their projects during a question-and-answer period after their presentation.

**PARTICIPATION (20%).** This is a graduate seminar. It is your collective job to carry the majority of our class discussion. The final portion of your grade is based on your ability and willingness to contribute to our class. Everyone's experience in this course is enhanced by regular attendance and active participation; conversely, everyone's experience suffers if individuals do not participate. Remember that a sincere question often adds as much (if not more) to our understanding of the course material as an explanation of the week's readings. So, don't be afraid to speak up!

Please remember that attending class and sitting silently is not, by definition, "participation." Also, please note that I do not penalize you directly for missing class (though multiple absences will adversely affect your grade through a lower participation score).

### **EXPECTATIONS/PROCEDURES**

**RESPECT.** In this course, we are all engaged in the endeavor of building a stronger understanding of American politics. Everyone comes to this course with a different background in the subject (particularly with respect to the technical aspects of the readings). It is important that we all treat each other with the utmost respect.

Criticism. This is a seminar and, as such, it is our job to be critics. As you read for class, you should examine the goals of an article, the persuasiveness of the evidence it presents in support of its theory, and the place it makes for itself in the literature. Remember that a harsh critique isn't the same thing as an intellectually rigorous one, and focus less on what you perceive to be flaws and more on what you could learn from the article. Oftentimes, it is more difficult to point out what is "good" than what is "bad". In other words, treat our authors the way you would like to be treated by students in your shoes in 20 years.

OFFICE HOURS. I have office hours, listed at the beginning of the syllabus. My door is usually open, and you shouldn't hesitate to stop by outside of my scheduled office hour times.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS. Assignments not submitted by the assigned due date and time are late. This is a graduate class, so I expect you to communicate with me about things that affect your ability to get an assignment in on time. All assignments must be completed to complete this course.

EXTENSIONS. Extensions will be granted in only the most severe circumstances. If you foresee the need for an extension, one needs to be requested and granted at least 24 hours before the due date. No one is entitled to an extension; they will be offered only at my discretion.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY. I take violations of the University's academic dishonesty policy—reprinted below—very seriously. Please review the policy and let me know if you have any questions.

GRADING SCALE. The course will follow a standard grading scale:

93-100	A	80-82	B-
90-92	A-	77-79	C+
87-89	B+	70-76	C
83-86	B	60-69	D

A NOTE ON GRADES. I do not *give* grades. You *earn* grades. It is essential that you are proactive regarding your performance in this course; *do not wait* until grades are posted and then ask how your grade could be improved. At that point, barring a mathematical error on my part, it cannot be. If, at any point, you are unsure of your current standing in the course, please come to my office hours.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY. The Department of Political Science, along with the College of the Liberal Arts and the University, takes violations of academic dishonesty seriously. Observing basic honesty in one's work, words, ideas, and actions is a principle to which all members of the community are required to subscribe.

All course work by students is to be done on an individual basis unless an instructor clearly states that an alternative is acceptable. Any reference materials used in the preparation of any assignment must be explicitly cited. Students uncertain about proper citation are responsible for checking with their instructor.

In an examination setting, unless the instructor gives explicit prior instructions to the contrary, whether the examination is in class or take home, violations of academic integrity shall consist but are not limited to any attempt to receive assistance from written or printed aids, or from any person or papers or electronic devices, or of any attempt to give assistance, whether the one so doing has completed his or her own work or not.

Lying to the instructor or purposely misleading any Penn State administrator shall also constitute a violation of academic integrity.

In cases of any violation of academic integrity it is the policy of the Department of Political Science to follow procedures established by the College of the Liberal Arts. More information on academic integrity and procedures followed for violation can be found at: <http://laus.la.psu.edu/current-students/academics/academic-integrity/college-policies>

NOTE TO STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES. Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, contact the Office for Disability Services (ODS) at 814-863-1807 (V/TTY). For further information regarding ODS, please visit the Office for Disability Services Web site at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods/>

Instructors should be notified as early in the semester as possible regarding the need for reasonable accommodations.

## **SCHEDULE**

Below, you'll find a list of all class meetings, the topic we'll discuss, and the reading assignment. You should complete the reading assignment before you come to class and bring any questions that you have with you to our class meetings. In the event that deviations from this schedule are necessary, they will be announced in class.

### **Introduction**

Tuesday, August 23: Introduction to The Course

No Assigned Readings

### **Public Opinion and Political Attitudes**

Thursday, August 25: Political Preference Formation

Converse, Philip. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in the Mass Public." in *Ideology and Discontent* ed. David Apher 206-261.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Ch. 1-2

Jerit, Jennifer and Jason Barabas. 2012. "Partisan Perceptual Bias and the Information Environment." *Journal of Politics* 74: 672-684.

Tuesday, August 30: The Media and Public Opinion

Lenz, Gabriel. 2009. "Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the Priming Hypothesis." *American Journal of Political Science*

Berinsky Adam and Donald Kinder. 2006. "Making Sense of Issues Through Media Frames." *Journal of Politics* 68: 640-656.

Mutz, Diana C. and Byron Reeves. 2005. "The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust." *American Political Science Review* 99: 1-15.

Thursday, September 1: No Class (APSA)

E-mail me to set up a meeting about your final project.

### **Voting and Elections**

Tuesday, September 6: Classics in the Study of Voting Behavior

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. [ch 1, 3 and 8]

Campbell et al. 1960. *The American Voter*. [ch 2-4, skim 6-7]

Thursday, September 8: How do Voters Decide?

Lupia, Arthur. 1994. "Shortcuts Versus Encyclopedias: Information and Voting Behavior in California Insurance Reform Elections." *American Political Science Review* 88 (1): 63-76.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, and Charles Stewart, III. 2001. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections" *American Journal of Political Science* 45 (1): 136-159.

Achen, Christopher and Larry Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists*. [Ch. 2, 4, and 5]

## **Political Participation**

### Tuesday, September 13: Why do Voters Participate?

- Rosenstone, Steven J. and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. New York: MacMillian. Chapters 2 and 5.
- Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 89(2): 279-94.
- Rogowski, Jon. 2013. "Electoral Choice, Ideological Conflict, and Political Participation." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Enos, Ryan. 2015. "What the Demolition of Public Housing Teaches Us about the Impact of Racial Threat on Political Behavior." *American Journal of Political Science*.

### Thursday, September 15: The Effects of Campaigning

- Gerber, Alan S., James G. Gimpel, Donald P. Green, and Daron R. Shaw. 2011. "How Large and Long-lasting Are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review*. 105: 135-150.
- Krupnikov, Yanna. 2012. "When does Negativity Demobilize? Tracing the Conditional Effect of Negative Campaigning on Voter Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 55 (4): 797-813.
- Jacobson, Gary. 2015. "How do Campaigns Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 31-47.

## **Interest Groups**

### Tuesday, September 20: Classics in the Study of Interest Groups

- Truman. 1971. *The Governmental Process* [Excerpt]
- Schattschneider. *The Semisovereign People* [Excerpt]
- Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. [Ch 1-2]
- David Lowery and Virginia Gray. 1995. "The Population Ecology of Gucci Gulch, or the Natural Regulation of Interest Group Numbers in the American States." *American Journal of Political Science*. 39: 1-29.

### Thursday, September 22: No Class (Nelson at Conference)

### Tuesday, September 27: The Effects of Organized Interests

- Hojnacki, Marie and David C. Kimball. 1998. "Organized Interests and the Decision of Whom to Lobby in Congress." *American Political Science Review*.
- Hall, Richard L. and Alan V. Deardorff. 2006. "Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy." *American Political Science Review* 100 (1): 69-84.
- Schnakenberg, Keith. 2016. "Informational Lobbying and Legislative Voting." *American Journal of Political Science*. Forthcoming.

## **Political Parties**

### Thursday, September 29: The Formation of Political Parties

#### ***Annotated Bibliography Due***

- Aldrich. 1995. *Why Parties?* [Ch. 1-2]
- Key, V.O. *Southern Politics in State and Nation* [Ch. 1, 14, 18-19]

Bawn, Kathleen et al. 2012. "A Theory of Political Parties." *Perspectives on Politics* 10 (3): 571-597.

American Political Science Association. 1950. "Towards a More Responsible Two-Party System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties." *American Political Science Review* 44: 15-36.

#### Tuesday, October 4: Party Organizations

Gibson, James L., Cornelius P. Cotter, John F. Bibby, and Robert J. Huckshorn. 1983. "Assessing Party Organizational Strength." *American Journal of Political Science* 27 193-222.

Desmaris, Bruce A., Raymond J. La Raja, and Michael S. Kowal. 2014. "The Fates of Challengers in U.S. House Elections: The Role of Extended Party Networks in Supporting Candidates and Shaping Electoral Outcomes." *American Journal of Political Science*

Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2008. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Ch. 1-3.

### **Congress**

#### Thursday, October 6: The Classics

Mayhew, David. 1974. *The Electoral Connection*. [Excerpt]

Fiorina 1978. *Keystone*. [Excerpt]

Fenno, Jr., Richard F. 1977. "U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration." *American Political Science Review* 71(3):883-917.

#### Tuesday, October 11: Committees

Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization* [Ch. 4]

Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins. 2003. *Legislative Leviathan* [Ch. 8]

Maltzman, Forrest. 1995. *Competing Principals* [Ch. 2 and 5]

Berry, Christopher and Anthony Fowler. 2015. "Cardinals or Clerics? Congressional Committees and the Distribution of Pork." *American Journal of Political Science*.

#### Thursday, October 13: Three Models of Legislative Parties

Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2005. *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Ch 2, 5, and 10]

Krehbiel, Keith. 1993. "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23:235-66.

Rohde, David W. 2013. "Reflections on the Practice of Theorizing: Conditional Party Government in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of Politics*, 75: 849-864.

Jackman, Molly. 2014. "Parties, Median Legislators, and Agenda Setting: How Legislative Institutions Matter."

### **Presidency**

#### Tuesday, October 18: Presidential Power

##### ***Data Report Due***

Neustadt, Richard. *Presidential Power*. [Excerpt]

Kernell, Samuel. *Going Public* [Excerpt]



Howell, William G. 2005. *Power Without Persuasion* [p. 8-23, Ch. 4]

#### Thursday, October 20: The President in the Political System

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, William G. Howell, and David E. Lewis. 2008. "Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power: A Re-Evaluation of the Two Presidencies Thesis." *Journal of Politics* 70(1):1-16.

Kriner, Douglas L. & Reeves, Andrew. 2015. Presidential Particularism and Divide-the-Dollar Politics. *American Political Science Review*, 109(1), p.155-171

Rogowski, Jon C. 2016. "Presidential Influence in an Era of Congressional Dominance." *American Political Science Review*.

### **Bureaucracy**

#### Tuesday, October 25: Bureaucratic Power

Lindblom, Charles. 1959. "The Science of Muddling Through." *Public Administration Review* 19:79-88.

Epstein, David, and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1996. "Divided Government and the Design of Administrative Procedures: A Formal Model and Empirical Test." *Journal of Politics* 58(May):373-397.

Howell, William and David E. Lewis. 2002. "Agencies by Presidential Design." *Journal of Politics* 64: 1095-1114.

#### Thursday, October 27: The Bureaucracy in the Political System

McCubbins, Mathew, and Thomas Schwarz. 1984. "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28:165-79.

McCubbins, Mathew, Roger Noll, and Barry Weingast. 1987. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 3:243-77.

Clinton, Lewis, and Selin. 2014. "Influencing the Bureaucracy: The Irony of Congressional Oversight." *American Journal of Political Science*

### **Judiciary**

#### Tuesday, November 1: Judicial Decisionmaking

Segal and Spaeth, *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited* [Ch. 3 and 8]

Rachael K. Hinkle. 2015. "Legal Constraint in the U.S. Courts of Appeals." *Journal of Politics* 77: 721-735.

Boyd, Christina L., Lee Epstein, and Andrew D. Martin. 2010 "Untangling the Causal Effects of Sex on Judging." *American Journal of Political Science*. 54(2): 389-411

#### Thursday, November 3: Courts in the Political System

Dahl, Robert. 1957. "Decision-Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as National Policy-Maker." *Journal of Public Law* 6(2): 279-95

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, Tom S. Clark, and Jason P. Kelly. 2014. "Judicial Selection and Death Penalty Decisions." *American Political Science Review* 108(1):23-39 (2014)

Rosenberg, Gerald. *The Hollow Hope*. [Ch. 1 and Excerpt]

## **Representation and Policymaking**

### Tuesday, November 8: Classic Works in the Study of Representation

- Miller, Warren E., and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 57(1):45-56.
- Weissberg, Robert 1978. Collective vs. Dyadic Representation in Congress. *American Political Science Review* 72 (2): 535-47.
- Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen, and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89:543-565.

### Thursday, November 10: Identity in American Politics

- Gay, Claudine. 2001. "The Effect of Black Congressional Representation on Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 95(3):589-602.
- Beth Reingold and Adrienne R. Smith. 2012. "Welfare Policymaking and Intersections of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in U.S. State Legislatures." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(1): 131-47.
- Tesler, Michael. 2013. "The Return of Old Fashioned Racism to White Americans' Partisan Preferences in the Early Obama Era" *Journal of Politics*, 75(1): 110-123.
- Cowell-Meyers, Kimberley and Laura Langbein. 2009. "Linking Women's Descriptive and Substantive Representation in the United States." *Politics & Gender* 5 (4): 491—518.

### Tuesday, November 15: New Frontiers in Political Representation

- Jeffrey R. Lax and Justin H. Phillips. 2012. "The Democratic Deficit in the States." *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (1): 148-166.
- Grimmer, Justin *Representational Style*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. [Ch. 5-6]
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. "From Mass Preferences to Policy." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 147-165.
- Arceneaux, Kevin, Martin Johnson, René Lindstädt, and Ryan J. Vander Wielen. 2016. "The Influence of News Media on Political Elites: Investigating Strategic Responsiveness in Congress." *American Journal of Political Science* 60: 5-29.

## **Lawmaking in American Politics**

### Thursday, November 17: Policymaking

- Walker, Jack L., Jr. 1966. The Diffusion of Innovations among the American States. *American Political Science Review* 63 (3): 880-99.
- Bachrach, Peter and Morton Baratz. 1962. "The Two Faces of Power." *American Political Science Review*. 56: 947-52.
- Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [Excerpts]
- Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2nd. ed. New York: HarperCollins. [Excerpts]

Tuesday, November 29: The Separation of Powers

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics* [Ch. 1-2]

Cameron, Charles. 2000. *Veto Bargaining* [Ch. 1-2]

Clark, Tom S. 2009. "The Separation of Powers, Court-curbing and Judicial Legitimacy." *American Journal of Political Science* 53 (4): 971-989.

Thursday, December 1: Divided Government

Binder, Sarah A. 1999. The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-96. *American Political Science Review* 93 (3):519-534.

Howell, W., S. Adler, C. Cameron, and C. Riemann. 2000. "Divided Government and the Legislative Productivity of Congress, 1945-1994." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 25(2): 285-312.

Binder, Sarah. 2015. "The Dysfunctional Congress." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18: 85-101.

Tuesday, December 6: Catch Up

Thursday, December 8: Grant Proposal Presentations