

Political Science 709

SEMINAR ON AMERICAN POLITICS

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Autumn, 1998
Office Hours: 2-3 M,W,F

Scope of the Course. This course is designed to introduce you to the field of American politics by intensively examining selected readings, almost exclusively articles drawn from leading research journals, in the various areas that comprise the field. No single course can hope to represent, or even sample in representative fashion, this rich and expansive field of study. The approach taken in this course is to identify eighteen key research questions that are subjects of empirical study and (often) debate and to expose you to two or three key readings that deal with each question. None of the readings is beyond the reach of first-quarter graduate students, although you may not be familiar with all the statistical or modeling techniques employed and the theory and conceptualization may be complex. Many of the selections are models of political science research, and you should come to a good understanding of why. My hope is that thinking about these readings will hone your analytic and conceptual skills and whet your appetite for more study of each area. The readings also reflect the wide variety of theoretical approaches, research designs, and research methodologies that characterizes empirical research in American politics, so that you can see for yourself how diverse are the ways of answering what I hope you will find are interesting questions in the field.

Requirements and Grading Policies. Beyond introducing the field of American politics, the course invites you to engage in intensive writing and seminar discussion around these topics and a final topic of your choosing. Its basic requirements are three:

(1) Three essays of no more than 5 pages each that review all of the readings for a particular class session (15% each for a total of 45% of the course grade). Each essay should include a clear and succinct summary of the important points (e.g., research question[s], theory and conceptualization, study design, analysis, and results) in each reading and a discussion of how -- and how well -- the readings address the research question posed in the syllabus (or another research question if you find it more relevant). For the first essay, all students will write on the readings for Monday, September 28. This essay will be graded, but if you are dissatisfied with the grade you can do a fourth essay on the class session of your choice and substitute its grade for the grade on the first essay. Beyond this initial essay, you must complete one essay from each half of the course -- through October 26 and then afterwards. The essays are due at the beginning of the class session when these readings are to be discussed; their grade will be reduced by 1/3 of a letter grade for each 24 hours they are late, beginning with the end of that class session.

(2) Active and informed participation in seminar discussions (20% of the course grade). Each student should have sufficient familiarity with the readings for any session to be able to engage in discussion that day, whether or not an essay has been prepared on the topic. This

requires careful study of each selection and considerable thought about how the readings for that day interrelate. It is the quality of participation, more than its quantity, which is important. Finally, regular class attendance is a minimal expectation for a graduate seminar.

(3) A 10-15 page term paper that traces the impact of one of the field's classic articles. A list of the classics from which to choose is provided at the end of the syllabus; with my permission, you may choose another classic article as your focus. Your task is to trace the principal work derived from this classic, addressing what its theoretical, methodological, and/or empirical legacy has been and why it has attained standing of a classic. To identify the "offspring" of the classic article you have selected, you can trace them "backwards" from the footnotes of a recent article using it or use the Social Science Citation Index in the Reference Room of the main library and, since 1990, on line at <http://cite.ohiolink.edu/isi/CIW.cgi>. You should not try to include each and every derivative work in your analysis. Instead, you should focus on only the ones that make substantial use of the classic and only the most important of them, probably no more than a dozen in all.

Academic Dishonesty. All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own, done exclusively for this course. Cheating or plagiarism (using someone else's words or ideas without proper citation) will not be tolerated. All cases of academic misconduct in the form of cheating or plagiarism will be reported to the University Committee on Academic Misconduct and handled according to University policy.

Disabilities. Students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to me, and seeking available assistance, at the first meeting of the course. Course materials may be made available in alternative formats upon request. If you need such materials, please inform me immediately or contact Wayne DeYoung, Department of Political Science, 2140 Derby Hall (292-2880).

Syllabus. The following pages contain the course syllabus. All readings contained in it are required. Copies of them are available in a packet, which may be purchased at Cop-ez in the basement of Bricker Hall, the building immediately west of Derby Hall.

SEP 23 *Introduction: Review of Course and the American Field*

SEP 28 *Why Is Voter Turnout in American Elections So Low?*

Despite an easing of the requirements for registration and voting, contemporary American turnout is well below the levels routinely achieved in other democracies and in nineteenth century America. Scholars have provided different explanations for turnout levels, which can be drawn upon to answer this perplexing question.

Walter Dean Burnham. 1965. "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe." *American Political Science Review* 59: 7-28.

G. Bingham Powell, Jr. 1986. "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 80: 17-43.

Richard Timpone. 1998. "Structure, Behavior, and Voter Turnout in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 92: 145-58.

SEP 30 *What Motivates Political Activity?*

Even though political participation in the United States is more widespread than in most other democracies, only a minority of Americans engage in more demanding forms of political activity than voting. Contrasting explanations for why American citizens participate reflect the different theoretical approaches scholars have taken to accounting for political behavior in general, and specifically political activity.

Lawrence Bobo and Franklin D. Gilliam, Jr. 1990. "Race, Sociopolitical Participation, and Black Empowerment." *American Political Science Review* 84: 377-94.

Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 89: 271-94.

Laura Stoker and M. Kent Jennings. 1995. "Life-Cycle Transitions and Political Participation: The Case of Marriage." *American Political Science Review* 89: 421-33.

OCT 5 *Is Social Capital Eroding in America and, If So, What Can Be Done About It?*

Political analysts, as well as leaders, have become concerned about the declining quality of civic life in America. Political conflict and intolerance seem to be on the increase; political trust and political efficacy have declined. Ordinary Americans seem more divided from one another and less engaged in the political decisions that affect their lives. Scholars have studied what seems to be happening to these elements of "social capital" and have pondered what can be done about the changes they have seen.

Robert Putnam. 1995. "Tuning In, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28: 664-83.

John Brehm and Wendy Rahn. 1997. "Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 999-1023.

Mark Schneider, Paul Teske, Melissa Marschall, Michael Mintrom, and Christine Roch. 1997. "Institutional Arrangements and the Creation of Social Capital: The Effects of

Public School Choice.” *American Political Science Review* 91: 82-93.

OCT 7 *How Ideological Are Americans?*

Voting and public opinion often are analyzed in ideological terms -- e.g., left, right, liberal, conservative -- as if these terms reflect the thinking of ordinary citizens as readily as they do the thinking and rhetoric of political leaders. Converse’s classic 1964 work casts doubt on the ability of most Americans to engage in the level of constrained or consistent political thought that is required for them to be at all ideological. Subsequent recent studies, though, question Converse’s conceptualization and conclusions.

Philip E. Converse. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter. New York: Free Press, pp. 206-61.

Sullivan, John L., James E. Piereson, and George E. Marcus. 1978. "Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings." *American Journal of Political Science* 22: 233-49.

Stanley Feldman and John Zaller. 1992. "The Political Culture of Ambivalence: Ideological Responses to the Welfare State." *American Journal of Political Science* 36: 268-307.

OCT 12 *Why Does Race Remain a Potent Political Issue?*

The question of race remains at the center of American politics, as it has throughout the history of the nation. Among its contemporary manifestations, affirmative action, welfare policy, and redistricting to enhance the prospects of electing African-American officials have received the most attention.

Martin Gilens. 1996. " 'Race Coding' and White Opposition to Welfare." *American Political Science Review* 90: 593-604.

James H. Kuklinski, Paul M. Sniderman, Kathleen Knight, Thomas Piazza, Philip E. Tetlock, Gordon R. Lawrence, and Barbara Mellers. 1997. "Racial Prejudice and Attitudes Toward Affirmative Action." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 402-19.

Charles Cameron, David Epstein, and Sharyn O’Halloran. 1996. "Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?" *American Political Science Review* 90: 794-812.

OCT 14 *Performance vs. Promise: On What Basis Do Citizens Evaluate Leaders?*

Surely since the beginnings of democratic politics, and increasingly with the emphasis on rational choice approaches, scholars have debated whether voters judge political leaders and political candidates on the basis of what they have done (performance) or what they will do (promises). The lines of the debate are staked out well in disagreements over the determinants of public evaluations of leaders and candidates on economic issues and the health of the economy.

Michael B. MacKuen, Robert S. Erikson, and James A. Stimson. 1992. "Peasants or Bankers? The American Electorate and the U.S. Economy." *American Political Science Review* 86:

597-611.

Helmut Norpoth. 1996. "Presidents and the Prospective Voter." *Journal of Politics* 58: 776-792.

Michael B. MacKuen, Robert S. Erikson, and James A. Stimson. 1996. "Comment." *Journal of Politics* 58: 793-801.

Helmut Norpoth. 1996. "Rejoinder." *Journal of Politics* 58: 802-05.

OCT 19 *How Has Television Influenced American Politics?*

Although the media are widely credited as powerful influences on Americans' political views, the absence of clear evidence of that influence for many years produced a "minimal effects" theory of the media. Recent research provides evidence of more substantial effects, but the nature of these effects varies considerably as does whether they represent influence of the media themselves or of the media simply as the conduit for messages from other sources.

Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 1982. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *American Political Science Review* 76: 848-58.

Thomas E. Nelson, Rosalee Clawson, and Zoe Oxley. 1997. "Media Framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and Its Effect on Tolerance." *American Political Science Review* 91: 567-84.

Stephen Ansolabehere, Shanto Iyengar, Adam Simon, and Nicholas Valentino. 1994. "Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?" *American Political Science Review* 88: 829-38.

OCT 21 *Are Political Parties Dying or "Born Again"?*

Political parties, long presumed to be important and perhaps even essential actors for American democratic politics, have changed considerably in role and vitality in recent decades. After a long period of decline in their classic form, the political machine, local party organizations appear to have rebounded in strength. The differences between these "new" local parties and the traditional machines, though, raise the question of what party organizations are and how what they are affects the role they play.

James L. Gibson, John P. Frendreis, and Laura L. Vertz. 1989. "Party Dynamics in the 1980s: Change in Party Organizational Strength, 1980-1984." *American Journal of Political Science* 33: 67-90.

Joseph Schlesinger. 1985. "The New American Political Parties." *American Political Science Review* 79: 1152-69.

Paul Allen Beck, Russell J. Dalton, Audrey A. Haynes, and Robert Huckfeldt. 1997. "Presidential Campaigning at the Grass Roots." *Journal of Politics* 59: 1264-75.

OCT 26 *Why Do People Organize for Political Pressure?*

In his classic *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), Mancur Olson observes that individual incentives to join with one another in pursuit of collective goods that can not be restricted are generally weak because of the "free rider" problem. Yet interest groups have proliferated in modern times, much as Madison feared they might in *Federalist 10*. This situation has led scholars back to the question of why people seem to join groups in spite of "rational" reasons not to do so.

- Jack Walker. 1983. "The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America," *American Political Science Review* 77: 90-406.
- John Mark Hansen. 1985. "The Political Economy of Group Membership," *American Political Science Review* 79: 79-96.
- Lawrence S. Rothenberg. 1988. "Organizational Maintenance and the Retention Decision in Groups." *American Political Science Review* 82: 1129-52.

OCT 28 PACs and Interest Groups: Who Do They Influence and How?

That organized interests will attempt to turn public policy to their advantage hardly surprising, as this is very much a part of democratic politics. Just how they do this, however, is more difficult to discern. Scholars have answered this question in different ways, narrowing the search for answers while leaving considerable mysteries yet to be solved.

- Richard Hall and Frank Wayman. 1990. "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees." *American Political Science Review* 84: 797-820.
- David Austen-Smith and John Wright. 1994. "Counteractive Lobbying." *American Journal of Political Science* 38: 25-44.
- Frank Baumgartner and Beth Leech. 1996. "The Multiple Ambiguities of 'Counteractive Lobbying'." *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 521-42.

NOV 2 Does Gender Make a Difference?

Women have become more involved in politics in recent years, challenging the traditional male dominance of the political world. As their involvement increases, in some areas attaining the levels of male involvement, attention has been drawn to how much it matters for such political behavior as voting in elections and service in legislatures and on the courts.

- Carole Kennedy Chaney, R. Michael Alvarez, and Jonathan Nagler. 1998. "Explaining the Gender Gap in U.S. Presidential Elections, 1980-1992." *Political Research Quarterly* 51: 311-39.
- Donald R. Songer, Sue Davis, and Susan Haire. 1994. "A Reappraisal of Diversification in the Federal Courts: Gender Effects in the Court of Appeals." *Journal of Politics* 56: 425-39.
- Sue Thomas. 1991. "The Impact of Women on State Legislative Policies." *Journal of Politics* 53: 958-76.

NOV 4 Why Are Congressional Committees So Powerful?

The standing committees of the Congress are almost universally credited with being powerful actors in the policy-making process. Their decisions are given deference by non-committee members and rarely challenged on the floor. But why? What is the source of this deference? Some locate it in the rules of the chamber, which allows them to dominate key points in the legislative process so that opposition is futile. Others contend that their power resides in their representativeness; non-members can rely upon them to be faithful agents on behalf of their

congressional principals.

Kenneth Shepsle and Barry Weingast. 1987. "The Institutional Foundations of Committee Power." *American Political Science Review* 81: 85-104.

Keith Krehbiel, Kenneth Shepsle, and Barry Weingast. 1987. "Why Are Congressional Committees Powerful?" *American Political Science Review* 81: 929-45.

Keith Krehbiel. 1990. "Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?" *American Political Science Review* 84: 149-63.

NOV 9 *How Important Is Party in the House of Representatives?*

The majority party organizes the House of Representatives, dominating its committees, controlling the agenda on the floor, and generally regulating the flow of legislation. Yet some question whether this is really party control, because the power of individual members, the committees and their leaders, and even cross-party coalitions is substantial. In the end, the role party plays is an empirical question, subject to systematic investigation.

Eric Schickler and Andrew Rich. 1997. "Controlling the Floor: Parties as Procedural Coalitions in the House." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 1340-75.

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1997. "Toward a Theory of Legislative Rules Changes: Assessing Schickler and Rich's Evidence." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 1376-86.

Eric Schickler and Andrew Rich. 1997. "Party Government in the House Reconsidered: A Response to Cox and McCubbins." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 1387-94.

NOV 11 *Presidential Principal and Bureaucratic Agents: Can the President Control the Executive Branch Bureaucracy?*

Democratic theorists and political reformers still debate the advantages of control of the bureaucracy through elected leaders, especially the president as head of the executive branch bureaucracy at the federal level. Beyond the normative debate is the empirical question of how, perhaps even whether, principals can control their bureaucratic agents. Viewed from the bureaucratic politics perspective, Hecló's classic A Government of Strangers (1977) suggested that presidential control over the bureaucracy was very difficult. More recent studies, often operating from a principal-agent perspective, show various ways in which it can be accomplished.

Marc Allen Eisner and Kenneth J. Meier. 1990. "Presidential Control versus Bureaucratic Power: Explaining the Reagan Revolution in Antitrust." *American Journal of Political Science* 34: 269-87.

B. Dan Wood and Richard W. Waterman. 1991. "The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review* 85: 801-28.

Joel D. Aberbach and Bert A. Rockman. 1995. "The Political Views of U.S. Senior Federal Executives, 1970-1992." *Journal of Politics* 57: 838-52.

NOV 16 *Law or Politics: What Is the Basis for Supreme Court Decisions?*

The Framers of the Constitution created a Supreme Court with lifetime appointments, perhaps hoping that it would be sufficiently insulated from ordinary political pressures to make decisions based on legal canons and legal precedents, not political considerations. Some legal scholars conclude that these hopes, by and large, have been realized, whereas others see the Court as an eminently political institution, subject to the same political forces experienced by the other institutions, albeit in probably more muted form.

Gregory A. Caldeira and John R. Wright. 1988. "Organized Interests and Agenda Setting in the U.S. Supreme Court." *American Political Science Review* 82: 1109-27.

Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth. 1996. "The Influence of *Stare Decisis* on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices." *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 971-1003.

Jack Knight and Lee Epstein. 1996. "The Norm of *Stare Decisis*." *American Journal of Political Science* 40: 1018-35.

NOV 18 *Does the Supreme Court Respond to Public Opinion?*

At least since Robert Dahl's classic "Decision-making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as National Policy-maker" (1957), scholars have looked for a relationship between public opinion, especially as expressed through election results, and the decisions of the Supreme Court. Establishing this relationship is difficult, and therefore has been a source of enduring controversy. But the fact remains that the Court is not so aloof from popular pressures as its institutional insulation might presume.

William Mishler and Reginald S. Sheehan. 1993. "The Supreme Court as a Countermajoritarian Institution: The Impact of Public Opinion on Supreme Court Decisions." *American Political Science Review* 87: 87-101.

Helmut Norpoth and Jeffrey A. Segal. 1994. "Comment." *American Political Science Review* 88: 711-16.

William Mishler and Reginald S. Sheehan. "Response." *American Political Science Review* 88: 716-24.

NOV 23 *When Does Strong Leadership Emerge?*

Leadership is one of the most elusive factors in politics, and scholars often disagree on whether it emerges in response to the context or is a less predictable product of individual capabilities. Looking at changes in leadership style and action across time for both the Congress and the presidency helps to understand the conditions for the emergence of strong leadership.

Joseph Cooper and David W. Brady. 1981. "Institutional Context and Leadership Style: The House from Cannon to Rayburn." *American Political Science Review* 75: 411-25.

Barbara Sinclair. 1992. "The Emergence of Strong Leadership in the 1980s House of Representatives." *Journal of Politics* 54: 657-84.

David E. Lewis and James Michael Strine. 1996. "What Time Is It? The Use of Power in Four Different Types of Presidential Time." *Journal of Politics* 58: 682-706.

NOV 25 NO CLASS, THANKSGIVING BREAK

NOV 30 *Are American Institutions Institutionalized?*

Since Samuel Huntington's classic "Political Development and Political Decay" (1965), scholars have looked for regularities in the operations and rules of political institutions that signify their movement beyond the personalism of their current occupants. They claim have found them in Congress and the presidency.

Nelson W. Polsby. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review* 62: 144-68.

Lyn Ragsdale and John J. Theis, III. 1997. "The Institutionalization of the American Presidency, 1924-1992." *American Journal of Political Science* 41: 1280-1318.

DEC 2 *American Politics in Retrospect: Prospects and Challenges?*

15 Classic Readings in American Politics

Graham Allison. 1969. "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis." *American Political Science Review* 63: 689-718.

Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. New York: Wiley, Chapters 6 and 7.

Peter B. Clark and James Q. Wilson. 1961. "Incentive Systems: A Theory of Organizations." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 6:

Philip E. Converse. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter. New York: Free Press, pp. 206-61.

Robert A. Dahl. 1958. "Decision-making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as a National Policy-Maker." *Journal of Public Law* 6: 279-95.

Otto A. Davis, M. A. H. Dempster, and Aaron Wildavsky. 1966. "A Theory of the Budgetary Process." *American Political Science Review* 60: 529-47.

Anthony Downs. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row, Chapters 3 or 4.

Richard F. Fenno. 1962. "The Appropriations Committee as a Political System." *American Political Science Review* 56: 310-24.

Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. 1982. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *American Political Science Review* 76: 848-58.

V. O. Key. 1955. "A Theory of Critical Elections." *Journal of Politics* 17: 3-18.

David R. Mayhew. 1974. "Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals." *Polity* 295-317.

Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 57: 45-56.

John E. Mueller. 1970. "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson." *American Political Science Review* 64:18-34.

Mancur Olson. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

Chapter 1.

Nelson W. Polsby. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review* 62: 144-68.