

**AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS
AND PROCESSES**

G53.1300

Fall 1999

Time: Tuesdays, 6:10-7:50 PM

Place: 25 West 4th Street, Room C3

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Hours: 4-6 PM Tuesday

This course aims to introduce you to the study of American politics and government at the graduate level; I assume you know the basics of the system from prior study. Primarily, we will review how recent research deals with certain perennial topics and problems in the American field. These are the questions around which research orbits, and the ones you will need to address in comprehensive examinations and doctoral work in American government. We will give special attention to rational choice interpretations, including their limitations.

The course covers public opinion, voting, interest groups, agenda-setting, parties, and the main institutions of the federal government. Some subjects--budgeting, implementation, public law--are omitted for lack of time. Some of these I cover in my other graduate course, G53.2371 Public Policy. Most assignments include advanced texts and more specialized articles. Where possible, approaches to an issue are listed chronologically, and they should be read in that order.

This is primarily a reading course. I am concerned mainly that students absorb the material and be able to discuss it. Grades will be based equally on a short paper, an in-class final examination, and participation in class. The assignment for the paper will be distributed later. For participation, credit will be divided between notes on readings, which students will submit weekly, and discussion in class. The notes requirement is to ensure that people are prepared. During class, I will minimize exposition. The emphasis will be on discussion of issues raised by the readings.

Much of the reading will come from the following texts. I recommend that you purchase them, but you may also read them on reserve at Bobst:

Norman R. Luttbeg and Michael M. Gant, American Electoral Behavior 1952-1992, 2nd ed., Itasca, Ill: F.E. Peacock, 1995.

Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, Agendas and Instability in American Politics, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.

John H. Aldrich, Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Parties in America, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Gary Jacobson, The Politics of Congressional Election, 4th ed., New York: Longman, 1997.

David R. Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

Michael Nelson, ed., The Presidency and the Political System, 5th ed., Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1998.

Morris Fiorina, Divided Government, 2nd ed., Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996.

Paul E. Peterson, The Price of Federalism, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1995.

These additional articles or chapters (listed in order of assignment) will be on reserve at Bobst, listed under my name as "personal copies" (xeroxes). When to read them is shown on the class schedule. Those indicating an intention to do so may also buy a copy of these readings from Unique Copy Center at 252 Greene St.:

- William H. Riker and Peter C. Ordeshook, "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting," American Political Science Review 62, no. 1 (March 1968): 25-42.
- John R. Zaller, The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1992), chs. 1-2.
- David B. Truman, The Governmental Process: Political Interests and Public Opinion, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1971), Introduction to the Second Edition, chs. 1-2.
- Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), Introduction, ch. 1.
- James Q. Wilson, Political Organizations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), Introduction to the Paperback Edition, chs. 1-3.
- Robert H. Salisbury, "The Paradox of Interest Groups in Washington--More Groups, Less Clout," in The New American Political System, Second Version, ed. Anthony King (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 1990), ch. 7.
- John W. Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy, 2nd ed. (New York: HarperCollins, 1995), chs. 1, 8.
- V.O. Key, Jr., Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, 5th ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1964), ch. 8.
- Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), chs.2, 7.
- Martin P. Wattenberg, The Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics: Presidential Elections in the 1980s (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), Introduction, chs. 1-2, 7.
- Morris P. Fiorina, Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), chs. 1, 3, 5, 10.
- R. Douglas Arnold, The Logic of Congressional Action (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), chs. 1, 6.
- David W. Rohde, Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), ch. 6.
- Erwin C. Hargrove and Michael Nelson, Presidents, Politics, and Policy (New York: Knopf, 1984), pp. 3-11, 66-91.
- Jon R. Bond and Richard Fleisher, The President in the Legislative Arena (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), preface, chs. 1, 9.
- Samuel Kernell, Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1993), preface, chs. 1-2.
- James L. Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory for the New Era of Coalition Government in the United States," Political Science Quarterly 103 (Winter 1988-9): 613-35.
- Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis (New York: Norton, 1971), Introduction, ch. 3.
- Terry M. Moe, "The New Economics of Organization," American Journal of Political Science, vol. 28, no. 4 (November 1984), pp. 739-77.
- James Q. Wilson, Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It (New York: Basic Books, 1989), preface, chs. 1-2, 9, 20.
- David R. Beam, Timothy J. Conlan, and David B. Walker, "Federalism: The Challenge of Conflicting Theories and Contemporary Practice," in Political Science: The State of the Discipline, ed. Ada W. Finifter (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 1983), ch. 9.
- Thomas J. Anton, American Federalism and Public Policy: How the System Works (New York: Random House, 1989). chs. 2, 5.
- Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), ch. 1.
- James Q. Wilson, "Interests and Deliberation in the American Republic, or, Why James Madison Would Never Have Received the James Madison Award," PS, vol.23, no.4 (Dec.1990), pp.558-62.

Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory: A Critique of Applications in Political Science (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), ch. 1.
 Elinor Ostrom, "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action," American Political Science Review 92, no. 1 (March 1998): 1-22.
 James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life," American Political Science Review 78, no. 3 (September 1984): 734-49.

The following is the schedule for class meetings, with the readings to be covered at each. Students are expected to do the readings beforehand. Readings should be done in the order indicated:

Sept. 7: Public Opinion: Approaches: The Michigan approach to public opinion and voting. Its major concepts. Changes in partisanship, efficacy, and trust.

Luttbeg and Gant, American Electoral Behavior, chs. 1-2, 4-6.

Sept. 14: Public Opinion: Turnout and Policy: The problem of voting turnout and the question of whether the public is capable of coherent opinions about issues:

Luttbeg and Gant, American Electoral Behavior, ch. 3
 Riker and Ordeshook, "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting."
 Zaller, The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion, chs. 1-2.
 Page and Shapiro, chs. 1-4, 8, 10.

Sept. 21: Interest Groups: Competing theories of interest groups. Their changing role in Washington:

Truman, The Governmental Process, Introduction to the Second Edition, chs. 1-2.
 Olson, The Logic of Collective Action, Introduction, ch. 1.
 Wilson, Political Organizations, Introduction to the Paperback Edition, chs. 1-3.
 Salisbury, "The Paradox of Interest Groups in Washington--More Groups, Less Clout."

Sept. 28: Agenda-Setting: How do issues become active in politics? How does innovation occur? Patterns of stability and change.

Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, chs. 1, 8.
 Baumgartner and Jones, Agendas and Instability in American Politics, chs. 1-8.

Oct. 5: Parties: Nature and Development: How do parties arise, and what is their function in the political system?

Key, Politics, Parties, and Pressure Groups, ch. 8.
 Aldrich, Why Parties?, chs. 1-6.

Oct. 12: Parties: Reform and Change: The reorientation of the parties to new issues. Their weakening as mass organizations, yet strengthening among activists and in Congress.

Carmines and Stimson, Issue Evolution, chs. 2, 7.
 Wattenberg, Rise of Candidate-Centered Politics, Introduction, chs. 1-2, 7.

Aldrich, Why Parties?, chs. 7-9.

Oct. 19: Congress: Elections: The politics of Congressional elections. The recent weakening of the incumbency effect and the emergence of a degree of party government:

Jacobson, The Politics of Congressional Elections, chs. 1, 3-6.

Morris Fiorina, Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment, chs. 1, 3, 5, 10.

Oct. 26: Congress: Policymaking: Pressures toward parochialism in Congress. The countervailing pressure of party. Rise of stronger parties in Congress.

Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection.

Arnold, The Logic of Congressional Action, chs. 1, 6.

Rohde, Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House, ch. 6.

Nov. 2: The Presidency: Politics: Presidential elections, and the mercurial nature of presidential power. Cyclical conceptions of the office. Is it possible to theorize about the presidency?

Nelson, The Presidency and the Political System, chs. 4-5, 7, 9-11.

Hargrove and Nelson, Presidents, Politics, and Policy, pp. 3-11, 66-91.

Nov. 9: The Presidency: Policymaking: Can presidents govern? What difference does their skill make? Governing through direct appeals to the public.

Nelson, The Presidency and the Political System, chs. 13-15, 17.

Bond and Fleisher, The President in the Legislative Arena, preface, chs. 1, 9.

Kernell, Going Public, preface, chs. 1-2.

Nov. 16: Divided Government: The problem of divided political control of government. Causes and consequences for governing.

Sundquist, "Needed: A Political Theory."

Fiorina, Divided Government, chs. 1-6, 10-11.

Nov. 23: The Bureaucracy: Competing conceptions of bureaucracy. Bounded rationality, principal-agent, and culture.

Allison, Essence of Decision, Introduction, ch. 3.

Moe, "The New Economics of Organization."

Wilson, Bureaucracy, Preface, chs. 1-2, 9, 20.

Papers due in class.

Nov. 30: Intergovernmental Relations: Functional and normative theories of intergovernmental relations. What determines the respective roles of national and local government?

Beam et al., "Federalism."

Anton, American Federalism and Public Policy, chs. 2, 5.

Peterson, The Price of Federalism, chs. 1-4, 6, 8.

Dec. 7: Models of Behavior: The rational choice approach to political analysis and its critics. “New institutionalism” as a compromise.

Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy, ch. 1.

Wilson, "Interests and Deliberation in the American Republic."

Green and Ian Shapiro, Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory, ch. 1.

Ostrom, "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action."

March and Olsen, "The New Institutionalism."

Dec. 15-22: Final examination period.