This course offers a broad survey of American political institutions and processes, focusing on the most important and influential works in the study of the politics and government of the United States since World War II. The course is organized into three parts:

- Part I focuses on a brief overview of American political science since the 1950s, including the pluralist school, normative and empirical critiques of the pluralist school, and the development of rational choice perspectives. This part of the course emphasizes the reading and discussion of chapters and journal articles that have been particularly influential in the evolution of post-WWII American political science.
- Part II focuses on political behavior, including public opinion, interest group participation, and the electoral process. This part of the course emphasizes key debates about the role of these processes in American democracy and about the possibilities and limitations of participation in the US political system.
- Part III examines the branches of the federal government, including Congress, the Presidency, the federal bureaucracy and the judiciary. This part of the course reviews the literature about how each branch is shaped by institutional structures and processes on the one hand and by individual ambition and agency on the other.

Course Requirements
The principal requirements for this course are three take-home exams of one essay each and one research plan. There will also be brief weekly written assignments and students will take turns presenting their analyses of course readings and helping to lead class discussion. The final grade will be calculated on the following basis: take-home exams – 60% (20% each); research plan – 20%; class assignments and participation – 20%. More information will be presented about the course requirements in class.

Course Readings
Since this course is a survey of the core works in American politics, there is a wide variety of readings, mostly book chapters or excerpts and journal articles. All readings should be completed before the class in which they are due and preferably in the order they are listed. Given this course’s focus on the key works in the field, more recent scholarship will not be stressed. You are also encouraged to spend some time browsing recent issues of political science journals to acquaint yourself with current thinking in the field, and to use these in your research paper. A list of reputationally strong political science journals is attached to this syllabus.
All of the books and articles on this syllabus have been placed on reserve at Bobst Library. (The call numbers of all books are also listed below.) A limited number of key books from the first few weeks have been ordered at the NYU Bookstore. For those wishing to build a personal library of key classics in American politics, this list would be a good place to start. Core classics in the field below that are recommended for purchase have been marked by an asterisk. Books may be purchased or special ordered through the NYU Bookstore or other bookstores or ordered online. The Strand Bookstore (828 Broadway, several blocks north of the Politics Department) has a particularly deep backlist of books in the social sciences.

In addition to the books below, an undergraduate textbook on American politics has also been placed on reserve for those who may wish to brush up on particular factual details. It is *The Logic of American Politics* (Samuel Kernell and Gary Jacobson, CQ Press, Call#JK274.K43).

**Course Schedule**

*This is the anticipated course schedule, but it maybe subject to minor revisions as the semester progresses. A limited number of additional readings may also be assigned.*

January 20 Meeting: Introduction, Overview, and Organizational Meeting

**Part I: A Brief Overview of Post-WWII American Political Science**

January 27 Meeting – The Constitutional Order and the Legal-Formalist School

Review the text of the US Constitution, including the 27 Amendments

James Madison, *Federalist* 10, 51
(can be accessed at: http://memory.loc.gov/const/fed/fedpapers.html)


David Truman, *The Governmental Process* (Greenwood Press, Call # JK1118.T7), Preface, Ch. 2, 3, 16

February 3 Meeting: Behavioralism, The Pluralist School, and its Critics


Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?: Democracy and Power in an American City* (Yale University Press, Call# JS1195.2.D2) Ch. 1, 7, 8, 12, 19, 24, 27, 28

Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, “Two Faces of Power” (article on reserve)

**February 10 Meeting: Rational Choice Perspectives**

* Exam #1 distributed in class

*Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (HarperCollins, Call#JF1351.D65), Ch. 1,2,3,8

*Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Harvard University Press, Call#HM131.055 1971), Ch 1, 2

Donald P. Green and Ian Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory* (Yale University Press), Ch. 1,2,3,8

Rogers Smith, “Should We Make Political Science More of a Science or More about Politics?” from *PS: Political Science and Politics* (article on reserve)

**Part II: Political Behavior**

**February 17 Meeting: Political Participation; Interest Groups**

* Exam #1 due in class


Terry Moe, *The Organization of Interests* (University of Chicago Press, Call#JF529.M59 1988), Introduction, Ch. 1, 2, 3

Robert Salisbury, “An Exchange Theory of Interest Groups” (article on reserve)

**February 24 Meeting: Public Opinion**


Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public* (University of Chicago, Call# JK2261.S9 1983), Ch. 1,2,7,8,10

**March 3 Meeting: Political Parties, Realignment, and Divided Government**
*Exam #2 distributed in class*


James Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System* (Brookings Institution, Call#JK2261.S9 1983), Ch. 1, 2, 3


**March 10 Meeting: Voting and Elections**


**March 17 – No Meeting: Spring Break**
Part III: Institutions of Government

March 24 Meeting: The Study of Institutions
Exam #2 due in class

Elinor Ostrom, Governing the Commons (Cambridge U Press, 1990) Ch. 1, 3, 6


Kenneth Arrow, “The Economics of Agency” (article on reserve)

John W. Pratt and Richard J. Zeckhauser, “Principals and Agents: An Overview” (article on reserve)

March 31 Meeting: Congress, Part I

*David Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection (Yale University Press, Call# JK1067.M3) (Part I)


Richard Fenno, Home Style: House Members in Their Districts (HarperCollins 1978 ), Ch. 1-2

April 7 Meeting: Congress, Part II

Matthew D. McCubbins, Congress: Structure and Policy (Cambridge University Press, Call# JK1061), Ch. 2, 3, 4


David Mayhew, Divided We Govern, (Yale University Press, JK2261.M36 1991), Ch. 1, 5, 6

April 14 Meeting: The Presidency
Exam #3 distributed in class

*Richard Neustadt, Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents (Free Press, Call# JK516.N4 1990), Ch. 1-5

Stephen Skowronek, The Politics Presidents Make (Harvard U Press, Call# JK511.S55), Ch 1-3
Aaron Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies” (article on reserve)

Terry Moe, “Presidents, Institutions, and Theory” (article on reserve)

**April 21 Meeting: The Bureaucracy**


Hugh Heclo, “Issue Networks and the Executive Establishment” (article on reserve)

Matthew D. McCubbins, *Congress: Structure and Policy* (Cambridge University Press, Call# JK1061), Ch. 16

**April 28 Meeting: The Judiciary**

*Exam #3 due in class*

Alexander Hamilton, Federalist 78
(can be accessed at: http://memory.loc.gov/const/fed/fedpapers.html)

David O’ Brien, *Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Life* (WW Norton, Call #KF8742.O27 1993), Ch. 1, 6