

Core Seminar: The Domestic Politics of the United States I
Politics G53.1300.001
Spring 2006

Professors Sanford Gordon and Howard Rosenthal

I. Introduction

This course provides graduate students with a broad overview of important topics in the study of the domestic politics of the United States. We will examine classic and contemporary research on political participation, mass opinion, elections, legislative politics, inter-branch relations, bureaucratic politics, judicial politics, federalism, inequality, and the role of money in politics. The course has two goals: First, to introduce students to important controversies in the study of American domestic politics; and second, to encourage students to think rigorously about the process of conducting political research.

Even if your primary focus is not American politics, there are three reasons why you should seriously consider taking this course. First, the United States is a political system about which we know a great deal. For better or worse, both U.S. citizens and foreign students are likely to have a better understanding of this particular political system than that of any country picked at random off the map. Second, there is a wealth of data on American political phenomena. This facilitates testing a variety of different theories about politics (especially if you do not confine yourself to national politics). Finally, political science as a discipline has progressed in large part due to advances in the study of American politics that were later applied elsewhere. Understanding how the field has developed is an important part of becoming a well-rounded student of politics.

II. Contact and meeting Information

Professors

Sanford Gordon

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Class Meetings

Thursday, 2-4pm, 726 Broadway rm. 747

III. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading

Participation: _____ 20%

Participating in seminar is an essential component of satisfactory completion of the course.

Presentations: _____ 10%

In addition to normal participatory duties, each student will spend several of our meetings providing a public good as “defender” of a particular text or perspective, which will include a 10-15 minute presentation at the beginning of the class.

Thought papers: _____ 20%

Each student will write a one page, single-spaced paper each week, due by close of business (5pm) on the day before class. The paper may critically examine a particular feature of a single reading, or draw comparisons among multiple readings for that week. At the end of the semester, we will drop the lowest short paper score. (This has the practical effect of permitting you to miss writing one paper.)

Research paper: _____ 50%

A final research paper will count for 50% of the grade. Details will be discussed in class. You should be thinking about your paper and discussing the topic with us by early to mid-October. Note that if your research interest lies primarily in topics covered toward the end of the class, you should be prepared to read ahead.

IV. Weekly Schedule

Part A. Political Behavior in the United States

Week 1. September 7, 2006

Introduction and Orientation

Week 2. September 14, 2006

Political Participation: Individual Determinants and Behavior

- Feddersen, Tim. 2004. “Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18: 99-112
- Schlozman, Kay Lehman. 2002. “Citizen Participation in America: What do we Know? Why do we Care?” In Ira Katznelson and Helen V. Milner, eds., *Political Science: State of the Discipline (Centennial Edition)*, 433-461
- Leighley, Jan, and Jonathan Nagler. 1992. “Individual and Systemic Influences on Turnout: Who Votes? 1984.” *Journal of Politics* 54: 718-740
- Lassen, David Dreyer. 2005. “The Effect of Information on Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Natural Experiment.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 103-118

Week 3. September 21, 2006

Political Parties: Historical/Functional Perspectives

- John Aldrich, *Why Parties*, chs. 1-5
- V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, chs. 1-3, 5, 8, 12, 14

Week 4. September 28, 2006

Introduction to the Spatial Model, with Applications to the Theory of Partisan Alignment

- Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal, *Ideology and Congress*, chs. 1-5. (2nd edition of *Congress: A Political Economic History of Roll Call Voting*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.) Copies of page proofs will be distributed to the class.

Week 5. October 5, 2006

Elections I: Parties and Position Taking

- Alesina, Alberto and Howard Rosenthal. 1995. *Partisan Politics, Divided Government, and the Economy*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995, ch. 2
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James M. Snyder, Jr., and Charles Stewart III. 2001. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 45: 136-159
- Gerber, Elisabeth R., and Jeffrey B. Lewis. 2004. "Beyond the Median: Voter Preferences, District Heterogeneity, and Political Representation." *Journal of Political Economy* 112: 1364-1383

Week 6. October 12, 2006

Elections II: Representation and Agency

- Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. Mackuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*, chs. 7-8
- Gordon, Sanford, and Gregory Huber. 2006. "The Effect of Competitiveness on Incumbent Behavior." Typescript
- Brady, David W., Brandice Canes-Wrone and John F. Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *American Political Science Review* 96: 127-140
- Bartels, Larry. 1991. "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Buildup." *American Political Science Review* 85: 457-474.

Week 7. October 19, 2006

Institutional Development of Congress

- Schickler, Eric. 2001. *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, selections
- Binder, Sarah A. 1997. *Minority Rights, Majority Rule: Partisanship and the Development of Congress*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, selections

Week 8. October 26, 2006

The Internal Organization of Congress: Rational Choice Approaches

- Keith Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization*, selections
- Gary Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives*, selections

Week 9. November 2, 2006

Agenda Control

- Romer, Thomas, and Howard Rosenthal. 1982. "An Exploration in the Politics and Economics of Local Public Services." In D. Bos et al., eds., *Public Production, Zeitschrift für*

Nationalökonomie/Journal of Economics, Supplementum 2: 105-126

- Krehbiel, Keith. 1996. "Institutional and Partisan Sources of Gridlock." *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 8: 7-40.
- Gerber, Elisabeth R., and Justin H. Phillips. 2003. "Development of Ballot Measures, Interest Group Endorsements, and the Political Geography of Growth Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 47: 625-639
- Gerber, Elisabeth R., and Justin H. Phillips. 2004. "Direct Democracy and Land Use Policy: Exchanging Public Goods for Developmental Rights." *Urban Studies* 41: 463-479

Week 10. November 9, 2006

Bureaucratic Politics

- Carpenter, Daniel P. 2000. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, selections
- Moe, Terry. 1989. "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure." In John Chubb and Paul Peterson, eds., *Can the Government Govern?*
- McNollGast. 1987. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 3, 243-277.

Week 11. November 16, 2006

Courts

- Segal, Jeffrey A., and Harold J. Spaeth. 2002. *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited*, chs.2,3,8
- Segal, Jeffrey A., 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
- Bergara, Mario, Barak Richman, and Pablo T. Spiller. 2003. "Modeling Supreme Court Strategic Decision Making: The Congressional Constraint." *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 28: 247-280.
- Harvey, Anna, and Barry Friedman. 2004. "The Limits of Judicial Independence: The Supreme Court's Constitutional Rulings, 1987-2000. NYU Typescript

Week 12. November 23, 2006

Thanksgiving – No Class

Week 13. November 30, 2006

TBA: Either Federalism and State Politics or Theories of Presidential Leadership

Week 14. December 7, 2006

Money in Politics: Competing Causal Mechanisms

- McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, ch. 5
- Kroszner, Randall S., and Thomas Stratmann. 1998. "Interest Group Competition and the Organization of Congress: Theory and Evidence from Financial Services Political Action Committees." *American Economic Review* 88: 1163-1187.
- Hall, Richard L., and Frank W. Wayman. 1990. "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees." *American Political Science Review* 84: 797-820.

- Ansolabehere, Stephen, John M. de Figueiredo, and James M. Snyder Jr. 2003. "Why is There So Little Money in U.S. Politics?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17: 105-130.
- Gordon, Sanford C., Catherine Hafer, and Dimitri Landa. "Consumption or Investment? On the Political Expenditure of Corporate Executives." NYU typescript

Week 15. December 14, 2006

Inequality

- McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The Dance of Ideology and Unequal Riches*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, chs. 1-4, 6