Overview: To what extent do those who run American government follow the will of the people when they make policy? We will carefully examine this question through the lenses of positive political theory and the empirical study of American politics. Our focus will be both substantive (measuring and assessing representation in the U.S.) and methodological (the questions that remain, and how scholars should go about answering them). Of course, in the background will lurk important normative questions about representation as well.

Among the topics we’ll cover in this seminar are:

- What is representation, and what aspects of this notion are particularly amenable to study by political scientists?
- What sorts of expectations does positive theory provide us about the relationship between elected officials and their constituents?
- How do we empirically measure this relationship given the data at hand, and what do we know about the representative relationship?
- What role can elections play in strengthening representation?
- How can factors such as information asymmetries, campaign contributions, institutional rules, agenda setting, and interest groups change the representative relationship?
- Under what conditions (if any) are the preferences of elected officials able to become the “independent variable” in the representative relationship—that is, when can leaders persuade their constituents to change their minds about policy?

Prerequisites: You should know some game theory and feel comfortable considering questions about politics in this light. Talk to me if you have any hesitations in this regard.

Requirements: Attendance and active participation in seminar. Periodic presentations and reaction papers on seminar readings. A final research paper that advances your own scholarship on a relevant topic.

Readings: The syllabus is still in development, but we will read selections from the following list of representative texts and articles.
Clarifying the Concept


Theoretical Expectations


Measuring Representation


**Do Elections Matter?**


**Who Leads Whom?**


