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:


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.:


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.


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. 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
Page and Shapiro, chs. 1-4, 8, 10.

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


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


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


**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.


**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:


**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.
- 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.

- 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.

   Wilson, "Interests and Deliberation in the American Republic.”
   Green and Ian Shapiro, Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory, ch. 1.
   March and Olsen, “The New Institutionalism.”