Field Seminar in American Politics
Politics G53.1300.001
Spring 2005
Professor Sanford Clark Gordon

I. Introduction
This course provides graduate students with a broad overview of contemporary analytic approaches to the study of American politics. Although the course has no formal prerequisites, we will survey a broad array of different methodological approaches, including formal modeling, quantitative analysis, experiments, and historical analysis. Sophistication and discernment in one's approach to the topics in this course will prove invaluable to succeed in the class.

The course is divided into two parts:

Part A. Political Behavior in the United States
Part B. American Political Institutions
Part C. Current Controversies

Students are encouraged not only to evaluate each work on its own terms, but also to assess the appropriateness of the methodology employed, and to consider what research agendas, if any, stem from the work under discussion.

II. Contact and meeting Information
Professor
Sanford Clark Gordon
726 Broadway, rm. 718
Office Hours: Wednesday 2-4pm, or by appointment
Phone: (212) 998-3708
E-mail: sanford.gordon@nyu.edu
Web: http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/faculty/gordon/gordon_home.html

Class Meetings
Monday, 4-6pm, 726 Broadway rm. 747

III. Required Readings
The following books are available for purchase at the University bookstore:
- Tali Mendelberg, The Race Card
- Aldrich, John. Why Parties?
- David Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection
- Keith Krehbiel, Pivotal Politics
- V.O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation
Note also that there will be numerous articles and chapter selections from books. Methods for acquiring these will be discussed in class.

**IV. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading**

**Participation:** 25%
Participating in seminar is an essential component of satisfactory completion of the course. In addition to normal participatory duties, each student will spend one or two of our meetings providing a public good as “defender” of a particular text or perspective. This goes a long way toward diminishing “Graduate Student’s Disease.” (A consequence of initial professional socialization, GSD makes one capable only of nitpicking otherwise valuable contributions to political science. Beware its allure.) You may not be defender of a text on which you are writing a short paper (see next).

**Three Short Papers:** 45% (15% each)
You will write three 4-5 page papers, each constructively critiquing one or two of the assigned readings (we will discuss what this means in class). Any paper that spends more than one page summarizing will be sent back. *A paper on a particular reading must be handed in before the class in which it is discussed.* The following timetable dictates the writing of short papers:
- The first short paper must be handed in before our February 21 meeting.
- The second short paper must be handed in before our March 28 meeting.
- The third paper must be handed in before class our May 2 meeting.

**Final research paper:** 30%
A final 20 page research paper will count for 30% of the grade. Details will be discussed in class.

**V. Weekly Schedule**

**Part A. Political Behavior in the United States**

**Week 1. January 24, 2005**

*Introduction and Orientation*

**Week 2. January 31, 2005**

*Mass Opinion*
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes, *The American Voter*, chs. 6-8, 10

Suggested:

**Week 3. February 7, 2005**
*Race, Attitudes, and American Politics*
• Mendelberg, Tali. 2001. *The Race Card*

Suggested:
Hochschild, Jennifer. 1995. *Facing up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation.*

**Week 4. February 14, 2005**
*Political Participation: (Guest participant: Rebecca Morton)*


**Week 5. February 21, 2005**

*Party Politics*


Suggested:
Duverger, Maurice. 1954. *Political Parties: Their Organization and Activities in the Modern State*
Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*
Sundquist, James L. 1983. *Dynamics of the Party System*
Epstein, Leon. 1986. Political Parties in the American Mold
Shefter, Martin. 1994. *Political Parties and the State: The American Historical Experience*
Rohde, David. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*

**Part B. American Political Institutions**

**Week 6. February 28, 2005**

*Congress*

• Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (this is a seminal work in the discipline; skim for the basic ideas)
• Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*, chs. 1-3
• Cox, Gary W., and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan*, ch. 5

Suggested:
Arnold, Douglas R. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*

**Week 7. March 7, 2005**

*The Presidency*

- Cameron, Charles. 2000. *Veto Bargaining*, chs. 4-6

Suggested:
Greenstein, Fred. 2001. *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton*

**Week 8. March 14, 2005**

*Spring Break: No Class*

**Week 9. March 21, 2005**

*The Bureaucracy*


Suggested:
Week 10. March 28, 2005

Judicial Politics

* Cameron, Charles, Jeffrey A. Segal, and Donald Songer. 2000. “Strategic auditing in a political hierarchy: An informational model of the Supreme Court's certiorari decisions.” *American Political Science Review* 94: 101-116

Suggested:
Epstein, Lee and Jack Knight, *The Choices Justices Make*, selections

Week 11. April 4, 2005

State Politics

* Key, V.O. 1947. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, selections

Suggested:
Erikson, Robert, et. al. 1993. *Statehouse Democracy*

Part C. Unresolved Controversies

Week 12. April 11, 2005

*Does Interest Group Money Buy Influence? How?*

• Grossman, Gene, and Elhanan Helpman. 2001. *Special Interest Politics*, ch. 7


• Gordon, Sanford C., and Catherine Hafer. 2005. “Flexing Muscle: Corporate Political Expenditures as Signals to the Bureaucracy.” Typescript (Conditionally accepted to the *American Political Science Review*).

Week 13. April 18, 2005

*What Explains the Rise in the Incumbency Advantage since the 1960s?*


Week 14. April 25, 2005

*Does Divided Government Cause Legislative Gridlock?*

• Mayhew, David. 1991. *Divided we Govern*, chs. 3, 7

• Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics*, chs. 1-3, 8, 9


Week 15. May 2, 2005

*Does Legislative Party Discipline Exist Independent of Intra-Caucus Homogeneity?*


