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  
726 Broadway, rm. 714  
Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4pm, or by appointment  
Phone: (212) 998-3708  
E-mail: sanford.gordon@nyu.edu  

Howard Rosenthal  
726 Broadway, rm. 743  
Office Hours: Wednesday 10-12am, or by appointment  
Phone: (212) 998-8512  
E-mail: howardrosenthal@nyu.edu  

Class Meetings  
Thursday, 2-4pm, 726 Broadway rm. 747
III. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading

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<th>Participation: 20%</th>
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<td>Participating in seminar is an essential component of satisfactory completion of the course.</td>
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<th>Presentations: 10%</th>
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<td>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.</td>
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<th>Thought papers: 20%</th>
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<td>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.)</td>
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<th>Research paper: 50%</th>
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<td>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.</td>
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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

Week 3. September 21, 2006
Political Parties: Historical/Functional Perspectives
- 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


Week 5. October 5, 2006

Elections I: Parties and Position Taking


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

Week 7. October 19, 2006

Institutional Development of Congress


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, Zeitschirft fur
Week 10. November 9, 2006

Bureaucratic Politics
- Carpenter, Daniel P. 2000. The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy, selections

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

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
- 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*