Power and Politics in America  
POL-UA 0300  
Spring 2012  
Professor Sanford Clark Gordon

I. Introduction

This course provides an introduction to national political institutions and behavior in the United States, and introduces students to a variety of analytical concepts and approaches useful for the study of domestic politics. In the first part of the course, we discuss issues foundational to the study of politics in the United States, through an in-depth examination of the political antecedents and political consequences of the 1787 Constitution. Next, we consider political participation and mass behavior: how private individuals and groups seek to influence public policy; the nature of American political culture; the formation of public attitudes; and the electoral connection between politicians and citizens. Finally, we examine the institutions of governance in the United States and their implications for the creation of public policy.

The goal of this course is to provide a conceptual framework in which to understand, and not merely describe, U.S. politics. With this in mind, we will delve into such concepts such as public goods and collective action; preference aggregation and the median voter theorem; delegation, representation, and accountability; agenda control; inter-branch bargaining; and the mechanisms of private influence on public policy.

II. Contact and Meeting Information

Professor  
Sanford Clark Gordon  
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Phone: (212) 998-3708  
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Teaching Assistants  
Nicholas Almendares (naa230@nyu.edu)  
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Lectures  
Mondays and Wednesdays from 11:00am-12:15pm, Silver Center 703

III. Required Readings

The following books are available for purchase at the University bookstore:

• Morris P. Fiorina, et. al., *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, 3rd edition

Additionally, we will be using the following online sources:
• *The Federalist Papers*, at [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp) and numerous other sites.
• Blackboard, under the “Course Documents” Heading (BB)

### IV. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading

**Formal Course Requirements**

**Recitation participation:** 15%
Recitations will cover topics discussed in class and in the readings. Typically, discussion will focus on an important topic covered in the Kollman reader or a reading on Blackboard. You are expected to have completed *all* of the assigned readings up to and including those assigned for a particular recitation, and to attend *all* recitations.

**First examination** 20%
The first examination will be held in class on Wednesday, February 22, and will cover the first third of the class.

**Second examination** 20%
The second examination will be held in class on Monday, April 2, and will cover the second third of the class.

**Research Assignment:** 15%
A brief research exercise is due in lecture on Monday, April 23. The topic will be distributed in class.

**Final examination** 30%
Unless otherwise noted in class, the final examination will be held on Monday, May 14, from 10:00-11:50am. Roughly two-thirds of the exam will cover material not covered by the first two exams. The remaining third will review those earlier topics. *Please be sure to note the date of the final exam when making travel arrangements.*

**Policy on missed exams and late papers**

*Exams:* Exceptions in emergency situations are inevitable, but in general, students missing an exam will receive a grade of zero. If you must miss an exam, please contact your teaching assistant before the scheduled test time, and if the excuse is justified (such as in cases of documented illness or family/personal emergencies), we will schedule a make-up.

*Research Assignment:* In general, students will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) per day late. If you know you will be late, it is in your best interest to contact your teaching assistant prior to the deadline, since the penalty may be relaxed in extenuating circumstances.

**Policy on grading-related grievances**

Students who feel that an error has been made in the grading of one of their assignments should first consult their teaching assistants. If the issue is not resolved, a student may submit a brief, one paragraph description of the grievance to the professor. Please keep in mind that any formal re-grading will be conducted *de novo* (i.e. without reference to the original grade), and could potentially result in a loss of points.
V. Academic Integrity

All of the work you do in this course is expected to be your own. *Absolutely no cheating or plagiarism* (using someone else’s words or ideas without proper attribution) *will be tolerated*. All ideas not your own must be properly cited. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will be handled according to university policy. For more information on university policy, see [http://cas.nyu.edu/object/bulletin1012.ug.academicpolicies](http://cas.nyu.edu/object/bulletin1012.ug.academicpolicies).

VI. Weekly Schedule

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### Part A. Foundations: Analytical and Constitutional

**Week 1. Introduction**

**Recitations, 1/23-1/27**

There will be no recitations in the first week of class

**Monday, January 23**

*Introduction and Orientation: Power and Politics in America*

**Wednesday, January 25**

*Some Fundamental Problems of Politics*

- LGSA, ch.1: 2-23
- Kollman Reader
  - 1.3. Selection from Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons”

**Week 2. Constitutionalism, Governance, and Public Authority: Preliminaries**

**Recitations, 1/30-2/3**

*Getting Comfortable with Analytical Models of Politics*

**Monday, January 30**

*Legitimating National Authority*

- John Adams, “Thoughts on Government,” April 1776 (BB)
- James Madison, “Vices of the Political System of the United States,” April 1787 (BB)
- Impartial Examiner No. 1, February 1788 (BB)
- The Articles of Confederation and the original U.S. Constitution (not including the Bill of Rights), in the Appendix of LGSA
- For a basic civics refresher if you need it, look at ch. 2 of LGSA, pp. 37-52

**Wednesday, February 1**

*The Individual against the State*

- LGSA, ch. 4: 98-137
- The Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the Constitution), in the Appendix of LGSA
Week 3. Constitutionalism, Governance, and Public Authority: Conflicts & Tradeoffs
Recitations, 2/6-2/10

From Where Do Threats to Liberty Come? And Whose Liberty Are We Talking About Here?
- *The Federalist*, Nos. 10, 15, and 23
- Brutus (Robert Yates?), “To the Citizens of the State of New-York” (BB)
- Address and Reasons of Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of Pennsylvania to their Constituents (BB)

Monday, February 6
Which State? Federalism and the “Compound Republic”
- LGSA, ch. 3: 66-87
- *The Federalist*, No. 10 (read twice!)
- *McCulloch v. Maryland* (BB)
- Kollman Reader

Wednesday, February 8
Self-Enforcing Constitutionalism?
- LGSA, ch. 3: 87-97
- *The Federalist*, Nos. 47, 48, 49, and 51 (read No. 51 twice!)

Part B. Political Behavior

Week 4. Associational Life
Recitations, 2/13-2/17

Interest Group Politics

Monday, February 13
Private Influence on Public Policy
- LGSA, ch. 12

Wednesday, February 15
Political Culture and Social Capital
- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, selections (BB)
- Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, selections (BB)

Week 5. President’s Day and First Examination
Recitations, 2/20-2/24
There will be no recitations the week of President’s Day
Monday, February 20
*PRESIDENT’S DAY – NO CLASS*

Wednesday, February 22
*First Examination, in Class*

**Week 6. Public Opinion; Elections I**
Recitations, 2/27-3/2

*How Polarized is the American Citizenry?*
- Fiorina, *Culture War*, chs. 2-3

Monday, February 27
*Attitude Formation in the Mass Public*
- LGSA, ch. 9
- Pew Research Center, Overview of “Independents Take Center Stage in Obama Era: Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes, 1987-2009” (BB)
- Kollman Reader
  - 9.1. Selection from Lupia and McCubbins, *The Democratic Dilemma*

Wednesday, February 29
*The Logic of Elections and Electoral Competition*
- James D. Fearon, “Electoral Accountability and the Control of Politicians: Selecting Good Types versus Sanctioning Poor Performance,” selections (BB)

**Week 7. Elections II: Getting Votes and the Role of Parties in the Electorate**
Recitations, 3/5-3/9

*The 2012 Republican Primary and the Outlook for the General Election*
- Selection of articles on the Republican primary and the fall outlook (BB)

Monday, March 5
*The Spatial Model of Party Competition*
- LGSA, ch. 11: 475-484 and 506-511
- Kollman Reader
  - 12.1 Selection from John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties?*

Wednesday, March 7
*Voting and Getting Votes*
- LGSA, ch. 10: 412-423, 437-467; ch 11: 484-491
- Selection from Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds* (BB)

**Week 8. Spring Break**
Week 9. Election III; Representation  
Recitations, 3/19-3/23  
*Street Fight, Part II; and Discussion*

Monday, March 19  
*Movie: Street Fight, Part I*

Wednesday, March 21  
*The Nature of Representation*

- LGSA, ch. 10: 423-429 and 432-437; ch. 5: 166-182  
- *The Federalist*, nos. 62 and 63  
- Kollman Reader  
  - 5.2. Selection from Fenno, *Home Style*  
  - 13.1. Selection from Ansolabehere and Snyder, *The End of Inequality*

**Part C. The Institutions of Governance**

Week 10. Legislative Politics  
Recitations, 3/26-3/30  
*Spatial Models of Legislative Behavior*

Monday, March 26  
*Legislative Preferences and Legislative Strategy*

- LGSA, ch. 5: 208-215  
- Kollman Reader  
  - 5.1. Selection from David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*  
  - 5.4. Selection from Cox and McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda*

Thursday, March 28  
*The Internal Organization of Congress*

- LGSA, ch. 5: 182-200

Week 11. Pivots  
Recitations, 4/2-4/6  
*Whither the Filibuster?*

- McCarty, Poole, Romer, and Rosenthal, “The Price of Principle” (BB)  
- Selection from Gregory J. Wawro and Eric Schickler, *Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S. Senate*, 30-31 & 89-108 (BB)

Monday, April 2  
*Second Examination, in Class*

Wednesday, April 4  
*Lawmaking under Separated Powers*

Week 12. Executive Authority
Recitations, 4/9-4/13

The Bully Pulpit
- Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President on the Payroll Tax Cut,” December 20 and 22, 2011 (BB)
- Kollman Reader
  - 6.3 Selection from Brandice Canes-Wrone, Who Leads Whom?

Monday, April 9
The Sources of Executive Authority
- LGSA, ch. 6
- Kollman Reader
  - 6.1 Selection from Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan

Wednesday, April 11
The Institutional Presidency
- Terry M. Moe, “Presidents, Institutions, and Theory” (BB)

Week 13. The Executive Branch Concluded; The News Media
Recitations, 4/16-4/20

The Transformation of the American News Media

Monday, April 16
The Bureaucratic State
- LGSA, ch. 7: 272-282 & 289-308; (for factual background, read 282-289)
- Selection from James Q. Wilson, Bureaucracy (BB)
- Selection from David E. Lewis, The Politics of Presidential Appointments (BB)

Wednesday, April 18
The Media as Political Institution
- LGSA, ch. 13

Week 14. The Judiciary
Recitations, 4/23-4/27

What is the Role of Unelected Judges in a Democracy?
- Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (BB)
- Kollman Reader
  - 8.3. Lawrence v. Texas
  - 8.4. Bush v. Gore
Monday, April 23  (Research assignment due in class)
*The Judiciary I: Judicial Power and the Supreme Court*
  - LGSA, ch. 8: 326-357; (for factual background, first skim 314-326)
  - *The Federalist*, No. 78
  - *Marbury v. Madison* (BB)

Wednesday, April 25
*The Judiciary II: State Court Politics*
  - Selection from Adam Skaggs and Maria Da Silva, “The New Politics of Judicial Elections” (BB)

**Week 15. Equality, Inequality, and Reform**
Recitations, 4/30-5/4
*Income Inequality as a Political Phenomenon*
  - Selection from Hacker and Pierson, *Winner-Take-All Politics* (BB)

Monday, April 30
*Equality and Inequality*
  - LGSA, ch. 4: 137-162
  - Selection from Larry M. Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* (BB)

Wednesday, May 2
*Reforming the Political System*
  - Fiorina, *Culture War*, 207-228

**Week 16. Wrapping Up**
Recitations, 5/7-5/11
There will be no recitations in this week

Monday, May 7
*Conclusion*

**Final Exam**
Monday, May 14, from 10:00-11:50am