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, elections, legislative politics, inter-branch relations, bureaucratic politics, judicial politics, interest groups, and the functioning of the constitution. 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 your 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
Professor
Sanford Gordon
19 West 4th Street, Room 311
Office Hours: Mondays 2-4pm, or by appointment
Phone: (212) 998-3708
E-mail: sanford.gordon@nyu.edu

(Please do not hesitate to e-mail for appointments outside of office hours or just drop by)

Class Meetings
Tuesday 2-4pm, 19 West 4th Street, Room 212

III. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading
Participation: 20%
Participating in seminar is an essential component of satisfactory completion of the course.
Presentations: 10%
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.

Thought papers: 20%
Each student will write a paper no longer than one single-spaced page each week he/she is not presenting. The paper should be uploaded to NYU Classes by close of business (5pm) on the day before class so that we can incorporate its insights into class discussion. Once the 5pm deadline has passed, I will compile the papers into a zip file for distribution to the whole 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, I will drop the lowest short paper score. (This has the practical effect of permitting you to miss writing one thought paper.)

Research paper: 50%
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 me by late February/early March. Note that if your research interest lies primarily in topics covered toward the end of the class, you should be prepared to read ahead. The research paper is due by 5pm on Friday, December 20.

IV. Readings
Most of the readings are articles and can be found on NYU Classes. Please purchase the following books:
- Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, Ideology and Congress

V. Weekly Schedule

Week 1. September 3, 2013
Introduction and Orientation

Week 2. September 10, 2013
Political Participation I: Individual Determinants and Turnout
Week 3.  September 17, 2013
Political Participation II: Vote Choice

Week 4.  September 24, 2013
New Directions in Opinion Research

Week 5.  October 1, 2013
Political Parties and Polarization

Week 6.  October 8, 2013
Introduction to the Spatial Model, with Applications to the Theory of Partisan Alignment

Week 7.  October 15, 2013
FALL RECESS – CLASS WILL NOT MEET
Week 8. October 22, 2013
Elections I: Parties and Position Taking

Week 9. October 29, 2013
Elections II: Representation and Agency

Week 10. November 5, 2013
Elections III: Incumbency

Week 11. November 12, 2013
Agenda Control: Theory and Applications
• Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. Pivotal Politics, selections

Week 12. November 19, 2013

Bureaucratic Politics
• Hollibaugh Jr., Gary E., Gabriel Horton, and David E. Lewis. Forthcoming. “Presidents and Patronage.”


Courts
• Segal, Jeffrey A., and Harold J. Spaeth. 2002. The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited, chs.2,3,8


Private Influence in Public Policy

Week 15. December 10, 2013

System Performance
• Gordon, Sanford C., and Dimitri Landa. N.D. “Gridlock Federalism,” selections.