The purpose of this course is to introduce doctoral students to the major themes and some of the best scholarship in the political science literature on American Politics. The readings for 2305 typically form the core of students’ subsequent reading lists for major or minor general exams in American politics. Still, there is much in the study of American politics that is not represented here, indeed that political scientists have failed to take up. Along the way, we will want to identify important but neglected questions. What issues should motivate the next generation of research in this field? What theoretical and methodological approaches might be appropriate to studying them?

The most important requirement of the course is to read the assigned readings for each week carefully and critically. They will be the focus of our weekly discussions, though we will rarely be able to talk about them all. Nonetheless, please read all of them since your reading of some will affect your reading of others, whether in the current or some other week. More generally, the readings will provide us, as a group, with common terms of reference upon which good discussions will depend.

To facilitate discussion, it is important that you write as well as read and think in advance about how the readings address the overall topic for that session. We have three ways to encourage you to do that:

*Defender of the Text:* Each student has this role for probably two sessions (depending on the number of participants in the course). The Defender(s) reads the assigned material with extra care, perhaps reads other material by the same authors or other pertinent unassigned material, and throughout the class session makes the best case possible for the assigned readings. The Defender(s) also introduces the class discussion with a few comments on central themes or issues or arguments about the topic for the week, as they emerge from the readings. The Defender will NOT summarize the readings (we will cut you off ruthlessly if you do); your job is to make the best case for the value and importance of the material, and to stick with that stance throughout the class.
This role does not preclude criticism--authors are usually their own best critic--but it does imply that criticism should be "internal" rather than "external." The purpose of this role is to encourage you to escape the classic graduate student dilemma of honing critical skills to a razor-sharp edge while leaving constructive skills dull and unpolished. (We will assign the dates for each student’s Defender role, so you don’t get to defend the texts or arguments you like best.)

AND

Discipline questions and themes: For 9 of the 12 class weeks, each student submits two or three discussion questions or overall themes for that session to the CANVAS website, with (only) one or two sentences about why you want to class to address those issues. That submission will be due by Sunday at 6 p.m, before each Monday class.

The purpose here is to begin to make the transition from student to teacher. That is, we ask you to put yourself in the role of syllabus writer – why did the professors choose this topic? Why these readings? How do they fit together (building on each other? Contradicting each other? Talking past each other? The goal is to begin integrating the material by framing questions or themes that bring some or all of the readings into direct conversation with one another. That will facilitate class discussion as well as foster your sense of a developing literature in which authors “talk” with one another.

AND

Research idea: In the final few minutes of each class period, a subset of participants (chosen by us at the beginning of the session, more or less randomly) gives a two-sentence statement of a research project that could grow out of the readings and discussion of that day. The purpose here is to begin to make the transition from consumer to producer of scholarship on American politics, and maybe to begin thinking about your final paper or syllabus design (see below).

In addition to the (almost) weekly written comments, you have two choices for the final requirement for the course:

1) write a literature review based on one or several of the week’s readings, outlining the important debates in that part of the literature. Think of this as the possible basis for a project you can execute and publish later; consider open questions, puzzles, and debates that you might be able to address or even resolve in your own work. To do this, you need first to persuade your reader that you have a really interesting and important research question that emerges from the scholarly literature (or even the real world!). Then, frame the literature review as the opening steps of a research design to answer that question; the design could result in collection of new evidence or new understandings of existing evidence. Then, lay out the basic contours of the research design itself so we can see where the literature review has taken your argument. We will talk more about the form this paper might take, but an excellent paper might be 15-18 pages in length.
2) design and explain a course outline, including a (mostly complete) syllabus, for a course on American politics. Decide if it is for a graduate or undergraduate course, develop and justify the major themes and weekly topics, and choose key readings and assignments. You might also develop pedagogical and/or technological innovations. Include the introductory lecture to the course; that should explain to your students the reasons for your overall structure of the course, particular topics, and crucial assignments or innovations. You might also include some comparison with other courses on American politics.

The paper or course outline is due on December 8, 2017 and should be emailed to the instructors. Course grades will depend on participation in the seminars, weekly tasks, and quality of the final paper or course outline, with these three components weighted equally.

Required readings will be available on the CANVAS site for the course or another generally available folder, except for the selections in the following books, which we recommend that you buy.

Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, University of Oklahoma Press, 2004

Reading Assignments

**August 30: Democratic Theory and Practice, and Institutional Foundations of the American Order**

* Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*  
  Vol. I, part 2, Ch. 5, “The People’s Choice...”, “Elements Which May Provide...”,
Vol. 1, part2, Ch. 9, “How the Enlightenment, Habits...”
Vol. II, part 2, Chs. 1, 2, 8
Vol. II, part 4, Chs. 2, 6
* E.E. Schattschneider, The Semisovereign People, pp. 1-35.
* Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy, Chs 1, 2.

September 11: Information, Ideology, Opinion Formation and Citizenship

September 18: Participation
* Andrea Campbell, How Policies Make Citizens, Chs 1-2, 4-6.
* Hahrie Han, How Organizations Develop Activists, passim (short book).
* Jane Mansbridge, 1986. Why We Lost the ERA, University of Chicago Press. Chs. 10, 13

**September 25: Politics of Race and Ethnicity**
  Optional but more recent update if you are interested: Thomas Pettigrew and Linda Tropp, 2006. “A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory,” Journal of personality and social psychology 90 (5), 751-xxx

Optional but a bit more on immigration if you are interested:


**October 2: The Politics of Gender and Sexuality**


**October 9: observed University holiday**

**October 16: Political Parties, Partisanship and Elections**


* Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, 2016. Democracy for Realists, Chs. 8, 9, 10, 11


**October 23: Legislatures and Representation**

* David Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection, pp 1-77.


* Bartels, Unequal Democracy, 2nd ed., Chs. 2, 3
* Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal, 2016. Polarized America, 2nd ed. chs. 2, 4

Optional but instant classics to keep in mind:
David Mayhew, 2017. The Imprint of Congress (Yale University Press)

October 30: Presidency and Executive Branch
* Stephen Skowronek, Building a New American State, Chs 6-8 and Conclusion.

November 6: Agendas, Interest Groups and Social Movements
* John W. Kingdon, Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies, Chs. 1, 4, and 9
* Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action, selections TBA.
* Theda Skocpol, Diminished Democracy, Chs 2-4, 7.

**November 13: State and Local Politics**

**November 20: Legal Process and the Courts**

**November 27 Bureaucracy**