This seminar is designed to acquaint students with classic, recent, and current scholarly writing on American politics. The goal is to acquaint students with various lines of substantive inquiry in political science regarding politics in the United States, as well as the many frameworks and methods used to study American political activity, institutions, beliefs, and governance. This course is also designed to begin your transition from a consumer to a producer of knowledge, by developing interesting and research-able questions, examining research designs or conceptual frameworks, and making constructive critiques of the materials you are reading. Perhaps most important, the course intends to introduce or re-introduce you to work that is among the best produced by our discipline and its predecessors; this material will provide resources for your own further work as a political scientist.

Of course, a one-semester seminar cannot provide a complete survey of the field. Students planning to be examined in American politics should read other books and articles, and review materials included in versions of this seminar offered in the past few years as well as reading lists of peer universities. Other courses in American politics are also essential for learning the field.

**Requirements**

We expect everyone to read and reflect on the required reading prior to class. All materials not available on JSTOR or some other electronic source will be available on the course website. The books with longer assignments are available in the Textbook section of the Coop, and many are available as used copies in on-line sources such as Amazon.com, Alibris.com, Abebooks.com, or Barnes and Nobles. You must participate in seminars and complete the written assignments to pass the course.
Books on Order at the Coop


Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*. Any complete edition – also available online.


Memos

Each student will also be responsible, for 9 of the 12 weeks, for a one-page memo to be turned in by midnight on Sunday (i.e. the day before the class). We will set up a drop box on the course website, so students can read each others’ memos. Each memo will begin with a key question that you would use if you were to run that day’s discussion; it should also include observations about why the question is important, what points you would hope to elicit during the discussion,
and how the question is connected with that week’s (and possibly previous weeks’) readings. These papers will not be individually graded, but their quality will enter into our overall evaluation of your performance in the course.

At the end of each class session, be prepared to state orally what you would do if you were to develop a research project on the topic of that week’s readings and discussion.

**Final Paper**

A longer paper, approximately 20 pages, is due by December 20, 2011. Its purpose is to identify a research question and propose a research design that will address the question. The paper should identify some aspect of American politics or government which you would like to investigate, justify its importance and interest to readers, review and interpret the relevant literature, and develop a significant hypothesis related to your topic. You should indicate the kind of data and evidence you would use, even if you cannot specify it exactly. *Your paper should then include two research designs*: the first would be undertaken by a researcher with unlimited financial resources (but staying within the bounds of ethical research); the second is a practicable design that could be undertaken by a graduate student with the usual limited financial resources. *The emphasis of this paper should not be the literature review* but should instead be the research designs. (The language in this paragraph assumes standard hypothesis-testing modes of research; if you prefer a different mode, such as a more conceptual or historical style of analysis, consult with us about how to frame this project.)

If you are writing a research paper for another course, you may combine the assignment with this one if you first clear the plan with us and the professor in the other course. If you combine the assignments, you will ordinarily be expected to actually carry out the research project.

You should plan to submit a preliminary memo about your paper to us, or to both instructors if the paper is for two courses, by December 5, 2011. Late submissions of proposals and final papers are not permitted.

**Evaluation**

Memos, contributions to class discussion, and the final research paper will be given equal weight in your grade for this seminar.

**Syllabus**

**August 31: Course Introduction**

**September 5: Labor Day Holiday (No Class)**

**September 12: Constitutional design and structure**


*Ackerman, We the People: Transformations* chaps. 1, 2, 4, 10.
September 19: Courts and separation of powers

*Federalist*, No.78.


Howard Gillman, Mark Graber, and Keith Whittington , *American Constitutionalism*, chap. 8

September 26: Civic participation

Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

Vol. I, part 2:
  - chap. 4
  - chap. 9, “How the Enlightenment, Habits…”

Vol. II, part 2
  - chaps. 1, 2, 5, 8

Vol. II, part 4
  - chaps. 2, 6

Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, *Voice and Equality*, chaps. 12, 13, 14, 16.


October 3: Identity in politics – gender and sexuality


October 10: Columbus Day Holiday (No Class)

October 17: Identity in politics – race, ethnicity, and immigration


Michael Tesler and David Sears. 2010. Obama’s Race, chaps. 3 and 4.


October 24: Public opinion and media


**October 31: Political parties**


**November 7: The role of the president**

*Federalist*, Nos. 70, 73.


**November 14: Partisanship and ideology**


Green, Palmquist, and Schickler, *Partisan Hearts and Minds*, chaps: 1-4
November 21: Congressional lawmaking

*Federalist* Nos. 52, 54, 62, 63.


Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism*, chaps. 1, 6, Epilogue.


November 28: Bureaucracy and agencies

Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy*, chaps. 1, 8, and conclusion


December 5: Elections and voting behavior


