GOVT 2305: American Politics Field Seminar

Fall 2016

Instructors:
Dan Carpenter: Office hours are on Thursdays, 1-4, CAPS Conference Room
Jon Rogowski: Office hours are Tuesdays, 3-4, CGIS 420

Wednesdays 2-4pm
Location: Knafel 401

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 prelims in American. 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 what we take to be some of the most 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 that you read the assigned readings for each week carefully and critically. The syllabus contains *starred* readings that are mandatory, and a large set of additional reading if you want to go deeper into a given topic or set of related arguments. This syllabus can therefore serve as a guide for future readings, and you can also discuss these readings with your advisors if you plan on taking the American Prelim. The starred readings will serve as the primary focus of our weekly discussions, though we will rarely be able to talk about them all in the time allotted. It is important that you read all of them by the appointed time nonetheless, for your reading of some will affect your reading of others assigned for the current week or some subsequent week. More generally, the common readings will provide us, as a group, with common terms of reference upon which good discussions will depend.

To facilitate that discussion we think it important that you write as well as read. In 6 of the weeks of the course you will be asked to focus on a particular reading for that week and write a paper. Set down some critical comments and questions for each piece, and relate it to the other readings and their core arguments (briefly). In your paper, briefly summarize the main claims, emphasizing the most important arguments that tie things together, and provide comments that will help set the agenda for the seminar discussion. Limit your papers to three double-spaced pages. The papers will be due at 5pm the day before class (Tuesdays at 5pm) and should be submitted through the course website at CANVAS.

The final requirement for the course is a literature review based on one of the week’s readings, outlining the important debates in that part of the literature. We would like you to imagine this might be the basis for a project you can execute and publish later in your graduate
program, so we want you to think about the open questions, puzzles, and debates that you might be able to answer/solve in your own work. To do this, you should attempt to think about a research design that could result in new data collection (or new understandings of existing data, such as survey analyses based on ANES data or evaluations of legislative decision making). We will talk more about the form this paper might take, but an excellent paper might be 15-20 pages in length. The papers are due on December 16th and should be emailed to the instructors. Course grades will depend on participation in the seminars, six short papers, and performance on the final paper, with these three components weighted equally.

The 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.

Diana Mutz, Hearing the Other Side, Cambridge University Press.
Skocpol, Theda, Diminished Democracy, University of Oklahoma Press.
Hahrie Han, How Organizations Develop Activists, Oxford University Press, 2014.

Reading Assignments

September 7th Week 1: Democratic Theory and Practice, and Institutional Foundations of the American Order

* Skowronek, Building a New American State, Chapters 1-2.
* E.E. Schattschneider, The Semisovereign People, selections, pp. 1-35.
* Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy, Chs 1, 2.
* David Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection, pp 1-77.


**September 14th**

**Week 2: Partisanship and the Calculus of Voting**


Lau & Redlawsk, 2006, How Voters Decide


September 21th          Week 3. Participation


* Campbell, How Policies Make Citizens, selections TBA.

* Han, How Organizations Develop Activists, selections TBA.


**September 28th  Week 4. Information and Public Opinion Formation**

* Hochschild, *What’s Fair? Selections TBA*


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**October 5th** **Week 5. Prejudice and Politics**

* Cohen, *Boundaries of Blackness.*


October 12th  Week 7. Political Parties and Elections

*Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy, Ch. 7-8.

V.O. Key, 1955. Politics, Parties, and Pressure Group.,

October 19th

* Bartels, Unequal Democracy, passim.
* Morris P. Fiorina, Representatives, Roll Calls, and Constituencies, 1974, chs. 1 and 2.
* Tracy Sulkin, Issue Politics in Congress, TBA.


David Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection, pp. 78 to end.


Timothy Groseclose and James Snyder, “Buying Supermajorities,” APSR, June 1996.


October 26th Week 9. Legislative Behavior and Institutions, Part II


selections TBA.

*Keith Krehbiel, Pivotal Politics, chs. 1, 2.


November 2nd        Week 10: Presidency and Executive Branch (note that Bureaucratic Behavior, Oversight and Delegation have not been included here, as Carpenter is teaching a related course this semester)

* Skowronek, *Building a New American State*, selections TBA.


November 9th        Week 11: Interest Groups and Social Movements

* Mancur Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action*, selections TBA.
* Dennis Chong, *Collective Action and the Civil Rights Movement*, selections TBA.
* Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy*, selections tba.
* Hahrie Han APSR 2016
* Ken Kollman, *Outside Lobbying*, chs. 1 and 3


November 16th Week 12: State and Local Politics
*Elizabeth Rigby and Gerald C. Wright, “Political Parties and Representation of the Poor in the American States,” AJPS 57 (2013), 552-565.

Other Readings:
Nancy Burns, The Formation of Local Governments, Oxford University Press.

November 30th  Week 13. Legal Process and the Courts

* Benjamin E. Lauderdale and Tom S. Clark, “The Supreme Court’s Many Median Justices,” APSR 106 (2012), 847-866


DROPPED: **Week 12: Bureaucracy**


Anthony Downs. *Inside Bureaucracy*.


