

V2. 1/23/17

Harvard University
Department of Government
Government 2335: Power in American Society
Spring 2017

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Monday, 4:10 to 6 p.m.
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Office hours: Monday, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

NOTE reading assignment for first class, January 23, 2017

PURPOSES: The concept of “power” is central to the discipline of political science and the practice of governance, but its meaning, measurement, causes, and effects are all elusive. The goal of the seminar is to give students clearer ways of thinking about power, preparatory to doing research throughout your careers that will in one way or another revolve around making sense of the concept.

To this end, we will pursue three more specific purposes. One is *empirical* – to examine how and when power is exercised, by whom, to what effect. The works focus mainly although not exclusively on the United States, and consider the power inscribed in institutions and rules ranging from constitutional design to regulatory decisions, as well as the power of individual actors or groups, ideas or cultures, and emotions or preferences.

A second purpose is *analytic* – to compare definitions of power, ways to measure it, theories about its origins and effects, and methodological choices for studying it. The first half of the course will follow in roughly chronological order the ways in which political scientists have developed analyses of power; the second half will address a variety of contemporary research programs.

A third purpose is *normative* – to explore the virtues and flaws of particular theories of power, structures or modes of exercising power, and distributions of power resources. The goal here is to develop arguments about desirable and feasible changes in the creation, distribution, and use of power, and to consider how those changes might be studied and implemented.

TASKS: Seminar participants read and discuss the equivalent of one substantial book or five articles per week. The readings are listed below.

Defender of the Text: Each student has this role for one or 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 author(s) or other pertinent unassigned material, and throughout the class session makes the best case possible for the assigned readings. 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. (I will assign the dates for each student's Defender role, so you don't get to defend the texts or arguments you like best.)

Discussion questions: For 9 of the 12 class weeks, each student submits two discussion questions 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.

Class summary: In the final few minutes of each class period, a subset of participants (chosen by me) gives a two-sentence statement of a research project that could grow out of the readings and discussion for that session. The purpose here is to begin to make the transition from consumer to producer of scholarship on power.

Paper or course outline: Each student also writes either a seminar paper (no more than 8000 words), or designs and explains a course outline, including a partial syllabus, for a course on Power. For the paper, once you have chosen a specific, well-bounded issue or condition, you should ask and answer questions such as: How does power work in this circumstance? Who or what exercises it? How do I know that? To what effect? Should the power exercised in this case be maintained, strengthened, resisted, abolished, or otherwise changed? What is this a case of? How does this case lead us to conceive of power more generally?

If you choose to write and explicate course outline, you will need to 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. The course outline should explain the reasons for your overall structure of the course, particular topics, and crucial readings and assignments. It could be accompanied by a literature review, comparison with other courses, and theoretical development of how to study and deploy the concept of power.

GRADES in the seminar are roughly one-half for the paper or syllabus, and one-half for class participation. Class participation includes your discussion questions, role as Defender, and research ideas as well as general engagement. You must complete all the work to pass the course. I reserve the right *not* to grade in accord with the strictly arithmetic average, so that I can take into account such things as extra (but unsuccessful) effort, trajectory during the semester, unusual circumstances that affect performance,

and so on. Class participation probably weighs more heavily in my evaluation than the papers if there is a discrepancy between the two indicators.

BOOKS and ARTICLES: The following are available at the Coop. You can find used copies of many of these books on Amazon.com or other online book sellers.

Achen, Christopher and Larry Bartels *Democracy for Realists* (Princeton University Press, 2016)

Caro, Robert. *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Master of the Senate* (Vintage Books, 2003)

Dahl, Robert. *Who Governs?*, 2nd ed. (Yale University Press, 2005)

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish* (Vintage Books, 1995)

Gaventa, John. *Power and Powerlessness* (University of Illinois Press, 1982)

Gerstle, Gary. *Liberty and Coercion* (Princeton University Press, 2015)

Morgan, Edmund. *American Slavery, American Freedom* (Norton, 2003)

Woolf, Virginia. *Three Guineas* (various publishers, e.g. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966)

Articles and other book sections will be available through links in the syllabus, on the Canvas website, on JSTOR, or directly online.

TOPICS and READINGS:

January 23: The First and Second Faces of Power

Robert Dahl, *Who Governs?* chaps. 1, 7, 8, [9, 10, or 11], 12, 15-19, 24, 27-28

Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, "Two Faces of Power," *American Political Science Review* 56 (4), Dec. 1962: 947-952. (JSTOR, or

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3b92/da387c1717f83426e6bc6dffe9cb6a5a2926.pdf>)

If time: Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, "Decisions and Nondecisions: An Analytical Framework," *APSR* 57 (3), Sept. 1963: 632-642 (JSTOR)

January 30: The Third and Fourth Faces of Power

John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness*, chaps. 1, 6, 7, 8, 10

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*: chap. 1 of Part 1; chap. 1 of Part 2; Parts 3, 4

February 6: The Power of Structures I

Terry Moe, "Power and Political Institutions," *Perspectives on Politics*, June 2005, 3(2): 215-233 (JSTOR)

Gary Gerstle, *Liberty and Coercion* (Princeton University Press, 2015), Introduction, Part I, Part IV, Conclusion

Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Retrospect and Prospect," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 31 (2), May 2008: 109-124.

February 13: The Power of Structures II

Kenneth Shepsle, "Institutional Arrangements and Equilibrium in Multidimensional Voting Models," *AJPS* 23 (1), Feb. 1979: 27-59 (JSTOR)

Gary Cox, "On the Effects of Legislative Rules," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 25 (2), May, 2000: 169-192 (JSTOR)

George Tsebelis and Eric Chang, "Veto Players and the Structure of Budgets in Advanced Industrialized Countries," *European Journal of Political Research* 43: (2004): 449-476

Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge University Press, 2015)

And/or: Thomas Dietz, Elinor Ostrom, and Paul C. Stern, "The Struggle to Govern the Commons," *Science* 302 (5652), Dec. 12, 2003.

February 27: Post-structural and Post-modern Theories of Power

Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?* (Harvard University Press, 1982), chaps. 13, 14, 16

Anne Norton, *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture*. (University of Chicago Press, 1993), chap. 3

Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2002), chaps. 2, 3, 5 (through p. 122).

March 6: The Power of Time

Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *APSR* 92 (2), June 2000: 251-267 (JSTOR)

Douglas Rae, "Viacratic America: Plessy on Foot v. *Brown* on Wheels," *Annual Review of Political Science* v. 4, 2001: 417-438.

Stephen Skowronek, *Presidential Leadership in Political Time* (University Press of Kansas, 2011), chap. 1

Jacob Hacker, "Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State," *APSR* 98 (2), May, 2004: 243-260

March 20: The Power of Contingency and Personality

Robert Caro, *Master of the Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (Vintage Books, 2003), part **IV or V**

James Read and Ian Shapiro, "Transforming Power Relationships: Leadership, Risk, and Hope" *APSR*, 108 (1), Feb. 2014: 40-53.

David Mayhew, "Events as Causes: The Case of American Politics," ch. 4 in Ian Shapiro and Sonu Bedi (eds.), *Political Contingency: Studying the Unexpected, the Accidental, and the Unforeseen* (NYU Press, 2007): 99-137.

Elizabeth Wood, Modeling Contingency, in Shapiro and Bedi????

March 27: Power and Gender

Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas* (be sure to read notes as well as text)

Anna Harvey, *Votes without Leverage: Women in American Electoral Politics, 1920-1970* (Cambridge University Press, 1998): chaps. 4, 5

Mala Htun and S. Laurel Weldon, "The Civic Origins of Progressive Policy Change: Combating Violence against Women in Global Perspective, 1975-2005," *APSR* 106 (3), August 2012: 548-569.

April 3: Power and Race

Edmund Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, chaps. 1, 3, 11-18

Frymer, Paul. "Racism Revised: Courts, Labor Law, and the Institutional Construction of Racial Animus." *APSR* 99 (3), 2005: 373-387.

Vesla Weaver, "Unhappy Harmony: Black Mass Incarceration in a 'Postracial' Era," in *Beyond Discrimination: Racial Inequality in a Post-Racial Era*, Fredrick Harris and Robert Lieberman, eds. (Russell Sage Foundation, 2013): 215-256.

April 10: Power, Wealth, and Class

Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*

Thomas Picketty, *Capital in the Twenty-first Century* (Harvard University Press, 2014), chaps. 7, 11, 14

Nolan McCarty, Keith Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. *Polarized America, 2nd ed.* (MIT Press, 2016), chaps. 4 and 6

Martin Gilens. "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69 (5), 2005: 778-896.
http://scholar.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/mgilens/files/inequality_and_democratic_responsiveness.pdf

April 17: The Power of Identity, Connection, and Context

Dora Costa and Matthew Kahn, "Health, Wartime Stress, and Unit Cohesion: Evidence from Union Army Veterans," *Demography* 47 (1), Feb. 2010: 45-66.

Andrew Gelman, Boris Shor, Joseph Bafumi, and David Park, "Rich State, Poor State, Red State, Blue State: What's the Matter with Connecticut?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 2 (2007): 345-367
http://www.stat.columbia.edu/~gelman/research/published/rb_qjps.pdf

Chris Achen and Larry Bartels, *Democracy for Realists* (Princeton University Press, 2016),
chaps. 8-11

Paper or Course outline due on May 11, by 5 p.m. – submitted electronically to me.