

## **PO 711: American Politics Field Seminar**

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**Office Hours:** Mondays 1-3 and by appointment

**Class Time:** Mondays 9:00 AM-12:00 PM

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This seminar acquaints graduate students with both classic and more recent approaches to studying major questions in American politics. Substantively, the course surveys a range of topics from civic engagement to the functioning of and interactions between political institutions to American political behavior. Furthermore, the readings employ diverging methodologies spanning the gamut from historical-institutional analyses, to formal models of politics, to quantitative approaches. While the course is designed to provide graduate students with a solid foundation from which to begin their preparation for the general examination in American politics, it cannot provide a complete survey of the American subfield in a single semester. Students should be sure to familiarize themselves with the list of recommended readings supplementing those from the course itself in preparing for their examinations.

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

Sixty percent of your grade for the course will be comprised of one midterm examination (35%) and class participation (25%). Because this is a seminar course, participation in class discussions is particularly important – please come to class each week prepared to discuss and engage one another about all of the materials for that week.

The second half of your grade is comprised of an original research project. In addition to beginning students' preparation for the general exam in American politics, one of the course's primary goals is to give every student the experience of preparing and presenting a research paper akin to one that you might present at a professional conference. A formal, conference-style presentation (approximately 10-12 minutes) of your research given on the last day of class to your peers will count for 15% of your grade. Power point, overheads, etc. will be available to assist you in presenting and discussing your research. The final paper itself, of approximately 20-25 pages, will comprise the final 25%. For the paper, you may either write a traditional seminar paper or a research proposal describing a slightly more ambitious project. While research

proposals do not require you to actually execute the proposed analysis, they should review and interpret the relevant literature, develop a significant hypothesis about some facet of American politics and situate it within the relevant literature, and clearly describe a research design by which you could test the hypothesis. The paper will be due, in electronic format by email, at 5pm on May 5. Late papers will be docked a full letter grade for each day late.

### **ACADEMIC CONDUCT:**

As a reminder, plagiarism or cheating of any kind is strictly prohibited. Please be aware of the following Boston University policy: "All students are responsible for having read the Boston University statement on plagiarism, which is available in the Academic Conduct Code. Students are advised that the penalty for cheating on examinations or for plagiarism may be '... expulsion from the program or the University or such other policy as may be recommended by the Committee on Student Academic Conduct, subject to approval by the dean."

### **REQUIRED BOOKS**

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*.

Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Mayhew. David. 2005. *Divided We Govern*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Tesler, Michael and David O. Sears. 2010. *Obama's Race: The 2008 Election and the Dream of a Post-Racial America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **THE LINEUP**

January 26: INTRO/AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Hartz, Louis. 1955. *The Liberal Tradition in America*. New York: Harcourt Brace.  
Chapters 1 and 2.

Steinmo, Sven. 1994. "American Exceptionalism Reconsidered: Culture or Institutions." In *The Dynamics of American Politics*, ed. Larry Dodd and Calvin Jillson. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, Pp. 106-131.

Hacker, Jacob. 2002. *The Divided Welfare State: The Battle over Public and Private Social Benefits in the United States*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Pp. 1-66.

## February 2: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Chapters 1-4, 9-15, 21-22.

Skocpol, Theda, Marshall Ganz, and Ziad Munson. 2000. "A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 94: 527-546.

Skocpol, Theda and Morris Fiorina, ed. 1999. *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. Washington: Brookings Institution. Chapter 11.

Steven Rosenstone and John Mark Hansen. 1993. *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America*. New York: MacMillan. Pp. 1-36; 71-127.

## February 9: PUBLIC OPINION, POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Campbell, Angus, Phillip Converse, Warren Miller and Donald Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. Chapters 6-8.

Converse, Phillip. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David Apter. New York: Free Press.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2-4, 6, 8-9.

Samuel Popkin, "Information Shortcuts and the Reasoning Voter." ch. 1 of Bernard Grofman, ed. *Information, Participation, and Choice*, University of Michigan Press, 1993.

February 16: No class (PRESIDENT'S DAY)

February 17 (TUESDAY): MEDIA POLITICS

Iyengar, Shanto and Donald Kinder. 1987. *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*.  
Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Patterson, Thomas E. 1993. *Out of Order*. New York: Knopf. Chapters 1 and 2.

Prior, Markus. "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout." *American Journal of Political Science* 49: 577-592.

February 23: ELECTIONS

Lynn Vavrek. *The Message Matters*. Chapters 1-3, 5

Andrew Gelman and Gary King. 1993. "Why Are American Presidential Election Campaign Polls so Variable When Votes are so Predictable?" *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol 23. No. 4.

Lodge, Milton, Marco Steenbergen, and Shawn Brau. 1995. "The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation." *American Political Science Review* 89: 309-326.

March 2: PARTIES

Aldrich, John. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapter 2

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Rowe.  
Chapters 2, 7 and 8.

Levendusky, Matthew. 2009. *The Partisan Sort: How Liberals Became Democrats and Conservatives Became Republicans*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.,  
Chapters 1-4.

Key, 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*, chs. 1, 15, 24

March 9: Spring break

March 16: CONGRESS

Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Cox, Gary and Matthew McCubbins. *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. Chapters 4-8.

Lee, Frances. 2009. *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles, and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters: 1, 3, 4

March 23: PRESIDENCY

Richard Neustadt. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. New York: Free Press. Chapters 1-5.

Howell, William. 2003. *Power Without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 2 and 4.

Skowronek, Stephen. 1993. *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press. Chapters 1-3.

Kernell, Samuel. 1997. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press. Chapters 1-3, 5.

March 30: INTER-INSTITUTIONAL DYNAMICS

Cameron, Charles. 2000. *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-2, 4 and 9.

Krehbiel, Keith. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-4.

Mayhew, David. 2005. *Divided We Govern*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Selected chapters. All but chapter 2.

April 6: BUREAUCRACY

Moe, Terry. 1987. "An Assessment of the Positive Theory of 'Congressional Dominance'." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 12: 475-520.

McCubbins, Matthew, Roger Noll and Barry Weingast. 1989. "Structure and Process, Politics and Policy: Administrative Arrangements and the Political Control of Agencies." *Virginia Law Review* 75: 430-445.

Carpenter, Dan. 2001. *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Pp. 1-36.

Lewis, David. 2008. *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 3-5, and 7.

April 13: MIDTERM EXAM

April 20: No class. Patriot's Day

April 22 (Wednesday): COURTS

Rosenberg, Gerald. 1991. *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring about Social Change?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-5.

Epstein, Lee and Jack Knight. 1998. *The Choices Justices Make*. Washington: CQ Press.

Howell, William. 2003. *Power Without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. Chapter 6.

Mishler, William and Reginald Sheehan. 1993. "The Supreme Court as a Counter-Majoritarian Institution? The Impact of Public Opinion on Supreme Court Decisions." *American Political Science Review* 87: 87-101.

April 27: RACE AND GENDER

Michael Tesler and David O. Sears. 2010. *Obama's Race*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Sniderman, Paul and Edward Carmines. 1997. *Reaching Beyond Race*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Chapters 1, 2 and 4.

Box-Steffensmeier, Jan, Suzanna De Boef, Tse-Min Lin. 2004. "The Dynamics of the Partisan Gender Gap." *American Political Science Review* 98: 515-528.

April 29: INTEREST GROUPS AND POLICY AGENDAS **AND RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS**

Olson, Mancur. 1969. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.  
Chapter 1.

Hall, Richard and Frank Wayman. 1990. "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees." *American Political Science Review* 84: 797-820.

Baumgartner, Frank, et al. 2009. *Lobbying and Policy Change: Who Wins, Who Loses, and Why*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-2, 5, 9-11.