

LSU Department of Political Science
POLI 7900
PROSEMINAR IN AMERICAN POLITICS
Fall Semester, 2016

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Office hours: Tuesday and Wednesday, 2 – 3:30; and by appointment.

This course is a survey of selected segments of the literature on American politics. This course is designed to provide you with an advanced understanding of American government through classic and recent cutting-edge scholarship. This course will focus on books investigating American politics and political institutions. We will just scrape the surface of these topics but give you a flavor for how research is conducted in these areas and a sense of the debates and discussions produced from this literature.

It is designed to meet the needs of graduate students who hope at some time in the future to do original research, master a doctoral field, or teach in one or more areas of American politics. *No one* could master all of the literature on American politics in one semester or even several years, so I have chosen 12 exemplary books on which we will focus. I expect you to really know these books well.

Evaluation

Your grade for the course will be measured by your weekly writing assignments (50%) related to the readings, your class participation (20%) and a final paper (25%) and proposal (5%). Letter grades will be assigned (and translated numerically) for final grading. Each are outlined with more detail below:

Weekly critical response memo: Each week you will be responsible for reading critically, comprehensively and in detail, then crafting a **two-page** response to the readings. These papers are an opportunity for you to organize your general assessments of the readings. Response papers are not to summarize the readings; rather, they are intended to encapsulate your summary of the usefulness, strengths and weaknesses of the research. These are the kinds of issues to which you should address in your weekly critical response:

- (1) What is the main contribution of the reading to scholarly knowledge?
- (2) What theoretical tradition is the reading working within or in contrast to?
- (3) What hypotheses are offered for empirical evidence?
- (4) What are the data and measures used in the paper appropriate for evaluating the theory and hypothesis?
- (5) What are the main findings?

- (6) What are the implications of the theory and results for understanding American politics?
(7) What are your criticisms of the research?

Please email your weekly critical response memo no later than 5 pm each Wednesday.

Participation: Your weekly in-class discussion participation is critical to my ability to track your progress and your own development in understanding the material. This requires you to have a comprehensive understanding of the readings and (obviously) to come to class. When we talk about the readings in class, we will discuss the kinds of questions I have asked you to consider when writing response memos

Final paper: The books I have selected only scratch the surface of what we might have read. For your final paper, I would like you to select a 13th book (and I provide some suggestions below) and develop a brief review of literature tied to that 13th book. The paper should use an additional 8-10 journal articles for this literature. Identify the book and at least 4 potential journal articles for the final paper in a proposal, **due at 5 pm October 5 by email.**

Schedule and Readings

8/25 Syllabus

9/1 Olson, Mansur. 1965. *Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Harvard University Press.

9/8 Dougherty, Keith L. 2001. *Collective Action Under the Articles of Confederation*. Cambridge University Press.

9/15 Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper.

9/22 Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. Yale Univ. Press

9/29 Cohen, Marty, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John Zaller. 2009. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*. University of Chicago Press.

10/5 Final paper proposal due via email

10/6 Fall holiday

10/13 Harbridge, Laurel. 2015. *Is Bipartisanship Dead? Policy Agreement and Agenda-setting in the House of Representatives*. Cambridge University Press.

- 10/20 Segal, Jeffrey A., and Harold J. Spaeth. 2002. *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited*. Cambridge University Press.
- 10/27 Bartels, Larry M. 2009. *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*. Princeton University Press.
- 11/3 Dawson, Michael C. 1994. *Behind the Mule: Race and Class in African-American Politics*. Princeton University Press.
- 11/10 Skocpol, Theda. 1995. *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers*. Harvard University Press.
- 11/17 Karpowitz, Christopher F., and Tali Mendelberg. 2014. *The Silent Sex: Gender, Deliberation, and Institutions*. Princeton University Press.
- 11/24 Thanksgiving
- 12/1 Peterson, Paul E. 1981. *City Limits*. University of Chicago Press.
- 12/8 Final paper due**

Potential anchor books for final paper

Achen and Bartels. Democracy for Realists.
Aldrich. Why Parties?
Arnold. Logic of Congressional Action
Baretto and Segura. Latino America
Canes-Wrone. Who Leads Whom?
Carmines and Stimson. Issue evolution
Carpenter. Forging bureaucratic autonomy
Fenno. Homestyle
Kousser & Phillips. The Power of American Governors
Krehbiel. Pivotal Politics
Maltzman, Spriggs & Wahlbeck. Crafting Law on the Supreme Court
Mettler. The Submerged State
Putnam. Bowling Alone
Schattschneider Semi-sovereign people
Skowronek. Politics Presidents Make
Troutman. Political Monopolies in American Cities