

**American Political Process
(Institutions)
Political Science 8210
Fall 2015**

Professor Sarah Binder
467 Monroe; 202-994-2167
binder@gwu.edu

Class: Thursdays 6:10-8 pm
Office hours: Email or stop by

Seminar description

This seminar is one of two introductory graduate seminars for the American Politics subfield—focusing primarily on the study of institutions (though it can be hard to clearly divide the study of “institutions” and “behavior”). The course is designed to highlight a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches. By the end of this course, you should have a basic familiarity with many of the fundamental works in the study of American politics, understand the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to studying the American political system, and be familiar with classic and recent debates that are central to the subfield. You should also understand that there is no single way to approach the study of American political institutions nor is there much consensus about the performance of politicians, citizens, political organizations and institutions in meeting the demands of representative government.

Because this is a graduate level course, I am assuming that you are entering the seminar with a basic understanding of the American political system. Also, the seminar is targeted for graduate students intending to take the department’s PhD or MA exam in American politics.

Learning objectives

- Prepare for PSC department comprehensive exam (PhD or Masters) in American politics
- Understand and evaluate classic works on American politics
- Understand and evaluate competing theories of American politics
- Understand and evaluate empirical studies of American politics

Requirements

There are a number of requirements for this seminar. All must be completed to receive a passing grade in the course. Your final grade will be based on: seminar (oral and written) participation (25%), short paper (25%), and a take-home final exam (50%). If anyone prefers to complete a research paper in lieu of taking the final exam, come talk to me early in the semester and we can work something out. The final exam is designed to give you some practice in taking a department comp exam.

Seminar participation: Your primary assignment each week is to **complete the assigned readings** so that you can participate effectively in seminar discussions. Your secondary assignment is to **write over the course of the semester four very short papers** that respond to a week’s reading or to a single or set of readings. Each paper should be 1-2 pages (double-spaced) in length. The purpose of these four papers is to help you to read, digest and reflect upon the literature that week. These essays can compare and comment on alternative approaches to a similar question, criticize a reading’s methodology, conceptualization of a construct or

measurement of a variable, analyze the implications of a set of findings, suggest a related question or new hypotheses, or compare/contrast to a previous week's readings/arguments. I don't expect a polished piece of writing; these papers are intended to give you some practice reading and responding quickly to an argument, evidence, etc. You must keep track of your five papers and make sure that you don't run out of weeks in which to hand in a paper. Papers are due to me by email by 3 pm on Thursdays. I will grade the papers on a ✓ - (okay), ✓ (good), ✓+ (excellent) scale.

Paper assignment: You are required to write a short (somewhere between 5-10 pages) paper that identifies and explores a research question or puzzle in American politics that interests you. I will provide more guidance over the course of the semester. The paper is intended to help you to focus on a question of interest and to prepare a literature review that outlines what we know so far and what questions remain. *Please come to class on October 15th with a one-page (or even just a long paragraph) description of the research question or puzzle that interests you.* We will take part of class for a quick round of feedback on each of your questions. *Papers will be due in class on December 8th.*

Final exam: The final exam will be a take-home, two-hour exam and will be completed during the exam week (*date TBA*). The question(s) will be similar to the type(s) of questions that appear on the American politics comprehensive exam. Thus, preparing for and taking the exam will be excellent practice for taking the department's comprehensive exam in American politics. (You'll have the opportunity to write the exam on a computer at home or on campus.)

University policies and resources

1) Academic integrity

I personally support the GW Code of Academic Integrity. It states: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the remainder of the code, see: <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>

2) Support for students outside the classroom

Disability Support Services (DSS): Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential of a disability should contact the Disability Support Services office at (202) 994-8250 in Rome Hall, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information please refer to: <http://gwired.gwu.edu/dss/>

3) Counseling services

University Counseling Center (UCC): The UCC offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills problems. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations and confidential assessment, counseling services, and referrals. See <http://gwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices>. Or call (202) 994-5300.

4) Title IX

GWU's Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy and the Threats and Acts of Violence Policy are intended to inform members of the university community, including guests and visitors, about sexual harassment, sexual violence, other forms of interpersonal violence, and the procedures they should follow if

they encounter or observe it. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find the appropriate resources here: <http://haven.gwu.edu/>

Required texts

The texts for this course are available in the GW Bookstore in the basement of the Marvin Center. In addition to these texts, there are articles and book chapters that are available on JSTOR, Blackboard, or made available for you to photocopy each week. Be sure you have a functioning Blackboard account.

1. Hirshman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (Harvard 1970).
2. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2nd ed. (Yale 1974).
3. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (Wadsworth Publishing 1960)
4. Cohen et. al., *The Party Decides* (Chicago, 2008).
5. Aldrich, *Why Parties: A Second Look* (Chicago, 2011)

Class outline

September 3 **Introduction to the course**

September 10 **Theoretical approaches to studying American politics**

Shepsle, Kenneth. 1989. "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Public Choice Approach," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1(2):131-147 (BB)

Moe, Terry. 1984. "[The New Economics of Organization](#)" *American Journal of Political Science* 28(4): 739-777.

Simon, Herbert. 1985. "[Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science](#)" *American Political Science Review* 79(2): 293-304.

Pierson, Paul. 2000. "[Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics](#)," *American Political Science Review* 94(2): 251-267.

Green, Donald and Ian Shapiro. 1996. *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, Yale University Press, Chapters 2-3 (BB)

March, James and Johan Olsen, 1984. "[The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 78(3):734-749.

September 17 **Power in America politics**

Dahl, Robert. 1967. *Pluralist Democracy in the United States* Chicago: Rand McNally & Company, pp. 22-24. (BB)

Schattschneider, E.E. 1960. *The Semi-Sovereign People* (Wadsworth Publishing)

Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*, Chapter 1 (BB)

Bachrach, Peter and Morton Baratz. 1962. [“The Two Faces of Power,”](#) *American Political Science Review* 56(4):947-52.

Moe, Terry. 2005. [“Power and Political Institutions,”](#) *Perspectives on Politics* 3(2): 215-233.

Hacker, Jacob and Paul Pierson. 2014. [“After the ‘Master Theory’: Downs, Schattschneider, and the Rebirth of Policy-Focused Analysis,”](#) *Perspectives on Politics* 12(3):643-662.

September 24 Organizations

Hirshman, Albert. 1970. *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*. Harvard University Press.

Wilson, James Q. 1973. *Political Organizations*. Basic Books, Chapters 2-3 (BB)

Moe, Terry. 2015. [“Vested Interests and Political Institutions,”](#) *Political Science Quarterly* 130(2): 277-316) (BB)

October 1 Political parties (1)

Key, V. O., Jr. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. New York: Knopf.

Schattschneider, E.E. 1942. *Party Government*. Transaction Publishers, pp. 1-11, 65-98 (BB)

Aldrich, John. 2011. *Why Parties?: A Second Look*. University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-2, 6, 8-9

Fiorina, Morris. 2002. [“Parties and Partisanship: A Forty-Year Retrospective.”](#) *Political Behavior* 24(2): 93-115 (BB)

October 8 Political parties (2)

Cohen, Marty et. al. 2008. *The Parties Decide*. University of Chicago Press. (all)

October 15 Interest groups

Hand in short description of your research question/puzzle, and be prepared to present your question to the class for a quick round of feedback.

Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Harvard University Press. Review chapter 1 (BB)

Walker, Jack. 1963. [“The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America,”](#) *American Political Science Review* 77(2): 390-406.

Wright, John R. 1985. [“PACs, Contributions, and Roll Calls: An Organizational Perspective,”](#) *American Political Science Review* 79(2): 400-414.

Hall, Richard and Frank Wayman. 1990. "[Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.](#)" *American Political Science Review*, 84(3): 797-820.

Campbell, Andrea. 2002. "[Self-Interest, Social Security, and the Distinctive Participation Patterns of Senior Citizens.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 96(3): 565-574.

Gilens, Martin and Benjamin I. Page. 2014. "[Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens.](#)" *Perspectives on Politics* 12(2):564-581.

October 22 Congress (1)

Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. "Constituency Influence in Congress." *American Political Science Review* 57 (1): 45-56.

Mayhew, David M. 1974. *The Electoral Connection* Yale University Press.

Kingdon, John. 1977. "[Models of Legislative Voting.](#)" *Journal of Politics* 39(3): 563-595.

Fenno, Richard F. Jr. 1977. "[U.S. House members in their constituencies: An exploration.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 71(3):883-917.

Fenno, Richard F. Jr. 1962. "[The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System](#)" *American Political Science Review* 56(2): 310-324.

Arnold, Donald. 1992. *The Logic of Congressional Action*, Yale University Press. Chapters TBA.

Hall, Andrew, "What Happens When Extremists Win Primaries," *American Political Science Review*, 109(1) 2015: 18-42 (BB)

October 29 Congress (2)

Rohde, David. 1991. *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 & 2 (BB)

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics*, University of Chicago Press. Chapters 2 and 3 (BB)

Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins. 1993. *Legislative Leviathan*. University of California Press. Chapters 4 and 5 (BB)

Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "[The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives,](#)" *American Political Science Review* 62(1): 144-68.

Binder, Sarah. 1996. "[The Partisan Basis of Procedural Choice: Allocating Parliamentary Rights in the House, 1789-1990,](#)" *American Political Science Review* 90(1): 8-20.

Schickler, Eric. 2000. "Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models." *American Political Science Review* 94(2): 269-288.

November 5 (no class...I have to go to U. Kentucky...work on papers...feel free to meet without me to discuss papers ☺)

November 12 Presidency

Neustadt, Richard. 1960. *Presidential Power*. John Wiley and Sons, Chapter 3 (BB)

Skowronek, Stephen. "Presidential Leadership in Political Time." Excerpt from Nelson, *The Presidency and the Political System*, CQ Press. (BB)

Moe, Terry. 2009. "The Revolution in Presidential Studies," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 39:701-724. (BB)

Cameron, Charles. 2000. *Veto Bargaining*. Cambridge University Press. Chapter 2 (BB)

Howell, William. 2003. *Power without Persuasion*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 4 (BB)

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "[The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals](#)," *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(2):313-329.

November 19 Judicial process

Dahl, Robert 1957. "Decision-Making in a Democracy" *Journal of Public Law* 6: 279-295. (BB)

Casper, Jonathan. 1976. "[The Supreme Court and National Policy Making](#)," *American Political Science Review* 70(1):50-63.

Segal, Jeffrey and Albert Cover. 1989. "[Ideological Values and the Votes of U.S. Supreme Court Justices](#)," *American Political Science Review*. 83(2):557-566.

Maltzman, Forrest, Spriggs, James and Paul Wahlbeck. 1999. "Strategy and Judicial Choice: New Institutional Approaches to Supreme Court Decision Making." In C. Clayton and H. Gillman's *Supreme Court Decision-Making: New Institutional Approaches*. University of Chicago Press. (BB)

Bartels, Brandon. 2009. "The Constraining Capacity of Legal Doctrine on the U.S. Supreme Court." *American Political Science Review* 103(3):474-95.(BB)

Gibson, James and Gregory Caldeira. 2011. "Has Legal Realism Damaged the Legitimacy of the U.S. Supreme Court?" *Law and Society Review* 45(1):195-219 (BB).

Whittington, Keith. 2005. "[Interpose Your Friendly Hand: Political Support for the Exercise of Judicial Review by the United States Supreme Court](#)," *American Political Science Review* 99(4):583-96. (BB).

November 26 **Thanksgiving**

December 3 **Bureaucracy**

Lindblom, Charles. 1959. "[The Science of Muddling Through](#)." *Public Administration Review* 19 (2): 79-88.

Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. New York: Basic Books, Chapters 17 and 18.

Moe, Terry. 1995. "The Politics of Structural Change: Towards a Public Theory of Bureaucracy." In Oliver E. Williamson, Ed., *Organization Theory*. Oxford University Press. BB

Wood, B. Dan and Richard Waterman. 1991. "[The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy](#)." *American Political Science Review* 9(1):801-828.

McCubbins, Mathew and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "[Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms](#)," *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1):165-179.

Mathew D. McCubbins, Roger Noll, and Barry R. Weingast ("McNollgast"). 1987. "[Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control](#)," *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 3(2): 243-277 (BB)

December 8 (Tuesday class) – TBA

Your short research papers are due. Let's leave this class seminar open for now. When it gets closer we can decide whether to hold class or not.