

**American Political Process  
(Institutions)  
Political Science 8210  
Spring 2020**

Professor Sarah Binder  
467 Monroe; 202-994-2167  
[binder@gwu.edu](mailto:binder@gwu.edu)

Class: Tuesdays 5:10-7 pm  
Office hours: Email or stop by

**Seminar description**

This seminar is one of the department's two introductory graduate seminars for the American Politics subfield. One focuses on institutions; the other, behavior. Although it can be difficult to neatly divide the study of "institutions" and "behavior," our focus this semester will be on the study of political institutions, with an eye to exploring a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches. By the end of the semester, 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. Just as there is no single definition of what constitutes an "institution," nor do scholars on how to study or what to conclude about them.

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 in the study of American political institutions
- Understand and evaluate competing theories of American political institutions
- Understand and evaluate empirical studies of American political institutions

**Requirements**

There are a number of requirements for this seminar. All must be completed to receive a passing grade. Your final grade will be determined as follows: participation (20%), response papers (20%), research puzzle (20%), and final exam (40%).

**Participation (20%):** Your primary assignment is to complete the readings each week so that you can participate effectively in seminar discussions.

**Response papers (20%):** To bolster the quality of our weekly discussion, you are required to submit a weekly response memo for each of the twelve seminars with assigned readings. (*You can take THREE passes during the semester, but you must keep track!*) Papers are due each Tuesday by 9 am by email to me. They should be 1-2 pages long (single or double spaced), and should critically engage at least one reading (or compare readings). Focus less on summarizing the reading(s) and more on discerning their strengths and weaknesses. And raise at least one question for seminar discussion.

Here are some potential focal points for a response paper:

- What argument (if any) animates the debate across authors?
- Which parts of the work (theory, assumptions, methods, data, analysis) of the reading(s) did you find most troublesome and why?
- Do the authors' choice of methods lead them to different conclusions?
- How might one do the study differently?
- What question would you pose to the class about the reading(s)?

Grading scale for the response papers will be: ✓- (okay), ✓ (good), ✓+ (excellent)

Or...☹ ☺ ☻

**Research puzzle (20%):** Identify a research puzzle or question related to the study of political institutions that interests you. Write a 3-5 page, double-spaced paper that articulates the puzzle/question, explains why we should care about resolving it, and speculate briefly about alternative explanations. Length of paper is less important than identifying a good puzzle!

**Final exam (40%):** This will be a take-home, two-hour exam. The assignment is intended to help you prepare for the department's comprehensive exam in American politics. The exam will be open books and notes and will be taken on a computer sometime during the final exam period.

If you prefer, you can substitute a research paper for the final exam. You could develop the research puzzle into a research design or paper, or (within limits) you could complete a research paper that you already have underway. Please see me early in the semester if you prefer this option.

## 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/>

Mental Health Services 202-994-5300

The University's Mental Health Services offers 24/7 assistance and referral to address students' personal, social, career, and study skills challenges. Services for students include: crisis and emergency mental health consultations confidential assessment, counseling services (individual and small group), and referrals. For additional information see [counselingcenter.gwu.edu](http://counselingcenter.gwu.edu)

### 3) *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/>

#### **4) Safety and security**

In the case of an emergency, if at all possible, the class should shelter in place. If the building that the class is in is affected, follow the evacuation procedures for the building. After evacuation, seek shelter at a predetermined rendezvous location.

#### **5) Instruction hours**

This is a 3-credit, seminar-based course. Federal regulations for 3-credit seminars require 112.5 semester hours of instruction. This seminar is comprised of 110 minutes/week of direct instruction (in-class) and 340 minutes/week of independent learning (out of class, including reading and preparing written response papers, projects and studying).

#### **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. Be sure you have a functioning Blackboard account.

1. Hirshman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (Harvard 1970).
2. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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)

#### **Course schedule**

**January 14 Introduction to the course**

**January 21 Theoretical approaches to the study of political institutions**

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](#)" *AJPS* 28(4): 739-777.

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

Pierson, Paul. 2000. "[Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics](#)," *APSR* 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.](#)" *APSR* 78(3):734-749.

### **January 28 Power in America politics**

Dahl, Robert. 1957. "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science*, 2(3):201-215

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.](#)" *APSR* 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.

### **February 4 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)

### **February 11 Political parties (1)**

Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, Chapters 1, 7-8 (BB)

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)

Lee, Frances. Forthcoming. "[Populism and the American Party System.](#)" *Perspectives on Politics*.

### **February 18 Political parties (2)**

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

### **February 25 Interest groups**

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,”](#) *APSR* 77(2): 390-406.

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

Hall, Richard and Frank Wayman. 1990. [“Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees.”](#) *APSR*, 84(3): 797-820.

Campbell, Andrea. 2002. [“Self-Interest, Social Security, and the Distinctive Participation Patterns of Senior Citizens,”](#) *APSR* 96(3): 565-574.

Hall, Richard and Alan Deardorff. 2006. [“Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy.”](#) *APSR*, 100(1): 69-84

### **March 3 Legislative politics (1)**

Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. 1963. [“Constituency Influence in Congress.”](#) *APSR* 57 (1): 45-56.

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

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)

### **March 10 Legislative politics (2)**

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

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

Lee, Frances. 2016. *Insecure Majorities*. Chapters 1-3, 6 (BB)

Mayhew, David. 1991. *Divided We Govern*, Chapters 1, 3-4 (BB)

Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics*, University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-3 (BB)

Binder, Sarah A. 1999. "[Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock, 1947-1996](#)" *APSR*.

Fong, Christian. 2020. "[Expertise, Networks, and Interpersonal Influence in Congress.](#)" *JOP* 82(1):269-284.

### **March 24      Research puzzles**

Come prepared to present and defend your research puzzle/question. What's the puzzle? Why is it a puzzle?

### **March 31      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)

Moe, Terry and William Howell. 1999. "[Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory.](#)" *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29(4):850-73.

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

Christenson and Kriner. 2019. "[Does Public Opinion Constrain Presidential Unilateralism?](#)" *APSR* 113(4):1071-7.

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

### **April 7            Bureaucratic politics**

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.

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)

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.

Potter, Rachel. 2017. "[Slow-Rolling, Fast-Tracking, and the Pace of Bureaucratic Decisions in Rulemaking](#)," *JOP* 79(3):841-855.

#### **April 14          Judicial politics**

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

Lee Epstein et al., The Supreme Court as A Strategic National Policymaker, 50 *Emory Law Journal* 583-611 (2001)

Wahlbeck, Paul J., James F. Spriggs, and Forrest Maltzman. 1998. "[Marshalling the Court: Bargaining and Accommodation on the United States Supreme Court](#)." *AJPS* 42 (1): 294-315

Carrubba, Clifford J., Barry Friedman, Andrew D Martin, and Georg Vanberg. 2012. "[Who Controls the Content of Supreme Court Opinions?](#)" *AJPS* 56(2): 400–412

Bartels, Brandon and Christopher Johnson 2013. "[On the Ideological Foundations of Supreme Court Legitimacy in the American Public](#)," *AJPS* 57 (1)184-199

Gibson, James L, and Michael J Nelson. 2015. "[Is the U.S. Supreme Court's Legitimacy Grounded in Performance Satisfaction and Ideology?](#)" *AJPS* 59(1): 162–74

Christenson, Dino P., and David M. Glick. 2015. "[Chief Justice Roberts's Health Care Decision Disrobed: The Microfoundations of the Supreme Court's Legitimacy](#)." *AJPS* 59(2): 403–18

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

#### **April 21          Evolution of institutions**

Knight, Jack. 1992. *Institutions and Social Conflict*. Chapters 1-2 (BB)

Pierson, Paul. 2004. *Politics in Time*. Chapter 4 (BB)

March and Olson. 2005. "Elaborating the 'New Institutionalism,'" in *Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions* ( BB)

Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "[The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives](#)," *APSR* 62(1):144–68

Howell and Lewis. 2002. "[Agencies by Presidential Design](#)." *JOP* 64(4):1095-1114

Crowe, Justin. 2012. *Building the Judiciary: Law, Courts, and the Politics of Institutional Development*. Chapters 1-2 (BB)

Binder, Sarah 2007. "Where do Institutions Come From? Exploring the Origins of the Senate Blue Slip." *SAPD*, 21 (Spring) 1-15.