This seminar is the introductory graduate course for the American Politics subfield. By the end of this course, you should have a basic familiarity with some of the more fundamental and central works in political science; understand the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches for studying the American political system; and, be familiar with a couple of the more recent debates that are central to the discipline. In other words, this course attempts to strike a healthy balance between political science classics and contemporary pieces. It also is designed to highlight a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches. At the end of this semester, you should understand that there is no single way to approach political science nor is there agreement on how politicians, citizens and institutions perform.

By itself, this seminar will not cover enough material to enable you to have a complete understanding of the American Politics subfield. If you are planning to take an American Politics comprehensive exam, you should not limit your studying to material on this syllabus. Since this is a graduate level course, a basic understanding of the American political system will be assumed. If you lack such an understanding, perusing a good American Government textbook is essential. I have several texts that I would be willing to lend students enrolled in the course.

**Required Texts:** All of the texts for this course are available in the bookstore in the basement of Marvin Center. In addition to these materials, there will be a course packet that will primarily be placed in the files section of this course’s blackboard page. You should be able to get there from [http://blackboard.gwu.edu](http://blackboard.gwu.edu) and by using your GW mail user name and password. Finally, there are a number of articles I am assigning that you can reach via JSTOR. If you are on campus, you can access these from any computer linked to the internet. If you want to access JSTOR articles from your home, you will need to go to JSTOR via the GW library’s ALADIN system [www.gwu.edu/~gelman](http://www.gwu.edu/~gelman). Then go to ALADIN and enter your library barcode from your GW ID.

1. Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder, *News that Matters*
2. Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card*
3. Albert Hirschman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty*
4. Martin Wattenberg, *The Decline of American Political Parties*
5. Keith Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization*
7. Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*
8. David Mayhew, *Divided We Govern, 2nd ed.*

**Requirements:** (i) Prior to each class, I expect you to read and reflect on readings for the course. (ii) For two of the seminars (not week 13), you should prepare a written list of
questions/discussion topics about the readings. These questions will be due at 3:00 pm on the
day of the seminar. You can either bring them to my office or email them to me. (iii) For two
classes, you will need to take the leading in presenting an article/chapter. This presentation
should (a) highlight what the article is about; the nature of the evidence employed; where it fits
into the literature; and its weaknesses. At the first class meeting, we will divvy up the
articles/chapters. (iv) You should complete a 15-20 page take home final exam.

**Evaluation:** The grade in this course will be based on seminar questions/class participation
(20%), Presentations (10%), and the final exam (70%).

**Key Dates:**
Final Exam will be due on December 17.

**Week 1: Understanding Politics I (September 6)**
Cohn, “When Did Political Science Forget about Politics?” *New Republic*
(10/25/1999) (Blackboard link)

*http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198506%29297%3A2%3C293%3AHNIPTD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N

Maltzman, Sigelman, and Binder, “Leaving Office Feet First: Death in Congress.”
*http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1049-0965%28199612%2929%3A4%3C665%3ALOFFDI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5

*http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28198411%2928%3A4%3C739%3ATNEEOO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G

Pierson, “Introduction” and “Institutional Development” chapter 5, *Politics in Time*
(2004). (Blackboard link)

(Blackboard link)

**Week 2: Public Opinion I: Media (September 13)--NEED TO RESCHEDULE**

**Week 3: Public Opinion II: Individuals (September 20)**

Nie and Andersen, "Mass Belief Systems Revisited” *Journal of Politics*
*http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-3816%28197408%29396%3A3%3C540%3AMBSRPC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Y

Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, ch. 9 (1960). (Blackboard link)

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28197805%2922%3A2%3C233%3AICITMP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Q


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28199701%2941%3A1%3C30%3ARSAWPV%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z


PRESENTATION #1:

PRESENTATION #2:
Stimson, *Public Opinion in America*, ch. 2 and 3 (1991) (Blackboard link)

PRESENTATION #3:

**Week 4: Voting and Parties (September 27)**

Aldrich, *Why Parties*. Ch. 1-2. (Blackboard link)

Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, ch. 6 and 7 (1960). (Blackboard link)

Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, pp. 1-14 (part of chapter 1) and ch. 2, 3 and 8 (1957) (Blackboard link)


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199812%2992%3A4%3C883%3AMARAC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199812%2992%3A4%3C901%3AWMMART%3E2.0.CO%3B2-S

PRESENTATION: 4

**Week 5: Participation (October 4)**

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0022-3816%28200008%29962%3A3%3C846%3ATEOANG%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198603%2980%3A1%3C17%3AAVTICP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28200210%2946%3A4%3C838%3ATCOCNF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28200001%2944%3A3%3C35%3APA%2BV1%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z


PRESENTATION #5:

PRESENTATION #6:

PRESENTATION #7:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199506%29989%3A2%3C271%3ABSARMO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-V
PRESENTATION #8:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199903%2993%3A1%3C147%3AJAAVR%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E

Week 6: Interest Groups (October 11)
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28196212%2956%3A4%3C947%3ATFOP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-J

(Blackboard link)


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198506%2979%3A2%3C400%3APCARCA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-U

PRESENTATION #9:
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198812%2982%3A4%3C1129%3AOMATRD%3E2.0.CO%3B2-F

Week 7: Congress (October 18)
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199603%2990%3A1%3C8%3ATPBOPC%3E2.0.CO%3B2-1

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28196206%2956%3A2%3C310%3AHTACAA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-2


PRESENTATION #10:
Polsby, "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives" American Political Science Review (1968:144-168).*
http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28196803%2962%3A1%3C144%3ATIOTUH%3E2.0.CO%3B2-N
Week 8: Congress (October 25)


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198403%2978%3A1%3C110%3ATCSBOT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-I


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198403%2978%3A1%3C110%3ATCSBOT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-I

Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan* (1993: ch. 4, 5). (Blackboard link)

Maltzman, *Competing Principals* (1997: ch. 2). (Blackboard link)


Week 9: Presidency (November 1)


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=1065-9129%28199912%2952%3A4%3C767%3ATPOEO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-R

Kernell, *Going Public* (1993: Ch. 1, and 2) (Blackboard link)


PRESENTATION #11:


Week 10: Partisanship and the Separation of Powers (November 8)


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28199909%2993%3A3%3C519%3ATDOLG1%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0007-1234%28199304%2923%3A2%3C235%3AWTP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-5

Mayhew, *Divided We Govern*, 2nd ed. (2005)


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%28199910%2943%3A4%3C1069%3ATPOS%3E2.0.CO%3B2-0

PRESENTATION #12

Cameron, *Veto Bargaining*, ch. 4 and 5 (2000) (Blackboard link)
**Week 11: Courts (November 15)**


Murphy, *Elements of Judicial Strategy* (1964: ch. 3, 6) (Blackboard link)


**PRESENTATION #13:**


**PRESENTATION #14:**


**PRESENTATION #15:**


**Week 12: Bureaucracy (November 29)**


**PRESENTATION #16:**

PRESENTATION #17:

**Week 13: Understanding Politics II (December 6)**

Green and Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory* (1994). Ch. 2-3. (Blackboard link)


Moe, “Power and Political Institutions” *Perspectives on Politics*. (2005) (Blackboard link)


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0092-5853%2828200104%2945%3A2%3C330%3ALASCOB%3E2.0.CO%3B2-C

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198409%2978%3A3%3C734%3ATNIOFI%3E2.0.CO%3B2-J

http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-0554%28198809%2982%3A3%3C719%3ACRAPAO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-8