

**American Political Process**  
**Political Science 8210**  
**Fall 2011**

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

Class: Mondays 6:10-8 pm  
Office hours: Fridays 10am-12 pm  
or by appointment

### **Seminar Description**

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 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 the classic and recent debates that are central to the discipline. The course is designed to highlight a variety of methodological and theoretical approaches. At the end of the semester, you should understand that there is no single way to approach political science nor is there much consensus about the performance of politicians, citizens, and political organizations and institutions in meeting the demands of representative government.

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, I am assuming that you have a basic understanding of the American political system.

### **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 determined as follows: seminar participation (20%), presentation (10%), and a take-home (closed book) final exam (70%).

*Seminar participation/presentation:* Your primary assignment is to complete the readings and to participate effectively in seminar discussions each week. To bolster the quality of our weekly discussion, you are asked to undertake two tasks. First, for two of the seminar meetings, you are required to submit a list of questions and/or discussion topics by 2 pm on Monday. These questions/topics should reflect a critical reading of the week's assigned readings. Second, for one seminar meeting, you will present an article or set of articles from the assigned readings. These presentations (roughly 5-10 minutes) should:

- Describe briefly the main *themes* of the reading
- Explain what its *contributions* are to our understanding of American politics
- Provide specific *criticisms* of the study (e.g., its theoretical argument, hypotheses, evidence, analysis, etc.)
- Raise *questions* about specific theoretical or empirical issues that you did not understand

*Final exam:* The final exam will be a take-home, closed book, two-hour exam. 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 school.)

### **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 University Press
2. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection*, Yale University Press, 2nd ed.
3. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern*, 2nd ed., Yale University Press
4. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People*, Wadsworth Publishing

## Class outline

**August 29**                    **Introduction to the course**

**September 5**                **Labor Day (no class)**

**September 12**            **Studying American politics**

Cohn, "When Did Political Science Forget about Politics?" *New Republic* October 25, 1999 (BB)

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

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

Pierson, *Politics in Time* (2004), Introduction and Chapter 5 (BB)

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

Green and Shapiro, *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory* (1994), Chapters 2-3 (BB)

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

**September 19**                    **Power in America politics**

Dahl, *Pluralist Democracy in the United States* (1967: 22-24) (BB)

Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People* (all)

Olson, *The Logic of Collection Action* (1965) Chapter 1 (BB)

Bachrach and Baratz, "[The Two Faces of Power.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 1962:947-52).

Moe, "Power and Political Institutions," *Perspectives on Politics* (2005:215-233).

## September 26

## Voting and elections

Campbell et al., *The American Voter* (1960), Chapters 1, 6 and 7 (BB)

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

Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (1981), Chapter 1 and pp. 84-105 (BB)

Bartels, "[Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996](#)," *American Journal of Political Science* (2000: 35-50).

McDonald and Popkin, "[The Myth of the Vanishing Voter](#)," *American Political Science Review* (2001: 963-974). (BB)

## October 3

## Participation

Hirshman, *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* (1970)

Rosenstone and Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* (1993) Chapters 1 and 2 (BB)

Gerber and Green, "The Effect of a Nonpartisan Get-Out-The-Vote Drive: An Experimental Study of Leafletting," *Journal of Politics* (2000: 846-257).

Powell, "[American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective](#)," *American Political Science Review* (1986: 17-43).

Mutz, "[The Consequences of Cross-Cutting Networks for Political Participation](#)," *American Journal of Political Science* (2002:838-855).

Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, "[Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation](#)," *American Political Science Review* (1995: 271-294)

**October 10                    Public opinion / Political economy**

Converse, "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics," in Apter, *Ideology and Discontent*, pp. 206-61). (BB)

Nie and Andersen, "[Mass Belief Systems Revisited](#)" *Journal of Politics* (1976:541-591).

Sullivan, et al., "[Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science* (May, 1978).

Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (1992), pp. 6-53 (BB)

Stimson, *Public Opinion in America* (1991), Chapters 2 and 3 (BB)

Alford, Funk, and Hibbing. "[Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?](#)" *American Political Science Review* (2006: 153-168) (BB)

Bartels, *Unequal Democracy* (2008), Chapters 1 and 9 (BB)

Kelly and Enns, "[Inequality and the Dynamics of Public Opinion: The Self-Reinforcing Link Between Economic Inequality and Mass Preferences.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science* (2010:855-70).

**October 17                    Political Parties**

Aldrich, *Why Parties?* (1995), Chapters 1 and 2, (BB)

Vavreck, *The Message Matters* (2005), Chapters 1-3, 5 (BB)

Cohen et. al. *The Party Decides* (2008), Chapters TBA

Hetherington, "[Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization.](#)" *American Political Science Review* (2001): 619-631).

**October 24                    Interest groups**

Olson, *The Logic of Collective Action* (1965), Review chapter 1 (BB)

Walker, "[The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 77 (1963): 390-406.

Wright, "[PACs, Contributions, and Roll Calls: An Organizational Perspective,](#)" *American Political Science Review* (1985:400-414).

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

Hall and Deardorff, "[Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 100 (2006):(69-84).

Dara Z. Strolovitch, "[Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the Intersection of Race, Class, and Gender.](#)" *Journal of Politics* 68 (2006): 894-910.

## **October 31                    Media and politics**

Iyengar and Kinder, *News that Matters* (1987) Chapters 1, 2, 7 (BB)

Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Simon, and Valentino, "[Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?](#)" *American Political Science Review* (1984: 829-838).

Kahn and Kenney, "[Do Negative Campaigns Mobilize or Suppress Turnout? Clarifying the Relationship between Negativity and Participation.](#)" *American Political Science Review* (1999:877-890).

Druckman. 2004. "[Political Preference Formation: Competition, Deliberation, and the \(Ir\)relevance of Framing Effects,](#)" *American Political Science Review* 98: 671-686.

Valentino, Hutchings, and White, 2002. "[Cues that Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes.](#)" *American Political Science Review* 96: 75-90.

Prior, Markus. 2005. "[News v. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout.](#)" *American Journal of Political Science*, 49 (3): 577-592.

## **November 7                    Congress I**

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

Mayhew, *The Electoral Connection* (1974).

Polsby, "[The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives](#)," *American Political Science Review* (1968:144-168).

Miller and Stokes, "[Constituency Influence in Congress](#)." *American Political Science Review* (1963:45-56).

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

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

## **November 14                      Congress II**

Mayhew, *Divided We Govern?* 2nd edition (2005)

Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics* (1998), Chapters 2 and 3 (BB)

Binder, Sarah. "[The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock](#)." *American Political Science Review* 1999: 519-534.

Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, "[The Constituency Service Basis of the Personal Vote for U.S. Representatives and British Members of Parliament](#)," *American Political Science Review* (1984: 110-125).

Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (1992) Chapters TBA.

Cox and McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan* (1993) Chapters 4 and 5 (BB)

## **November 21                      Presidency**

Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (1960), Chapter 3 (BB)

Kernell, *Going Public* (1997), Chapters 1 and 2 (BB)

Moe, "Presidents, Institutions, and Theory," in Edwards, *Researching the Presidency* (1993) 337-386 (BB)

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

Cameron, *Veto Bargaining* (2000) Chapter 2 (BB)

Howell, *Power without Persuasion* (2003), Chapter 4 (BB)

## **November 28      Judicial process**

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

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

Murphy, *Elements of Judicial Strategy* (1964) Chapters 3, 6 (BB)

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

Maltzman, Spriggs, and Wahlbeck. "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* (1999) (BB)

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

## **December 5      Bureaucratic politics**

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

Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (1989) Chapters 17 and 18.

Moe, "The Politics of Structural Change: Towards a Public Theory of Bureaucracy." In Williamson, *Organizational Theory* (1995)(BB)

Wood and Waterman, "[The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy](#)." *APSR* (1991:801-828).

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

Huber, Shipan, and Pfahler, "[Legislatures and Statutory Control of Bureaucracy](#)," *American Journal of Political Science* (2001:330-345)