Syllabus

For most of you this course is part of your socialization into graduate study in political science, and more particularly, in American Politics. While you have probably had undergraduate courses in American Government or the like, the study of political science at the graduate level is qualitatively different from what you did as an undergraduate. The purpose of this course is to help you make the transition from consumers of knowledge to producers of knowledge. An introductory course such as this generally aims to acquaint students with the breadth of work in the field and does so at the expense of depth. In many ways this course will be no different. But the breadth of work in American Politics is huge, and we will not be able to cover it all. We will try to get a feel for some classics in the field and an understanding of contemporary controversies.

American Politics is generally thought to consist of two broad areas of study: Institutions and Behavior. As with virtually everything we do, however, the lines that define these two areas are blurred at best. Even so, the semester will be organized more or less so that we will first consider behavior and then institutions. Let me make clear my bias up front. My research and most of my teaching focuses on behavior, and thus this class will tend to focus in that direction. However, I will attempt to make some use of colleagues here at Rutgers to bring in a range of perspectives and understandings of American Politics.

There is a list of required readings for each week that I expect everyone to do before class. These readings are designed to provide a basic introduction to each topic. If American Politics is to be an examination field for you (major or minor), then the readings provide a jumping off point for further work. In addition to the required readings, I have also listed optional readings for each week. These readings serve two purposes. First, you will have to write several short papers during the semester that will be expected to engage optional readings as well as the required material. Second, these readings provide more detail on the literature of American Politics for those who plan to specialize here and who will therefore need to have some familiarity with these works. The list of optional readings is drawn from syllabi from colleagues here at Rutgers and elsewhere and from my own experience. Not everyone will agree that this is the "right" list -- there is, in fact, no agreed upon canon. Instead these represent my perspective on what is important today, given the limitations of time and space we face in a syllabus and seminar such as this.

Sakai and Acquiring Readings

I will use Sakai to put up readings that might be difficult to find, but not all our readings will be there. Some will be in books, and you will need to acquire those either from the library or through purchasing. I will endeavor to place many of the books on the graduate reserve at Alexander Library but again I urge you to buy these books (generally used is ok) in order to build your basic library. Even in this electronic age, books continue to play an important role. Of course, for many newer books you can get electronic as well as old-fashioned paper versions. And for many older books, you may find the full text has been digitized and is available through Google Books or elsewhere. For many papers, I simply expect you to learn to find them online. Generally, when you are on campus you have access to most if not all of the journals we regularly use. If you are off campus you can go through the library portal with your NetID to access things. If you need help finding a reading, simply ask me.
Requirements

Participation

Since we are doing this class during second semester, you should already have learned (even if you are a first year student) that there is no place to hide. Seminars are small and you are expected to participate actively and effectively, rather than to passively absorb something approaching knowledge while dozing in the back of a class of 50 undergraduates (not that you’ve ever done this!) Thus, first and foremost, this class requires that you attend our meetings and do the reading as assigned, completely, prior to class meetings. By “doing the readings” I mean that you will read, annotate, make notes, and otherwise be prepared to engage the authors in discussion and critique with your colleagues in the seminar. If you fail to do this we will spend three hours each week staring at each other with very little to say!

Author’s Presenter

To minimize the chances of this happening, beginning with our third week, a member of the seminar will serve as an “Author’s Presenter” for each class, where you will present the key ideas of one assigned reading of your choice. You will do this twice. You will lead the discussion by presenting core aspects of your chosen reading in a 10-15 minute presentation using power point. This process will simulate a conference style presentation with you presenting as if you are one of the authors of the work. Your colleagues will then be able to ask questions about the work in a 10 minute discussion following the presentation. The presentation should include the following:

a. What is the research question?
b. What literature/work is this work contributing to?
c. What is the theory and hypotheses?
d. What is the methodological approach and research design?
e. What are the findings?
f. What is the central contribution of the work and implications?

Author’s Defender

In addition, one person will serve as “Authors’ Defender” by seeking to defend the theory, method, and value of all the required readings for a given week. You will also do this twice. This role does not require any written work but rather is a type of participation. As is the case in many graduate seminars, critiques of work are plentiful, however there is little praise or defense of work. Your job is to defend the value and merit of the readings from unjust attacks in order to keep the discussion balanced.

At our first meeting you will have the opportunity to choose your weeks for both roles.

Short papers

You will also continue to develop your writing and critiquing career in this class. During the course of the semester you will write three short papers, no fewer than 4 pages and no more than 6 (double-spaced, 11 or 12 point font, standard margins). Two of these papers will critique our readings. You may choose any two weeks of the semester (with a limitation listed below), with the proviso that at least 1 paper MUST be focused on readings related to political institutions and at least 1 must be on a political behavior topic. Papers should be analytical in nature rather than summarize the readings. Your goal is to develop an original argument (theoretical, empirical or methodological), which improves our understanding of the underlying issues of the week’s topic. Late papers will not be accepted for credit. Papers cannot overlap with the weeks you are author presenter or assume the role of author’s defendant. A sign-up will be circulated at the first class meeting.

The third paper will be a critique of research presented in person to the department. We routinely have speakers from within and outside of Rutgers present research. You may choose any of the talks presented this semester for
your paper, whether given by Rutgers faculty or visitors. You must read the presenter’s paper and respond to it in a critical fashion as if you are reviewing it for one of our journals. I will note that everyone may choose the same speaker; in particular you may want to consider doing this for Dan Butler’s talk scheduled on February 18 at 11:00, since that one is definitely related to American Politics.

Your short paper will be due by NOON on the TUESDAY BEFORE our class. Late papers will not be accepted, and a zero grade will be assigned. But since you choose when to do your papers (subject to the limits above) turning papers in on time should be no problem. Your paper will be posted for all of us to read and consider and can be included in our discussion of the material for that class. IMPORTANT: You are to EMAIL me your papers (redlawsk@rutgers.edu) in Microsoft Word format by the deadline. You do NOT have to provide a paper copy. I will post the paper on Sakai for everyone. You are expected to check the site before class and read any papers your colleagues have written.

Final Exam

There will be a final exam designed to mimic the type of questions you could expect on a comprehensive exam. This will be an open-book, take-home exam. More details will be provided on the exam later in the semester.

There is one final requirement. There are a variety of ways to learn about a discipline, and doing assigned reading for class is only one of them. Another is to belong to the discipline’s professional societies to know the latest work when it appears (i.e., not just when a professor assigns it), to know the culture, procedures, even the gossip. Thus, I have an expectation that you will become a member of the American Political Science Association or some other association. By joining the APSA you will receive the American Political Science Review (APSR), PS and Perspectives on Politics. To become a member, see APSA’s website at http://www.apsanet.org/

Grading

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<td>Short Papers</td>
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<td>Take Home Final Exam</td>
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Books Recommended for Purchase

The following books will be assigned as required reading, in full or in significant part, or they are books you should simply have in your American Politics library. Used copies are readily accessible for most of them, and they should all be available in our library in the graduate reserves under this class, though if you use that option, you may have to share them with colleagues in the class. There are required readings in other books not listed here.

Bickel, Theodore. 1986. The Least Dangerous Branch. (2nd Ed.) Chs. 1, 4(Skim), 5 & 6

Plagiarism and Cheating

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and are treated as such by both the university and by me. In fact, I have a zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism/cheating and I will impose the most severe penalty allowed by university rules, which includes but is not limited to issuing an automatic grade of 0.0 for the course if a verified case of plagiarism/cheating occurs. You may also be required to withdraw from the program. This should not even be necessary to say to graduate students, but I do so anyway. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, or other matters of academic integrity, the following link may be helpful http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/files/documents/AI_Policy_9_01_2011.pdf.

Section II specifically discusses the definitions of cheating and plagiarism. If you are having trouble assimilating outside information into your own ideas or have any other questions concerning academic writing, see the Rutgers Learning Center (http://lrc.rutgers.edu/), or come to my office hours.

Collaborative work

Please note that unless directly indicated on an assignment otherwise, students must complete assignments individually. Papers and take home-exams are NOT to be completed in a collaborative effort with other students. Students are encouraged to discuss readings together and share notes from the class over the duration of the semester. But notes, papers, and summaries written by another student are intellectual property that cannot be simply used in your own work without appropriate citations. Once the take home exam has been distributed, you are NOT allowed to discuss the exam questions or any other course material with one another via any medium, electronic or in-person. Please note that in completion of written assignments, you should take great care to ensure that you are not putting yourself in a position of having very similarly or identically worded prose compared to another student – my expectation is that your work will be distinct from that of others.

SCHEDULE

Jan 21 Introduction - The American Experience

Reading: Federalist Papers, Nos. 1, 9, 10, 15, 16, 39, 45, 47, 49, 51, 68, 78, 81, 84, 85 Available at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/fed.asp
de Tocqueville, Alexis, Democracy in America, Chs. 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 15 Available at http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/home.html
Dahl, Robert. Who Governs? Chs. 1, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 19-28
Schattschneider, E.E. The Semisovereign People.
Optional:  *A Selection of other Classics*


**Jan 28  Classics in Voting Behavior [Rick Lau will lead this class]**

**Reading:**


Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960. *The American Voter.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.  [Focus on chapters 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, and 19.]


**Optional:**


Pomper, From Confusion to Clarity: Issues and American Voters, 1956-1968. *American Political...*
Feb 3 The Political Psychology of Voting

AUTHOR PRESENTER: David

AUTHOR DEFENDER: Kathleen

Reading:
- Downs, 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*

Optional:
Feb 10  Public Opinion & Ideology

AUTHOR PRESENTER:     Jamel
AUTHOR DEFENDER:       David

Ideology and Discontent


Kinder and Sanders, 1996. Divided by Color.


Lane, 1960. Political Ideology.
Mutz, 2011. Population Based Survey Experiments

Feb 17 Interest Groups [Beth Leech will lead this class]

**AUTHOR PRESENTER:** Greg  
**AUTHOR DEFENDER:** Jamel

**Reading:**  

**Optional:**  
Berry, 1996. The Interest Group Society.  
Schattschneider. 1960. The Semisovereign People  
Wilson, 1974. Political Organizations.
February 24

**Participation**

**AUTHOR PRESENTER:** Sudip  
**AUTHOR DEFENDER:** Kathleen

**Reading:**
- *Political Behavior,* 32(3), September 2010 is dedicated to “social pressure” field experiments. While we will not cover every paper in detail, please scan through and identify what you think are key issues and themes.


**Optional:**
- Tolbert & Smith, 2004. Educated by Initiative: The Effects of Direct Democracy on Citizens and Political Organizations in the American States  
Mar 2  Representation

AUTHOR PRESENTER:  Kathleen
AUTHOR DEFENDER:  Sudip  David


Mar 9  Presidency

AUTHOR PRESENTER:  Jamel  David
AUTHOR DEFENDER:  Abbas


Mar 23 Congress (Ross Baker will join us)

**AUTHOR PRESENTER:** Abbas
**AUTHOR DEFENDER:** Greg

Reading: Ross Baker. 2014. *Is Bipartisanship Dead?* Paradigm Books

Baker, *House and Senate*.

Mar 30  
**Bureaucracy**

**AUTHOR PRESENTER:** Abbas  
**AUTHOR DEFENDER:** Greg

James Q. Wilson, Bureaucracy (2000 ed.)

Epstein and O'Halloran, 2000. *Delegating Powers.* (Esp. Ch. 6)
Govern?

Apr 6  NO CLASS: MIDWEST POL SCI ASSN MEETING

Apr 13  Parties  (Kira Sanbonmatsu will join us from 3-4)

AUTHOR PRESENTER:  Sudip
AUTHOR DEFENDER:  Abbas


Apr 20  Law and Courts

AUTHOR PRESENTER:  Greg
AUTHOR DEFENDER:  Jamel
Reading:  Bickel, 1986. *The Least Dangerous Branch.* (2nd Ed.) Chs. 1, 4(Skim), 5 & 6

Cameron, Cover, And Segal, Senate Voting On Supreme Court Nominees: A Neo-Institutional Model. *American Political Science Review* 84(1990): 525-534
Ely, *Democracy And Distrust.*
McCloskey, *The American Supreme Court.*
Murphy, 1964. *Elements of Judicial Strategy*

Apr 27  Campaigns & Elections

**AUTHOR PRESENTER:** Kathleen
**AUTHOR DEFENDER:** Sudip

Sue Carroll and Kira Sonbonmatsu. 2013. *More Women Can Run: Gender and Pathways to the State Legislatures.* Ch. 2

Cain, Ferejohn, and Fiorina, *The Personal Vote.*
Geer. 2006. *In Defense of Negativity*
Sides and Vavreck. 2014. The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election