

American Political Institutions

POLS 60043

Fall 2022

3:30-6:15 Tuesday, Jenkins-Nanovic B066

Professor: Rachel Porter
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 12:00-3:00
Office Location: 2067 JNH

This course serves as one of two introductory graduate seminars for the American politics subfield with a focus on the study of institutions. The goal is to familiarize students with many of the foundational works in the study of American political institutions and provide an understanding of the different methodological and theoretical approaches currently used to study the American political system. Most weeks will be evenly split between classics in American politics and the latest research being done in the field. Students should emerge from this course with the broad knowledge necessary for the comprehensive exam in American politics and ideas for how their own research interests might fit into the current state of the literature.

Required/Recommended Books

We will read most or all of the following books:

- Steven S. Smith. "Party Influence in Congress." 2007.
- Frances E. Lee. "Insecure Majorities: Congress & The Perpetual Campaign." 2016.
- Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John R. Zaller. "The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform." 2008.
- Mayhew, David. "Congress: The Electoral Connection." 1974.
- Keith Krehbiel. "Pivotal Politics." 1998 University of Chicago.

Course Requirements & Grade Distribution

Seminar Participation (25%)

This class will be conducted as a seminar. I expect you to come to each class having done the readings and ready to discuss the material with your classmates. You will be **assigned two seminars over the course** of the semester that you will be responsible for leading. For these seminars, you will send out a list of discussion questions for the rest of the class by **12pm on Sunday**. As you do the reading for each class, you should think about three things: (1) *Criticisms of particular readings*: Are there weaknesses in the types of data or methods an author used to test his or her assumptions, in the theoretical starting points of a study, or in the conclusions the author reached based on the evidence? (2) *How the readings relate to each other and what they tell us about American politics*: How do the particular readings for a given week fit together and how are they related to earlier readings? Taken as a whole, what do the readings tell us about political behavior and American democracy? (3) *Lines of future research*: What questions do these readings leave unanswered? Do they point to new directions for future research?

Short Papers (15%)

Over the course of the semester, you will be required to complete three short (2-3 pages double spaced) papers in response to assigned readings. For three weeks of your choosing, you will write

a response paper on a single reading for that week as if you were reviewing the paper for publication. Each review should clearly identify and discuss the empirical, theoretical, or methodological contribution of the chosen reading. This may also involve discussing the reading's place in the literature relative to other readings for that week, or readings from other sessions of class. The paper should additionally identify and discuss any weaknesses or potential extensions that may provide fertile ground for future research. **Reviews must be submitted by 9:00 AM on the day of our class meeting (i.e., Tuesday).** No more than one review can be submitted for credit in a given week. It is your responsibility to keep track of your papers and make sure you have submitted all three by the last class.

Research Papers (50%)

Each student will write an original research paper/proposal on American political institutions that is approximately 15-20 pages in length (including tables and figures). I expect that all of your papers will involve an introduction, literature review, and development of theory/hypotheses. At minimum, students should present a plan for executing the empirical component of their paper. Students are encouraged to test their theory using available data or an original data collection. The research paper for this course will be discussed in greater detail in class.

A paper proposal (approximately four pages), laying out the topic of the paper, its theoretical importance, and the types of data/method you plan to use is due by **October 14th**. However, you should begin talking to me about potential paper topics well before this date. Our class session on **October 25th** will be dedicated to discussing each paper proposal; students will circulate their proposals to the rest of the class a week beforehand. Students' paper proposals will be the assigned class reading for our October 25th. **Final papers will be due on the date of class presentation.**

Project Presentation (10%)

Students will present the key takeaways from their research papers in class on **December 6th**. These presentations will be 10-15 minutes in length and will mimic a conference-style presentation. The format and expectations for these presentations will be discussed in greater detail in class.

Grading Policy

I do not accept late papers except in the case of a true emergency. Similarly, incomplete grades will be given only in cases of true emergencies. It is in your best interest (and a requirement of this course) to finish all class assignments on time and to complete this course during the Fall 2022 semester. Of course, all students are required to follow Notre Dame's honor code, which can be found at <https://learningcontinuity.nd.edu/honor-code-academic-integrity/>.

Course Outline and Reading Assignments

All readings, unless listed under the required section, will be posted online.

August 23rd, 2022: Navigating Graduate School

Required/Recommended

- Health and Well-being in Graduate School: Preventing Burnout by Thomas S. Benson and Christina A. Boyes (<https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/api->

[gateway/apsa/assets/orp/resource/item/61f966a071868d696dc62700/original/health-and-well-being-in-graduate-school-preventing-burnout.pdf](https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/api-gateway/apsa/assets/orp/resource/item/61f966a071868d696dc62700/original/health-and-well-being-in-graduate-school-preventing-burnout.pdf))

- Feeling like a Fraud: Imposter Syndrome in Political Science by Thomas S. Benson, Bobbi Gentry and Sarah Shugars (<https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/api-gateway/apsa/assets/orp/resource/item/61f9656e360c84e986b26d86/original/feeling-like-a-fraud-imposter-syndrome-in-political-science.pdf>)
- To Twitter or Not to Twitter? By Salah Ben Hammou and Elizabeth Meehan (<https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/api-gateway/apsa/assets/orp/resource/item/61f6e277e4d9b81009fd6678/original/to-twitter-or-not-to-twitter.pdf>)
- Gender and the Political Science Graduate Experience: When Leaning In Isn't Enough By: Maya Novak-Herzog, Alisson Rowland, Kimberly Saks McManaway, and Tabitha Bonilla (<https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/api-gateway/apsa/assets/orp/resource/item/61f046ef8d70c3984b0dbae9/original/gender-and-the-political-science-graduate-experience-when-leaning-in-isn-t-enough.pdf>)
- Rejection by Amanda Murdie (<http://www.duckofminerva.com/2012/10/rejection.html>)
- Six steps to a better relationship with your future self By: Jake Bowers (http://www.jakebowers.org/PAPERS/tpm_v18_n2.pdf)

August 30th, 2022: Theorizing about American Political Institutions (Part I)

Required

- Kenneth A. Shepsle. "Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior and Institutions", 2nd Ed. 2010. W.W. Norton & Co, Chapters 1-4.
- Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C.R. Taylor. "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms." 1996. *Political Studies*. 44(5): 936-957.
- Barry Weingast. "Rational Choice Institutionalism," in Political Science: State of the Discipline. Edited by Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner. 2002. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Kenneth A. Shepsle. "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach." 1989. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*. 1(2): 131-147.

Discussant: Connor

Recommended

- James G. March and Johan P. Olsen. "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life." 1984. *American Political Science Review*. 78(3): 734-749.
- Paul Pierson and Theda Skocpol. "Historical Institutionalism in Contemporary Political Science," in Political Science: State of the Discipline. Edited by Ira Katznelson and Helen Milner. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Junko Kato. "Institutions and Rationality in Politics: Three Varieties of Neo-Institutionalism." 1996. *British Journal of Political Science*. 26(4):553-582.

September 6th, 2022: Analyzing American Political Institutions (Part II)

Required

- Adam Przeworski. "Institutions Matter?" 2004. *Government and Opposition* 39(4): 527-540.

- Paul Pierson. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics." 2000. *American Political Science Review*. 94(2): 251- 267.
- John Aldrich and Kenneth Shepsle. Explaining Institutional Change: Soaking, Poking, and Modeling in the U.S. Congress. In Congress on Display, Congress at Work. Edited by W. Bianco. 2000. University of Michigan Press.
- John Aldrich, Calvin Jillson, and Rick Wilson. "Why Congress? What the Failure of the Confederation Congress and the Survival of the Federal Congress Tell Us About the New Institutionalism," in Process, and Political Change in Congress: New Perspectives on the History of Congress. Edited by David Brady and Mathew D. McCubbins. 2000. Stanford University Press. Chapter 12 (465-492).

Discussant: Connor

September 13th, 2022: Power & Political Elites

Required

- Robert Dahl. "The Concept of Power." 1957. *Behavioral Science*, 2(3): 201-215.
- Peter Bachrach and Morton S. Baratz. "The Two Faces of Power." 1962. *American Political Science Review*, 56(4): 947-952.
- E.E. Schattschneider. "The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America." 1975. Wadsworth Publishing.
- Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page. "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens." 2014. *Perspectives on Politics*, 12(3):564–581.

Recommended

- Anthony Downs. "An Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy." 1957. *Journal of Political Economy*, 65(2):135–150, 1957
- Robert Dahl. "Who Governs? Democracy & Power in an American City." 1961. Yale University Press.
- Jack L. Walker. "A Critique on the Elitist Theory of Democracy." 1966. *American Political Science Review*, 60(2): 285-295.
- Robert Dahl. "Further Reflections on "The Elitist Theory of Democracy" 1966. *American Political Science Review*, 60(2): 296-305.

Discussant: Emma, Abigail, and McKenzie

September 20th, 2022: Political Parties (I): Parties as Organizations & in the Electorate

Required

- John Aldrich. "Why Parties: A Second Look." 2011. University of Chicago Press, Chapters 1-2
- Morris Fiorina. "Parties and Partisanship: A Forty-Year Retrospective." 2002. *Political Behavior*. 24(2): 93-115
- Marty Cohen, David Karol, Hans Noel, and John R. Zaller. "The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform." 2008. University of Chicago, Chapters 2, 4 and 7

- Frances Lee. "Populism and the American Party System: Opportunities and Constraints." 2020. *Perspectives on Politics*, 18(2): 370-388.

Recommended

- Marc J. Hetherington. Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization. 2001. *American Political Science Review*, 95(3): 619-631.
- Geoffrey C. Layman, Thomas M. Carsey, John C. Green, Richard Herrera, and Rosalyn Cooperman. Activists and Conflict Extension in American Party Politics. 2010. *American Political Science Review*, 104(2):324-346.
- Matt Grossman and David A. Hopkins. "Asymmetric Politics: Ideological Republicans and Group Interest Democrats." 2016. Oxford University, Chapters 1-3

Discussant: Emily

September 27th, 2022: Political Parties (II): Parties in the Legislature & Party Power

Required

- Steven S. Smith. "Party Influence in Congress." 2007. Cambridge University Press, Chapters 2,3,5
- Frances E. Lee. "Insecure Majorities: Congress & The Perpetual Campaign." 2016. University of Chicago Press, Chapters 1-6
- Sarah A. Binder. "The Dysfunctional Congress." 2015. *Annual Review of Political Science*. 18: 85-100

Recommended

- Andrew B. Hall and Kenneth Shepsle. "The Changing Value of Seniority in the U.S. House: CPG Revised." 2014. *Journal of Politics*. 76: 98-113.
- Joseph Cooper and David Brady. "Institutional Context and Leadership Style." 1981. *American Political Science Review*. 75: 411-25.
- Diana Z. O'Brien. "Rising to the Top: Gender, Political Performance, and Party Leadership in Parliamentary Democracies." 2015. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(4): 1022- 1039.

Discussant: Emma

October 4th, 2022: Congress (I): The Politics of Elections

Required

- Mayhew, David. 1974. "Congress: The Electoral Connection." New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Richard F. Fenno. "U.S. House Members in their Constituencies: An Exploration." 1977. *American Political Science Review*, 71(3):883-917.
- Gary C. Jacobson "Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections, 1946-86." 1989. *American Political Science Review* 83: 773-793.
- Danielle M. Thomsen. "Ideological Moderates Won't Run: How Party Fit Matters for Partisan Polarization in Congress." 2014. *Journal of Politics*, 76: 786-797.
- Gary C. Jacobson. "It's Nothing Personal: The Decline of the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections." 2015. *Journal of Politics*, 77(3):861-873.

Recommended

- Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless. "Gaining and Losing Interest in Running for Public Office: The Concept of Dynamic Political Ambition." 2011. *Journal of Politics*, 73: 443-462.
- Richard L. Fox and Jennifer L. Lawless. "Entering the Arena?: Gender and the Decision to Run for Office." 2004. *Journal of Politics*, 48(2): 264-280.
- Cherie D. Maestas and Cynthia R. Rugeley. "Assessing the 'Experience Bonus' through Examining Strategic Entry, Candidate Quality, and Campaign Receipts in U.S. House Elections." 2008. *American Journal of Political Science* 52: 520-535.

Discussant: Ben, Rasheed

October 11th, 2022: Congress (II): The Politics of Representation

Required

- Roberts Weissberg. "Collective vs. Dyadic Representation in Congress." 1978. *American Political Science Review*. 72: 535-547.
- Justin Grimmer. "Appropriators not Position Takers: The Distorting Effects of Electoral Incentives on Congressional Representation." 2013. *American Journal of Political Science*. 57(3): 624-642.
- Joseph Bafumi and Michael C. Herron. "Leapfrog Representation and Extremism: A Study of American Voters and Their Members in Congress." 2010. *American Political Science Review*, 104(3): 519-542.
- Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Matto Mildemberger, and Leah C. Stokes. "Legislative Staff and Representation in Congress." 2019. *American Political Science Review*, 113(1): 1-18.
- Kenneth Lowande, Melinda Ritchie, and Erinn Lauterbach. "Descriptive and Substantive Representation in Congress: Evidence from 80,000 Congressional Inquiries." 2019. *American Journal of Political Science* 63(3): 644-659.

Recommended

- John D. Griffin, Brian Newman, and Christina Wolbrecht. "A Gender Gap in Policy Representation in the U.S. Congress?" 2012. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 37: 35-66.
- Eric R. Hansen and Sarah A. Treul. "The Symbolic and Substantive Representation of LGB Americans in the US House." 2015. *Journal of Politics*, 77: 955-967.
- Claudine Gay. "The Effect of Black Congressional Representation on Political Participation." 2001. *American Political Science Review*, 95(3):589-602.

Discussant: Ben, Rasheed

October 25th, 2022: Presentations of Research Puzzle

November 1st, 2022: Congress (III): The Politics of Lawmaking

Required

- Brandice Canes-Wrone, David Brady, and John Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *American Political Science Review*. 96(1): 127-40.

- Christian Fong. "Expertise, Networks, and Interpersonal Influence in Congress." 2020. *Journal of Politics*, 82(1): 259-284.
- Christian R. Grose, Neil Malhotra, and Robert Van Howling. 2015. "Explaining Explanations: How Legislators Explain their Policy Positions and how Citizens React." *American Journal of Political Science* 59: 724-743.
- David R. Jones. "Partisan Polarization and Congressional Accountability in House Elections." 2010. *American Journal of Political Science*. 54(2): 323-337.

Recommended

- Jennifer L. Lawless, Sean M. Theriault, and Samantha Guthrie. "Nice girls? Sex, Collegiality, and Bipartisan Cooperation in the U.S. Congress." 2018. *Journal of Politics*, 80(4):1268– 1282.
- Jamie L. Carson, Gregory Koger, Matthew J. Lebo, and Everett Young. "The Electoral Costs of Party Loyalty in Congress." 2010. *American Journal of Political Science*. 54(3): 598-616.

Discussant: Emily

November 15th, 2022: Interest Groups

Required

- Mancur Olson. "The Logic of Collective Action." 1965. Harvard University Press. Chapter 1
- Richard Hall and Alan Deardorff. "Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy." 2006. *American Political Science Review*, 100(1): 69- 84
- Joshua L. Kalla and David E. Broockman. "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3):545–558, 2016
- Michael E. Sheppard and Hye Young You. "Exit Strategy: Career Concerns and Revolving Doors in Congress." 2020. *American Political Science Review*, 114(1): 270-284.

Recommended

- Jack Walker. "The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America." 1963. *American Political Science Review*. 77(2): 390-406.
- Richard Hall and Frank Wayman. "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees." 1990. *American Political Science Review*, 84(3): 797-820.
- Frank R. Baumgartner and Beth L. Leech. "Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science." 1998. Princeton University Press, Chapters 1-4
- Brandice Canes-Wrone and Kenneth M. Miller. "Out of District Donors and Representation in the U.S. House." 2022. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 47(2): 361-395.

Discussant: Adriana and McKenzie

November 8th, 2022: Presidency

Required

- Brandice Canes-Wrone. “Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public.” 2005. University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1, 2, 5, and 6
- Keith Krehbiel. “Pivotal Politics.” 1998 University of Chicago. Chapters 1-3
- Dino P. Christenson and Douglas L. Kriner. “Mobilizing the Public Against the President: Congress and the Political Costs of Unilateral Action.” 2017. *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(4):769–785.

Recommended

- Richard Neustadt. “Presidential Power.” 1960. John Wiley and Sons, Chapter 3

Discussant: Adriana and Abigail

November 22nd, 2022: Bureaucracy

Required

- McCubbins, Mathew and Thomas Schwartz. “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms.” 1984. *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1):165-179.
- Hye Young You and Melinda N. Ritchie. “Legislators as Lobbyists.” 2019. *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. 44(1): 65-95.
- Joshua D. Clinton, David E. Lewis, and Jennifer L. Selin. “Influencing the Bureaucracy: The irony of Congressional Oversight.” 2014. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(2):387– 401.
- Melinda N. Ritchie. “Back-Channel Representation: A Study of the Strategic Communication of Senators with the U.S. Department of Labor.” 2018. *Journal of Politics*, 80(1): 240–253.

Recommended

- McCubbins, Mat, Roger Noll, and Barry Weingast. “Administrative Procedure as Instruments of Political Control.” 1987. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*. 3: 243-277.
- Wood, B. Dan and Richard Waterman. 1991. “The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy.” *American Political Science Review*. 9(1):801-828.
- Rachel Potter. 2017. “Slow-Rolling, Fast-Tracking, and the Pace of Bureaucratic Decisions in Rulemaking.” *Journal of Politics*. 79(3):841-855.

November 29th, 2022: TBD

TBD

December 6th, 2022: TBD

TBD