

# CORE SEMINAR IN AMERICAN POLITICS

PSCI 7011.001  
FALL 2008  
TUESDAY  
11:00 AM - 1:30 PM

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OFFICE HOURS: TH 10 a.m. - noon

This course concerns the study of the scintillating field of American politics. Each week, we will cover a different topic important to the field, from the political behavior of citizens to the operation and consequences of political institutions. Given the vastness of the field, we will be unable to cover all of the major debates and topics in American politics during the course of the semester. However, we will explore a good number of fascinating and important research puzzles within the field. In doing so, we will also consider the array of different research methods and analytical approaches used within the discipline and discuss a range of classic and contemporary readings about American politics. The course should be especially helpful for those who hope to take comprehensive exams in American politics and those interested in teaching courses in the subject.

## reading assignments

There are no required texts that you will need to purchase for the course. Instead, course readings will be drawn from several texts as well as journal articles. Journal articles are accessible through the library's website, while book chapters have been placed on the library's e-reserves. You may wish to purchase the book you review for the book review and critique assignment as well as any other texts you feel will be useful as you continue your political science pursuits.

## requirements

participation (25% of your final grade)

attendance

One important prerequisite of participation is class attendance. Class attendance is vital and required.

keeping up with the readings

It is essential to read all of the assigned readings and think carefully about what you have read in advance of the class session. Frantically skimming the articles in the minutes before class begins will limit the quality of our class discussion and impede your ability to learn anything useful. Your education and our class discussion of the readings will both benefit from your careful reading of the articles as well as the time you spend in advance of class reflecting on what you have read and learned.

participating in class discussion

Beyond attending class, you will also be expected actively participate in class discussions in a thoughtful way.

discussion questions

Each week, you will be responsible for writing three questions to discuss in class that week. These questions might relate to the articles individually, cover themes engaged across different articles, or perhaps cross between that week's topic and prior readings. Good discussion questions will be able to engage the class in careful deliberation and lively debate. You should submit your discussion questions via e-mail by midnight on the Sunday before class meets.

### short papers (each is 4% of your final grade)

Throughout the course, you will be responsible for five short papers in response to a week's readings. These response papers should be single-spaced and two pages in length. You may choose which weeks you would like to write response papers. Your response papers must be turned in before we discuss that week's set of readings.

Papers should not summarize the readings. Instead, you should write papers that respond to the points and arguments raised in the readings – what you think about what you read, rather than recounting the details of what you read.

- This could take the form of critique – where you critique the theory or methods of the research and discuss the implications of these limitations for the authors' findings.
- You could also suggest extensions to the points raised in the readings, suggesting questions we might ask if we pushed these arguments further.
- You could contrast a week's readings with other theories covered in this class or other courses.
- You could discuss points of conflict between the readings, and discuss how to resolve these disagreements.

In other words, there are many ways to write a successful response paper. The best response papers will be thoughtful and focused – you should spend time thinking through your arguments and what you have to say about the readings. Papers hastily written in the hours before class will be poorly received, as will papers that are merely summaries or restatements of points raised in the readings.

### book review and critique (10% of your final grade)

You will be provided with a list of selected books related to each topic covered on the syllabus. At the beginning of the semester, you will select one of these books to read and critique. When we cover that topic in class, you will present a short summary of the book to the class and engage some of the strengths and weaknesses of the text. You should also turn in a book review essay (two to four pages) on the same matters, for distribution to the rest of the class via the course website.

### literature assessment paper (25% of your final grade)

Instead of a research paper for the course, your major writing assignment is to write an essay that assesses the current literature on a topic of your choosing, given instructor approval. This essay should be five to ten single spaced pages in length and is due near the end of the semester. The central goal of the paper will be to assess and summarize the research about a particular topic – to identify the central question or questions, highlight the most important literature related to the topic, and provide commentary about the strengths and weaknesses of the current research in the area. More details will be outlined on a separate handout.

### final exam (20% of your final grade)

The final exam for the course is an opportunity for you to show mastery of the material covered over the course of the semester. Questions on the final exam will resemble those asked on the comprehensive exam in American politics. The final exam will be take-home and open notes.

## CULearn is your friend

This syllabus, assignments, and other exciting material can be accessed on the class website on [culearn.colorado.edu](http://culearn.colorado.edu).

## special accommodations

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. You can contact the Disability Services office for more information at [www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

## some important comments on academic integrity

- Plagiarism and other academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. If you are not familiar with the rules of citing sources in written work or what constitutes plagiarism, you should contact me or refer to the University Honor Code at [www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode). Academic dishonesty will result in an F in the course and referral to the Honor Court for additional non-academic sanctions.
- All papers are expected to be original work, not previously or simultaneously handed in for credit in another course (unless prior approval of all instructors involved is obtained).

# CORE SEMINAR IN AMERICAN POLITICS

## course schedule

### 1. Introduction

**Tuesday, August 26**

*The study of American politics, approaches and methods*

### 2. Civic engagement

**Tuesday, September 2**

*Voter turnout, political participation, social capital, tolerance, deliberation.*

Who participates in politics and why do they do so? Why are some more politically tolerant than others?

- Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 89:271-294.
- Powell, G. Bingham, Jr. 1986. "American Turnout in Comparative Perspective." *American Political Science Review* 80(1):17-44.
- Putnam, Robert. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6:65-78.
- Mutz, Diana C. 2002. "Cross-Cutting Social Networks: Testing Democratic Theory in Practice." *The American Political Science Review* 96(1):111-126.
- Gibson, James L. 2008. "Intolerance and Political Repression in the United States: A Half Century after McCarthyism." *American Journal of Political Science* 52:96-108.

### 3. Political psychology

**Tuesday, September 9**

*Psychology of opinion formation, citizen motivation and capabilities*

What do people know about politics? How do they organize their beliefs? How do they form opinions?

- Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In David Apter, ed. *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: The Free Press.
- Lupia, Arthur, and Mathew D. McCubbins. 1998. *The Democratic Dilemma: Can Citizens Learn What They Need to Know?* New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2-4.
- Lodge, Milton, Marco R. Steenbergen, and Shawn Brau. 1995. "The Responsive Voter: Campaign Information and the Dynamics of Candidate Evaluation." *American Political Science Review* 89:309-326.

### 4. Public opinion

**Tuesday, September 16**

*Persuasion, opinion change, macropolitics, opinion dynamics*

What are the roots of public opinion? Why do political opinions change?

- Sears, David O., and Rick Kosterman. 1994. "Mass Media and Political Persuasion." In Sharon Shavitt and Timothy C. Brock, eds., *Persuasion: Psychological Insights and Perspectives*. Allyn & Bacon.
- Beck, Paul Allen, Russell J. Dalton, Steven Greene, and Robert Huckfeldt. 2002. "The Social Calculus of Voting: Interpersonal, Media, and Organizational Influences on Presidential Choices." *American Political Science Review* 96:57-73.
- Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Stimson, James A. 2004. *Tides of Consent: How Public Opinion Shapes American Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 5.
- Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapter 6.

### 5. The news media

**Tuesday, September 23**

*Media effects, media as an institution, interactions between politicians and the press*

What drives the content of the news media? What are the consequences for news consumers?

- Patterson, Thomas E. 1993. *Out of Order*. New York: Random House. Prologue and Chapter 1.
- Cook, Timothy E. 1998. *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 4-5.
- Kuklinski, James H., and Lee Sigelman. 1992. "When Objectivity is Not Objective: Network News Coverage of U.S. Senators and the 'Paradox of Objectivity.'" *Journal of Politics* 54:810-833.
- Baum, Matthew A. 2002. "Sex, Lies, and War: How Soft News Brings Foreign Policy to the Inattentive Public." *American Political Science Review* 96:91-109.
- Mutz, Diana C., and Byron Reeves. 2005. "The New Videomalaise: Effects of Televised Incivility on Political Trust." *American Political Science Review* 99(1):1-15.

## 6. Campaigns and vote choice

**Tuesday, September 30**

*Vote choice, campaign learning and decision-making*

What are the effects of campaigns? How do people decide whom to vote for? What informs vote choice?

- Marcus, George E., and Michael B. MacKuen. 1993. "Anxiety, Enthusiasm, and the Vote: The Emotional Underpinnings of Learning and Involvement during Presidential Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 87(3):672-685.
- Basinger, Scott J., and Howard Lavine. 2005. "Ambivalence, Information, and Electoral Choice." *American Political Science Review* 99:169-184.
- Lewis-Beck, Michael S., William G. Jacoby, Helmut Norpoth, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapters 4 and 6.
- Rabinowitz, George, and Stuart Elaine Macdonald. 1989. "A Directional Theory of Issue Voting." *American Political Science Review* 83:93-121.
- Gelman, Andrew, and Gary King. 1993. "Why Are American Presidential Election Campaign Polls So Variable When Votes Are So Predictable?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23:409-451.

## 7. Political parties

**Tuesday, October 7**

*Party organizations, realignment, partisanship*

Why do political parties form? Why do political parties rise, decline, and change over time?

- Aldrich, John H. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-2.
- Fiorina, Morris P. 1980. "The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics." *Daedalus* 109: 25-45.
- Schlesinger, James. 1985. "The New American Political Party." *American Political Science Review* 79(4):1152-1169.
- Miller, Gary, and Norman Schofield. 2003. "Activists and Partisan Realignment in the United States." *American Political Science Review* 97(2):245-260.
- MacKuen, Michael B., Robert S. Erikson, and James A. Stimson. 1989. "Macropartisanship." *American Political Science Review* 83:1125-1142.

## 8. Elections

**Tuesday, October 14**

*Congressional elections, candidate strategy, incumbency, electoral institutions*

Who runs for office and why? What explains election outcomes?

- Mayhew, David R. 1974. "Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals." *Polity* 6:295-317.
- Jacobson, Gary C. 1989. "Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections." *American Political Science Review* 83:773-794.
- Sellers, Patrick J. 1998. "Strategy and Background in Congressional Campaigns." *The American Political Science Review* 92(1):159-171.
- Fox, Richard L., and Jennifer L. Lawless. 2004. "Entering the Arena? Gender and the Decision to Run for Office." *American Journal of Political Science* 48:264-280.
- Cameron, Charles, David Epstein, and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1996. "Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?" *Amer. Political Science Review* 90:794-812.

## 9. Representation in Congress

**Tuesday, October 21**

*Representation, legislative responsiveness to constituents*

Do politicians respond to public preferences? When and how is policy representation achieved?

- Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown. Chapters 1 and 7.
- Gay, Claudine. 2007. "Legislating Without Constraints: The Effect of Minority Districting on Legislators' Responsiveness to Constituency Preferences." *The Journal of Politics* 69(2):442-456.
- Peterson, David A. M., Lawrence J. Grossback, James A. Stimson, and Amy Gangl. 2003. "Congressional Response to Mandate Elections." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(3):411-426.
- Jones, Bryan D., and Frank R. Baumgartner. 2004. "Representation and Agenda Setting." *Policy Studies Journal* 32(1):1-24.
- Stimson, James A., Michael B. MacKuen and Robert S. Erikson. 1995. "Dynamic Representation." *American Political Science Review* 89:543-565.

## 10. Congress as an institution

**Tuesday, October 28**

*Congressional decision-making, effects of institutional environments*

How do members of Congress make decisions and what factors shape these choices?

- Polsby, Nelson. 1968. "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives." *American Political Science Review* 62:144-168.
- Kingdon, John W. 1977. "Models of Legislative Voting." *The Journal of Politics* 39(3): 563-595.
- Mayhew, David. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (selection excerpted in Samuel Kernell and Steven S. Smith, eds.. 2000. *Principles and Practices of American Politics: Classic and Contemporary Readings* Washington, DC: CQ Press.)
- Fenno, Richard. 1973. *Congressmen in Committees*, Boston: Little Brown. Chapters 3-4.
- Aldrich, John H., and David W. Rohde. 2000. "The Republican Revolution and the House Appropriations Committee." *The Journal of Politics* 62(1):1-33.
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press. Chapters 3, 6.

## 11. Interest groups

**Tuesday, November 4**

*Collective action and interest group formation, interest group populations, lobbying and its effects*

Why do interest groups form? When and how do interest groups influence public policy?

- Walker, Jack. 1983. "The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America." *American Political Science Review* 77:90-406.
- Hansen, John Mark. 1985. "The Political Economy of Group Membership." *American Political Science Review* 79:79-96.
- Lowery, David, and Virginia Gray. 1995. "The Population Ecology of Gucci Gulch, or the Natural Regulation of Interest Group Numbers in the American States." *American Journal of Political Science* 39:1-29.

- Hall, Richard D., and Frank W. Wayman. 1990. "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Buying of Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees." *American Political Science Review* 84:797-820.
- Smith, Mark A. 1999. "Public Opinion, Elections, and Representation Within a Market Economy: Does the Structural Power of Business Undermine Popular Sovereignty?" *American Journal of Political Science* 43:842-863.

## 12. The presidency

**Tuesday, November 11**

*Presidential power and influence*

What are the roots of presidential power? How do institutions and personalities shape decision-making?

- Neustadt, Richard E. 1990. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*. New York: The Free Press. Chapter 3.
- Kernell, Samuel. 1997. *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*. 3rd ed. Washington: Congressional Quarterly Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. 2001. "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(2):313-329.
- Howell, William G. 2003. *Power without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1 and 2.
- Gilmour, John B. 2002. "Institutional and Individual Influences on the President's Veto." *Journal of Politics* 64:198-218.

## 13. Supreme Court and the judiciary

**Tuesday, November 18**

*The role of the Supreme Court, the legal model and the attitudinal model, responsiveness to public opinion*

What drives judicial decision-making?

- Dahl, Robert A. 1958. "Decision Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as a National Policy Maker." *Journal of Public Law* 6:279-95.
- Caldeira, Gregory A., and John R. Wright. 1988. "Organized Interests and Agenda Setting in the U.S. Supreme Court." *American Political Science Review* 82:1109-1127.
- Segal, Jeffrey A., and Harold J. Spaeth. 2002. *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited*. Cambridge University Press. Chapters 2, 3, 7, and 8.
- McGuire, Kevin T., and James A. Stimson. 2004. "The Least Dangerous Branch Revisited: New Evidence on Supreme Court Responsiveness to Public Preferences." *Journal of Politics* 66:1018-1035.

**Tuesday, November 25**

Fall break – class does not meet

## 14. Bureaucracy

**Tuesday, December 2**

*Bureaucratic control, congressional oversight*

Are bureaucrats responsive to elected officials and the public?

- Wilson, James Q. 1989. *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It*. New York: Basic Books. Chapter 9.
- Niskanen, William. 1971. *Bureaucracy and Representative Government*. Chicago: Aldine, Atherton. Chapters 4, 14.
- McCubbins, Mathew, Roger Noll, and Barry Weingast. 1987. "Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 3:243-77.
- Wood, B. Dan, and Rick Waterman. 1991. "The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy." *American Political Science Review* 85:801-828.
- Shipan Charles R. 2004. "Regulatory Regimes, Agency Actions, and the Conditional Nature of Congressional Influence." *American Political Science Review* 98:467-480.

## 15. Policy outcomes

**Tuesday, December 9**

*Policy change, issue evolution*

What moves public policy? Why do agendas, policies, and outcomes change over time?

- Jones, Bryan D., Tracy Sulkin, and Heather A. Larsen. 2003. "Policy Punctuations in American Political Institutions." *American Political Science Review* 97:151-169.
- Carmine, Edward B., and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press. Chapters 1, 7, 8.
- Kelly, Nathan J. 2005. "Political Choice, Public Policy, and Distributional Outcomes." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(4):865-880.