

POLS 6300: American Politics Seminar

Fall 2018

Professor Josh M. Ryan

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Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 10:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m., and by appointment. You are also welcome to stop by my office at other times and I'll make every attempt to meet with you.

Class Time and Location: Thursday 1:30-4:15, Old Main 318

Course Description

The study of institutions and behavior make up the two major sub-fields of American politics. The discipline of American politics began growing distinct from history and law in the late 1800s with new research on Congress pioneered by a few scholars, including Woodrow Wilson, whose book, "Congressional Government" (1885) still remains an important treatise on the American national legislature. Today, research on American institutions focuses on the major institutional components of American national government: the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, as well as the bureaucracy. Other, newer and developing areas of institutional work, most notably on state politics and the parties, are beginning to take their place in graduate courses in American institutions. Research on political behavior focuses on American knowledge and attitudes, representation, the responsiveness of elected officials, and political participation, such as voting or protesting. This course will also cover many of the advances in behavioral research as a result of field experiments and improved techniques for causal inference.

This course is meant as a graduate-level introduction to American politics. As such, it is a broad overview of the extant literature, and surveys the current state of knowledge, rather than providing an in-depth discussion of any individual topic area. Students will naturally find their interest drawn to one or two topics, rather than all of them, and I encourage them to use this course as a way of directing their intellectual curiosity. However, it is my hope that this course offers a sufficient background in the discipline to provide the foundation for students to engage in more specific and advanced coursework or research in a particular area.

The material in this course is more advanced than that in undergraduate work and much of our time will be spent on approaches, larger theoretical questions, and methods of research, rather than on the particulars of American politics. As such, a basic understanding of the institutional design of the various aspects of the United States government is expected; we will not spend time discussing more basic concepts like the role of the three branches of government or the purpose of the bureaucracy. I encourage any students who feel that they may not have sufficient background with a particular aspect of the American political system to ask me for suggested supplementary readings, which I will be happy to provide. Besides focusing on theories of American politics, we will also discuss how this research relate to other major themes in American politics such as representation, the rights of minorities, and the balance of power between different institutional actors.

We will briefly touch on the numerous ways of studying institutions and public opinion, including historical, sociological, and rational choice perspectives. We will discuss and analyze the different methodological approaches prominent in American politics research, namely qualitative, quantitative, and formal approaches. It is important that students are conversant in each of these major paradigms and understand how each promotes causal inference. However, consistent with the standards and practices in the discipline (and the instructor's own biases), the dominant approach taken in the class, and the vast majority of the literature we read, will use rational choice theory and quantitative or formal methods. It is my hope that the class will promote the development and understanding of both of these approaches, and I will do my best to assist students in fully understanding the material.

At the end of the course, students should have an understanding of the dominant institutional and behavioral

approaches and the important questions which drive research in the discipline. I also hope that students develop their research skills, and gain the ability to critically evaluate the existing research, particularly with respect to theoretical rigor, research design, empirical tests, and causal conclusions. At the end of this course, students should be well-versed enough in the subfield to pursue their own publication-worthy research projects. I also hope that students will better understand discipline processes, norms, and expectations.

Reading

The readings are listed in the syllabus below. All readings should be completed before class to ensure we can engage in a lively discussion. These articles can be found through Jstor.org, or through google scholar.

Course Requirements and Other Information

There is a significant amount of reading, and I expect that students will have all the readings completed prior to our class meeting. This is a small graduate seminar, so it will be very clear if students have not done the reading. Further, it will make for a very difficult and boring class session. If I find that a large percentage of the class is not completing the reading on a regular basis, I may assign graded response papers to incentivize reading.

This class is discussion based, meaning students will do the majority of speaking and will move the class forward. I will do my best to ensure the class is structured appropriately, and to answer any questions students have about the reading. Each class session, a group of students will be responsible for leading the discussion (see below).

This class, like many in political science, often deals with subjects that are controversial. Engaging with these issues is an important part of being an informed citizen and as such, we will not shy away from discussing controversial current events. This also means you should never feel embarrassed or afraid to share your opinion, even if it means disagreeing with other students in the class. However, each of us should remember that we have different experiences and different viewpoints. We must always be respectful of other students and other opinions. I take this policy very seriously and have **zero tolerance** for inappropriate, crude, disrespectful, or demeaning comments. I reserve the right to use an appropriate punishment for any student who engages in disrespectful behavior. This may include removal from the class, receiving a zero on an assignment, or being reported to university officials. Please speak with me promptly if you feel there is a civility problem in the classroom. See the USU Student Code of Conduct at <https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode/article5>.

I have a no cell phone or laptop policy. For the sake of your classmates, please ensure your cell phone is on silent and please do not text in class. I do not allow laptops because experience has shown me they create distractions for other students. Please go to the bookstore and buy a notebook to take notes in.

There is no attendance requirement for the class. If you miss a class for any reason, it is not necessary to tell me. However, this is a graduate class, and you are expected to attend all classes except in extreme extenuating circumstances. If you miss more than two classes, you should drop the class.

The Americans with Disabilities Act states: "Reasonable accommodation will be provided for all persons with disabilities in order to ensure equal participation within the program." If a student has a disability that will likely require some accommodation by the instructor, the student must contact the instructor and document the disability through the Disability Resource Center (797-2444), preferably during the first week of the course. Any request for special consideration relating to attendance, pedagogy, taking of examinations, etc., must be discussed with and approved by the instructor. In cooperation with the Disability Resource Center, course materials can be provided in alternative format, large print, audio, diskette, or Braille.

I will periodically send out emails to the class list. You are automatically subscribed to the list if you

are enrolled in the class through your campus email account or other email you specify. The list will allow me to inform you of changes in assignments, the schedule or to attach additional reading. I cannot send emails out to an email account not recorded by the University. The USU preferred email listed is an official means of communication between myself and the students. If you have any questions, please see USU's Email Communications Policy at <http://catalog.usu.edu/content.php?catoid=12&navoid=3142> and/or talk to me.

Please see <http://www.usu.edu/provost/faculty-life/syllabus.cfm> for additional USU and course policies on academic freedom, the grievance process, sexual harassment, and the withdrawal and incomplete process.

Grading

There are three grades for this class: a research paper, two response papers and a class presentation.

Discussion Leader and Response Papers, 30%

A group of students will be responsible for leading class discussion every week. Students should develop questions and discussion topics to ask of the class. In addition, the students leading discussion will be required to submit a 2-3 response paper to the readings. Both the response paper and discussion will be graded on a 0-5 scale. Each student will lead class discussion three times per semester, and as a result, will turn in three response papers (each worth 10% of the overall grade). Additional details will be provided in class.

Research Paper, 60%

A research paper, consisting of an original theory and a research design, of approximately 15-20 pages will be due near the end of the semester in class. We will discuss the paper topics in class in a few weeks. The research paper should be a project appropriate for a graduate course in American politics and should, hopefully, lead to a full research project that will eventually be published. We will discuss the paper throughout the semester and a number of assignments related to the paper will be due prior to the end of the semester.

Class Presentation 10%

Students will be required to present their paper at the end of the semester. These presentations will be similar to conference presentations in that about 10 minutes per student will be given, with time for comments and questions. The papers should be completed prior to the class presentation.

Misc. Grading Information

Plagiarism and/or cheating will not be tolerated under any circumstances. Anyone caught plagiarizing or cheating will receive a grade of zero on the assignment and/or the course, and may be reported to the Vice President of Student Services. Please see the Student Code of Conduct at <https://studentconduct.usu.edu/studentcode/article6> for USU's policies on cheating and plagiarism.

You must complete all assignments to pass the class.

Schedule

Please note this schedule is tentative. I reserve the right to change it or add or subtract readings or assignments.

Week 2: Syllabus, Introduction, and Background

- James A. Stimson. Professional writing in political science: A highly opinionated essay. Working Paper, ND
- Douglas L. Kriner and Andrew Reeves. The influence of federal spending on presidential elections. *American Political Science Review*, 106(2):348–366, 2012

Week 3: Institutions in Political Science and Approaches

- Gabriel A. Almond and Stephen J. Genco. Clouds, clocks, and the study of politics. *World Politics*, 29(4):489–522, 1977
- Jonathan Bendor, Terry M. Moe, and Kenneth W. Shotts. Recycling the garbage can: An assessment of the research program. *American Political Science Review*, 95(1):169–190, 2001
- R. Harrison Wagner. Who’s afraid of rational choice theory? Working Paper, October 2001

Week 4: Congress—Legislative Organization

- Kenneth Shepsle and Barry Weingast. Institutional foundations of committee power. *The American Political Science Review*, 81:85–103, 1987
- Keith Krehbiel. Where’s the party? *British Journal of Political Science*, 23(2):235–266, 1993
- Matthew J. Lebo, Adam J. McGlynn, and Gregory Koger. Strategic party government: Party influence in congress, 1789–2000. *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(3):464–481, 2007

Week 5: Representation and Elections

- Barbara Sinclair. Question: What’s wrong with congress? answer: It’s a democratic legislature. *Boston University Law Review*, 89:387–398, 2009
- Justin Grimmer. Appropriators not position takers: The distorting effects of electoral incentives on congressional representation. *American Journal of Political Science*, 57(3):624–642, 2013
- Brandice Canes-Wrone, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan. Out of step, out of office: Electoral accountability and house members’ voting. *The American Political Science Review*, 96(1):127–140, 2002

- Jamie L. Carson, Gregory Koger, Matthew J. Lebo, and Everett Young. The electoral costs of party loyalty in congress. *American Journal of Political Science*, 54(3):598–616, 2010

Week 6: The Presidency—Institutional Design and Extra-Institutional Power

- George C. Edwards III and B. Dan Wood. Who influences whom? the president, congress, and the media. *The American Political Science Review*, 93(2):327–344, 1999
- Charles Cameron and Nolan McCarty. Models of vetoes and veto bargaining. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7:409–435, 2004
- Jon C. Rogowski. Presidential influence in an era of congressional dominance. *American Political Science Review*, 110(2):325–341, 2016

Week 7: The Bureaucracy

- Joshua D. Clinton, Anthony Bertelli, Christian R. Grose, David E. Lewis, and David C. Nixon. Separated powers in the united states: The ideology of agencies, presidents, and congress. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(2):341–354, 2012
- Kenneth J. Meier, Robert D. Wrinkle, and Jerry L. Polinard. Representative bureaucracy and distributional equity: Addressing the hard question. *The Journal of Politics*, 61(4):1025–1039, 1999
- John D. Huber, Charles R. Shipan, and Madelaine Pfahler. Legislatures and statutory control of bureaucracy. *American Journal of Political Science*, 45(2):330–345, 2001

Week 8: The Courts and Judicial Politics

- Tom S. Clark. The separation of powers, court curbing, and judicial legitimacy. *American Journal of Political Science*, 53(4):971–989, 2009
- Melinda Gann Hall. Electoral politics and strategic voting in state supreme courts. *The Journal of Politics*, 54(2):427–446, 1992
- Michael A. Bailey and Forrest Maltzman. Does legal doctrine matter? unpacking law and policy preferences on the us supreme court. *American Political Science Review*, 102(3):369–384, 2008
- Gregory A. Caldeira and James L. Gibson. The etiology of public support for the supreme court. *American Journal of Political Science*, 36(3):635–664, 1992

Week 9: Citizen Competence and Political Knowledge

- Jason Barabas, Jennifer Jerit, William Pollock, and Carlisle Rainey. The question(s) of political knowledge. *American Political Science Review*, 108(4):840–855, 2014

- Richard Lau and David P. Redlawsk. Voting correctly. *American Political Science Review*, 91(3):585–598, 1997
- Larry M. Bartels. Uninformed votes: Information effects in presidential elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(1):194–230, 1996
- Philip E. Converse. The nature of belief systems in mass publics. In David Apter, editor, *Ideology and Discontent*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1964

Week 10: Partisanship

- Christopher H. Achen. Parental socialization and rational party identification. *Political Behavior*, 24(2):151–170, 2002
- Luke Keele and Nathan J. Kelly. Dynamic models for dynamic theories: The ins and outs of lagged dependent variables. *Political Analysis*, 14(2):186–205, 2006
- Joseph Bafumi and Robert Y. Shapiro. A new partisan voter. *The Journal of Politics*, 71(1):1–24, 2009

Week 11: Political Reasoning and Persuasion

- Paul Allen Beck, Russell J. Dalton, Steven Greene, and Robert Huckfeldt. The social calculus of coting: Interpersonal, media, and organizational influences on presidential choices. *American Political Science Review*, 96(1):57–73, 2002
- Andrew Gelman and Gary King. Why are presidential election campaign polls so variable when votes are so predictable? *British Journal of Political Science*, 23(4):409–451, 1993
- Milton Lodge, Marco R. Steenbergen, and Shawn Brau. The responsive voter: Campaign information and the dynamics of candidate evaluation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(2):309–326, 1995
- Scott J. Basinger and Howard Lavine. Ambivalence, information, and electoral choice. *American Political Science Review*, 99(2):169–184, 2005

Week 12: Priming, Framing, and Media Effects

- Shanto Iyengar, Mark D. Peters, and Donald R. Kinder. Experimental demonstrations of the “not-so-minimal” consequences of television news programs. *American Political Science Review*, 76(4):848–858, 1982
- James N. Druckman. The implications of framing effects for citizen competence. *Political Behavior*, 23(3):225–256, 2001
- Thomas E. Nelson, Rosalee A. Clawson, and Zoe M. Oxley. Media framing of a civil liberties conflict and its effect on tolerance. *American Political Science Review*, 91(3):567–583, 1997

- Michael. Tesler. Priming predispositions and changing policy positions: An account of when mass opinion is primed or changed. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(4):806–824, 2015

Week 13: No class, Thanksgiving

Week 14: No class—office Hours to discuss papers

- Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. Beyond ses: A resource model of political participation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(2):271–294, 1995
- Alan S. Gerber, Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. Social pressure and voter turnout: Evidence from a large-scale field experiment. *American Political Science Review*, 102(1):33–48, 2008
- Paul Allen Beck and M. Kent Jennings. Pathways to participation. *American Political Science Review*, 76(1):94–108, 1982
- John E. McNulty, Conor M. Dowling, and Margaret H. Ariotti. Driving saints to sin: How increasing the difficulty of voting dissuades even the most motivated voters. *Political Analysis*, 17(4):435–455, 2009

Week 15: Presentations

References

- [Ach02] Christopher H. Achen. Parental socialization and rational party identification. *Political Behavior*, 24(2):151–170, 2002.
- [AG77] Gabriel A. Almond and Stephen J. Genco. Clouds, clocks, and the study of politics. *World Politics*, 29(4):489–522, 1977.
- [Bar96] Larry M. Bartels. Uninformed votes: Information effects in presidential elections. *American Journal of Political Science*, 40(1):194–230, 1996.
- [BDGH02] Paul Allen Beck, Russell J. Dalton, Steven Greene, and Robert Huckfeldt. The social calculus of coting: Interpersonal, media, and organizational influences on presidential choices. *American Political Science Review*, 96(1):57–73, 2002.
- [BJ82] Paul Allen Beck and M. Kent Jennings. Pathways to participation. *American Political Science Review*, 76(1):94–108, 1982.
- [BJPR14] Jason Barabas, Jennifer Jerit, William Pollock, and Carlisle Rainey. The question(s) of political knowledge. *American Political Science Review*, 108(4):840–855, 2014.
- [BL05] Scott J. Basinger and Howard Lavine. Ambivalence, information, and electoral choice. *American Political Science Review*, 99(2):169–184, 2005.
- [BM08] Michael A. Bailey and Forrest Maltzman. Does legal doctrine matter? unpacking law and policy preferences on the us supreme court. *American Political Science Review*, 102(3):369–384, 2008.
- [BMS01] Jonathan Bendor, Terry M. Moe, and Kenneth W. Shotts. Recycling the garbage can: An assessment of the research program. *American Political Science Review*, 95(1):169–190, 2001.
- [BS09] Joseph Bafumi and Robert Y. Shapiro. A new partisan voter. *The Journal of Politics*, 71(1):1–24, 2009.
- [BVS95] Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. Beyond ses: A resource model of political participation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(2):271–294, 1995.
- [CBG⁺12] Joshua D. Clinton, Anthony Bertelli, Christian R. Grose, David E. Lewis, and David C. Nixon. Separated powers in the united states: The ideology of agencies, presidents, and congress. *American Journal of Political Science*, 52(2):341–354, 2012.
- [CG92] Gregory A. Caldeira and James L. Gibson. The etiology of public support for the supreme court. *American Journal of Political Science*, 36(3):635–664, 1992.