American Political Institutions
PS 9140

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Course Description
This course is designed to introduce graduate students to the principal political institutions in the United States and some of the major debates involved in the scholarly study of these bodies. We will focus on national-level institutions and more particularly on the Congress, the presidency, the Supreme Court, and the federal bureaucracy. Since we will cover a wide range of material, the course is designed more as a survey of the field than as an in-depth research seminar. As a result, we will be more interested in discussing classic texts and lasting themes relative to these institutions than in covering the most contemporary research in these areas. At the end of the semester, I expect students to be conversant in the principal literature on American political institutions and aware of some of the major debates in this field. Since I assume that most students in the class will not be majoring in American politics, grades will be based on examinations rather than on research papers.

Texts (all required)
In addition to periodic articles, our readings for the semester will come from seven books:


Since it is impossible to conduct a graduate seminar with students who are unprepared, I expect everyone to have completed all the assigned readings prior to the beginning of class each week. Needless to say, both regular attendance and prompt arrival for the beginning of class are assumed.

Grading
Semester grades will be determined as follows:
Seminar participation = 20%
Short essays = 30%
Midterm examination = 25%
Final examination = 25%

I will judge your seminar participation by the quality and quantity of your contributions to class discussions. The contributions can be in the form of insightful questions, comments, critiques of the reading, responses to colleagues, etc. I reserve the right to stimulate class discussion by any means necessary.

You will write three short (4-5 page) essays on assigned topics over the course of the semester; each essay will be worth 10 percent of your final grade. Due dates for these essays are noted in the schedule below. At my discretion, you may be allowed to re-write some of the essays to improve your grades. These essays must be typed, double-spaced, use reasonable (i.e., 10 to 12 point) fonts, and employ standard margins (i.e., one inch on all sides). While you may discuss the general topics for the assignments with your colleagues in the class, essays are to represent your own individual efforts.

The midterm will be given in class on October 9th. The final examination will be given during the last scheduled seminar session on December 4th.

You may check your grades whenever you like via the Blackboard website (blackboard.missouri.edu).

**Academic Misconduct**
Academic misconduct — defined as appropriating the words, ideas, or work of others and using them as your own through cheating or plagiarism — is something that I will not tolerate. I will prosecute cases of suspected academic misconduct to the fullest extent of University policy, and that can mean expulsion from the University. I advise you to consult relevant sections of the *M Book* for further information.

**Class Schedule and Assignments**

Week 1 (August 21st) — Administrivia

Week 2 (August 28th) — Introduction: Separate Institutions Sharing Powers

Readings: Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chapters 13 and 14
(http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-c.html#CHAPTER%20XIV)
Locke, *Second Treatise on Government*, chapters 11-13
(http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm)
(www.constitution.org/cm/sol.txt)
*Federalist #10* (http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_10.html)
*Federalist #51* (http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fed_51.html)

Week 3 (September 4th) — No class – Labor Day
Week 4 (September 11th) — Congress I: Electoral Repercussions
Mayhew, all

Week 5 (September 18th) — Congress II: Congress, Committees, and Information
Readings: Krehbiel, all

Week 6 (September 25th) — Congress III: Congress and the Roll of Political Parties
Krehbiel, “Where’s the Party?” *BJPS* 1993
Krehbiel, “Paradoxes of Parties in Congress.” *LSQ* 1999
Smith, “Positive Theories of Congressional Parties.” *LSQ* 2000
Sinclair, “Do Parties Matter,” (on blackboard)
Cox and McCubbins, “Agenda Power in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1877-1986” (on blackboard)

**N.B.: First essay assignment made in class.**

Week 7 (October 2nd) — Presidency I: Presidents and Presidential Power
Neustadt, all

**N.B.: First essay assignment due in class.**

Week 8 (October 9th) — Presidency II: Leadership, Change, and Political Time
Readings: Skowronek, pp. 1-285

Week 9 (October 16th) — Midterm Examination

Week 10 (October 23rd) — Presidency III: Leadership, Change, and Political Time, continued
Readings: Skowronek, pp. 287-end

**N.B.: Second essay assignment made in class.**

Week 11 (October 30th) — Supreme Court I: Preferences and Judicial Behavior
Readings: Segal and Spaeth, all

**N.B.: Second essay assignment due in class.**

Week 12 (November 6th) — Supreme Court II: Collegial Justice
Readings: Maltzman, Spriggs, and Wahlbeck, all
Week 13 (November 13th) — Bureaucracy I: Organization
Readings:       Wilson, chapters 1-9
                N.B.: Third essay assignment made in class.

Week 14 (November 20th) — No class — Thanksgiving Recess

Week 15 (November 27th) — Bureaucracy II: Bureaucracy, Bureaucrats, Politics, and Politicians
Readings:       Wilson, chapters 10-20
                N.B.: Third essay assignment due in class.

Week 16 (December 4th) — Final Examination