

Public Policy 330
Distributive Politics
Winter 2006
Professor Boris Shor
Tuesdays, 3-5:50
Version: March 2, 2006

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Office Hours: Wednesday, 3-5 pm

Description The federal government in the United States spends several trillions of dollars per year. These dollars—a highly visible aggregation of public policy—are accompanied by innumerable decisions about how the money is spent. Distributive politics is the study of those decisions: who gets what resources, where, how, and why—as allocated by any level of government. This course focuses on the activities of democratic institutions in the United States, including elections, interest groups, geographic constituencies, parties, bicameralism, committees, and the presidency in structuring how government resources are allocated and distributed. The course introduces theoretical concepts and applies them to specific examples. By the end of the course, students should be able to understand why government resources flow as they do to particular constituencies.

Texts There are 5 required books for the class.

- Arnold, R. Douglas. 1979. *Congress and the bureaucracy: A theory of influence*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Evans, Diana. 2004. *Greasing the Wheels*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mayhew, David R. 1974. *Congress: The Electoral Connection*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Rundquist, Barry and Thomas Carsey. 2002. *Congress and Defense Spending*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Stein, Robert M. and Kenneth N. Bickers. 1995. *Perpetuating the pork barrel: policy subsystems and American democracy*. Cambridge, England; New York: Cambridge University

Press.

All other assigned readings (articles and portions of books) are available electronically on the course web site, which is located at chalk.uchicago.edu.

Requirements

1. **Active Participation.** Since this class is being taught as a seminar, your attendance, preparation, and participation are crucial. Do not be afraid of saying something “wrong,” and do not be afraid of asking questions. Most of the other students are probably thinking along similar lines as you. The only guiding principle in participation is that it should be constructive.
2. **Reaction Papers.** Write four 1 page papers (1” margins, double-spaced, and 12-point serif font, like Times New Roman) reacting to a week’s reading of your choosing. You should address a single issue brought up by the readings, and your critique of it as handled by the author. Papers are due no later 1pm on the day of the class in electronic form (Microsoft Word or, preferably, PDF) to my email address.
3. **Policy Discussion.** For a single week’s readings (to be assigned), do research on an example of that week’s theoretical arguments in a contemporary public policy area. Use journalistic sources to flesh out the impact on the ground of those arguments. Present your findings for that week orally to the class for about 10-15 minutes, followed by a short discussion that you lead with a few prepared questions.
4. **Research Paper(s).** You have the option of writing two 7-8 page papers (1” margins, double-spaced, and 12-point serif font, like Times New Roman) due throughout the quarter (due in paper form before the start of class), or a single 15-20 page paper due by Friday, March 17 (approval needed along with a meeting to discuss the topic of the paper).

Policies

- **Lateness.** Is frowned upon. Each day a paper is late without a substantial excuse, a full letter grade is deducted from the paper.
- **Incompletes.** Will be granted rarely, if at all.
- **Plagiarism.** Will result in a failing grade for the course.

Grading

- Participation = 20%
- Reaction papers = 20%
- Policy discussion = 10%
- Paper(s) = 50%

1 Jan 3. Introduction, Part 1

Discussion of pre-course readings

2 Jan 10. Introduction, Part 2

[Book Readings]

Mayhew (1974) 13-61

Stein and Bickers (1995) 3-5, 15-29

Evans (2004) 1-28

[eChalk Readings]

Lowi (1964)

Wildavsky and Caiden (2003) 1-24

Recommended

Fiorina (1977) 38-49

3 Jan 17. Geography and Coalition Strategy

[Book Readings]

Arnold (1979) 3-54

Stein and Bickers (1995) 30-89

Evans (2004) ch 2

[eChalk Readings]

Fenno (1978) 1-29

Shepsle and Weingast (1981)

Recommended

Arnold (1990) 88-118

4 Jan 24. Interest Groups

[Book Readings]

Stein and Bickers (1995) 90-117

[eChalk Readings]

Jack L. Walker (1991) 19-57

Hardin (1982) ch 1-2

Sandler (1992) ch 2

Ansolabehere, de Figueiredo and Jr. (2003)

Paper 1 assignment distributed.

5 Jan 31. Elections

[Book Readings]

Stein and Bickers (1995) 118-136

[eChalk Readings]

Cox and McCubbins (1986)

Dixit and Londregan (1996)

Levitt and Snyder (1997)

Lindstadt (2005)

Finan (2004)

6 Feb 7. Committees

[Book Readings]

Evans (2004) 57-89

[eChalk Readings]

Weingast and Marshall (1988)

Gilligan and Krehbiel (1990)

Roberts (1990)

Alvarez and Saving (1997)

Savage (1991)

7 Feb 14. House and Senate

[Book Readings]

Evans (2004) 162-209

[eChalk Readings]

Lee (2003)

Milligan (2003)

8 Feb 21. Party

[eChalk Readings]

Levitt and Snyder (1995)

Balla et al. (2002)

Bickers and Stein (2000)

Cox and McCubbins (1993)

Paper 1 assignment due.

Paper 2 assignment distributed.

9 Feb 28. President

[Book Readings]

Evans (2004) 131-161

[eChalk Readings]

Mebane and Wawro (2002)

Canes-Wrone (2001)

McCarty (2000)

10 Mar 7. Defense

[Book Readings]

Arnold 1979, ch 6

[eChalk Readings]

Carsey and Rundquist (1999)

Derouen and Heo (2000)

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Shor (2006)

11 Mar 14 - Paper 3 Due Date

Paper 2 due.

References

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