This is a graduate introduction to American politics. It is impossible to cover the field in a single quarter, so we have to make choices. We shall brush over the usual major topics with the aim to familiarize you with many different ideas. My aim is to acquaint you with the main lines of work in the field as well as to provide an opportunity for you to develop your analytic skills.

Course Structure. We shall run the class as a reading seminar. You are asked to do the weekly readings. In fact, you must do all the assigned readings before class starts, without fail. You should expect to spend six to nine hours each week in preparation. For each meeting, one or two members of the seminar will have a special responsibility for leading the discussion, focusing attention on the theoretical concerns, and keeping us all awake. Class participation is an important part of this sort of course, both for you and for everyone else. Thus, part of your grade will depend on your work in the seminar sessions. This should be fun!

Further, as an introduction to the craft of doing research, I want you to write five one to three page research notes. Each note should delve more deeply into a very specific issue raised in class, in the readings, or just in your area of interest. Briefly specify the question, and be careful to say precisely how an answer to this question would advance the literature. These papers are due on the Tuesday before class, to be circulated to the whole of the class via email (the listserv address is forthcoming).

"Supplementary" and "Additional" Readings: In the weeks that you are responsible for leading the class, you will also be responsible for reading the "supplementary" readings, and to prepare a brief (1 - 2 paragraph) summary of the principal argument of each reading, which you will circulate to your colleagues in the class. While this is no substitute for actually doing the reading, the idea is that these summaries should help your colleagues become familiar with a broader reach of the field than we can accomplish with direct readings in this course. The "additional" readings are classics of the field, well-deserving for reading by all, and certainly by those students who wish to become specialists in the fields.

In addition to this routine reading and thinking and writing, you will take an examination. The format mimics that of preliminary exams so that you will be prepared for the next stage. Our goal is to provide you a chance to show that you have mastered the intellectual material. Please note that this is a "reading and writing" seminar. It is not a "lecture" course. You will benefit from this opportunity when you spend time thinking about the intellectual material you encounter. I understand that you begin this course as a "student" who completes assignments. I hope that you end it as an engaged participant who takes on the study of American politics as an exciting personal enterprise.

Grades. Your final grade will depend on the quality of your verbal participation and written work. Specifically, grades will be computed as follows:

- Participation 30%
- Discussion Leadership (3 times @ 5% each) 15%
- Research Note (5 times @ 5% each) 25%
- Final Examination 30%

Prerequisites. This course has no formal prerequisite. Yet, as a graduate course, it assumes that you are familiar with the basic character of American politics. If your background does not include formal training in Political Science, or if you feel as though you might benefit from a review, you might want to purchase an undergraduate textbook and read the material carefully. Please do let us know if you expect difficulties here.
3 Jan

Introduction

- Publius, 1787, Federalist Papers, Nos. 10, 51

10 Jan

The Mass Public: Information, Preferences and Consciousness
(Shang and Bethany)

Required:

Supplementary:

Additional:

16 Jan

Voting and Elections
(Shang, Hongsoo, Joan, and Laszlo)

Required:

Supplementary:

24 Jan

Interest Groups
(Vanessa, Bill, Koulaa, Deva, Brandi)
Required:

Supplementary:

Additional:

Schattschneider, EE. *The Semi-Sovereign People*.

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31 Jan

Media Politics

(Bob and Laszlo)

**Required:**


**Supplementary:**


**Additional:**


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7 Feb

Political Parties

(Bill, Deva, Vanessa, Kouslaa, and Brandi)
Required:


Supplementary:


Additional:

14 Feb

The Presidency
(Deva, Kouslaa, Hangsoo, and Brandi)

Required:

Supplemental:
• Light, Paul. 1982. *The President’s Agenda: domestic policy choice from Kennedy to Carter (with notes on Ronald Reagan)*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. Chapters 2, 3

Additional:

21 Feb

Representation in Congress
(Joan, Bethany, and Bob)

Required:
3, 6.

Supplementary:

Additional:

28 Feb
Congress as a Political Institution
(Bob, Vanessa, Shang, and Hongsoo)

Required:

Supplementary:

Additional:

Macro Politics & Political Economy
(Laszlo and Joan)

Required:

Supplementary:

Additional:
• Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2000. The Macro Polity. Cambridge University Press. (forthcoming), Ch. 6 "Policy Preferences." (The MSWord document zip file is here.)
American Political Science Review 77:1:75-190.

What we won’t cover but you should still learn about

The Supreme Court

Required:
**Supplementary:**

- Segal, Jeffrey A., and Harold J. Spaeth. 1996. “The Influence of Stare Decisis on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices.” *American Journal of Political Science* 40:971-1003. (See also related critiques in the same issue if you have time.)

**Additional:**


**The Public Bureaucracy**

**Required:**

Supplementary:

Additional:

Civic Engagement

• Sullivan, John et al., With Malice Toward Some: How People Make Civil Liberties Judgements
• McAdam, D., McCarthy, J.D., & Zald, M.N. (eds.), 1996. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements.

Politics and Race

• Rogers Smith, Civic Virtues. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), Chapter 1. (Hard copy available.)
• David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo. Racialized Politics: The Debate about
Racism in America. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), Chapter 1 (Hard copy available.)