This is the first of two semester-long courses that provide graduate students with an overview of the scholarly study of American politics. These two courses constitute the American politics “field survey.” The field survey is designed for students who intend to specialize in American politics, as well as for those students whose primary interests are comparative politics, international relations, or political theory, but who desire an intensive introduction to the “American” style of political science. During this first course, we will focus largely, but not exclusively, on American political institutions (at the national, state, and local levels). Reading assignments are drawn heavily from foundational contributions (i.e., the canons of the American politics literature). Sessions will aim to clarify and probe the puzzles, theories, methods, and evidence presented in the various texts and to assess the contributions they make to an understanding of American politics and the broader development of social and political science. I also hope to give you a sense of the trends in scholarship in various substantive areas, draw your attention to research design issues, and help you locate areas for future work. The class is conducted predominantly in a discussion format.

Course Requirements

Readings and discussion
The readings, though extensive, are not comprehensive. Students are required to have completed the assigned weekly reading by each class and to arrive thoroughly prepared to contribute actively to all discussions. You should expect to be called on to discuss any reading in any session. There are required readings followed by a selection of recommended readings. This list is not comprehensive, but gives a sense of some additional readings of note.

For each book or article, students should focus on the following:
1) What is the research question?
2) What is the argument?
3) What evidence does the author provide?
4) What conclusions are reached?
5) Are you convinced? Why or why not?
6) How might the author’s research be improved?
7) In what ways does this article/book contribute to our existing understanding of American politics?

Assignments
All students will write four analytic response papers during the course of the semester. These papers must be typed (standard 12 pt. Times New Roman or equivalent) and double-spaced. Use
“parenthetical citation” (Shapiro and Lax 2008, 435). As Shapiro and Lax (2008, 435) say, “use parenthetical notation.” There is also a final exam after the last class.

The response papers should be nor more than five pages in length. You must choose, in advance, the four weeks for which you will write a paper. The purpose of these papers is not to determine whether you have completed and understood the readings. Rather, they are assigned to help you develop your skills in the art of scholarly argumentation. It is thus vital that you not waste space or time summarizing the works. What you should do is critically analyze one or more of the week’s readings from the perspective of theory, logic, design, method, or evidence, assessing conclusions, relationships to other works, or contribution to the development of political science. You should stake out a coherent position clearly and forcefully in the first paragraph, then press it relentlessly forward. Papers that fail to develop a forceful, compelling argument will receive a poor mark. They should be carefully edited and tight. They do not demand reading or research beyond the week’s assignments. When in doubt, substitute more thinking for additional reading or writing. One print copy of the response paper is due in Professor Phillips’ mailbox by 1pm on the day of class. Late papers will not be accepted except by specific arrangement in advance!

The take-home final exam is similar to a comprehensive exam, albeit shorter. You will answer two questions from a list that I provide. Timing to be determined.

Grading
Course grades will reflect effort and performance in class discussions, papers, and the final exam. Weighting of components is as follows: participation 25%; short papers 50%; and final exam 25%.

Readings

September 13th: Congress: Representation and Institutionalization
Required:

Recommended:


**September 20th:** **Congress: Parties, Polarization and Ideology**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**September 27th:** **Presidency**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**October 4th: Bureaucracy**

**Required:**


Recommended:

October 11th: Courts

Required:


Recommended:


October 18th: State Politics

Required:

Recommended:


October 25th: Urban Politics


Recommended:


**November 1st: Federalism and Fragmentation**


**Recommended:**

- Burns, Nancy. 1994. *Formation of American Local Governments: Private Values in Public Institutions*

November 8th: University Holiday


Required:

Recommended:

November 22nd: Public Opinion and Government Responsiveness

Required:


**Recommended:**

**November 29th: Policymaking**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**


**December 6th: Inequality**

**Required:**


• Kalla, Joshua and David Broockman. Forthcoming. “Congressional Officials Grant Access to Individuals Because They Have Contributed to Campaigns: A Randomized Field Experiment.” *American Journal of Political Science*.


**Recommended:**


• Bhatti, Yosef, and Robert Erikson. How Poorly are the Poor Represented in the US Senate? (in *Who Gets Represented?*, Peter Enns and Christopher Wlezien, eds).


