

Political Science 550 Q: Advanced Seminar on American Politics

Time: Tu/Th, 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm
Location: Eaton Residential College 145

Professor: Casey A. Klofstad
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Course Description

This seminar provides students with a survey of research on American Politics. We will read influential works of the past, as well as cutting-edge research. Particular attention will be paid to discussion of the methods and theories used in the literature we will read.

Learning Outcomes

By successfully completing this course, students will:

- Develop a deeper understanding of American politics
- Develop skills in assessing social science research critically
- Develop writing skills
- Develop team working skills
- Develop public speaking and rhetorical skills through in-class discussions

Requirements

Participation: 15%

Attendance, completion of reading and writing assignments, and active participation in class discussion are required. I may give quizzes in class to assess your progress. From time to time we will also conduct team-based learning tasks (e.g. case studies) in class.

Midterm Examination: 35% (February 24th and February 26th; in class)

The midterm will cover the first half of the course. It will be comprised of a combination of essays and identifications. Students will be responsible for all material covered in discussion and in the readings. Make up examinations will only be given in extreme circumstances, and will not be scheduled without prior consent.

Final Exam: 35% (Wednesday, May 6th: 11:00am – 1:30pm)

The final exam will cover the second half of the course (i.e. non-cumulative). The final will be the same format as the midterm. Students will be responsible for all material covered in discussion and in the readings. Make up examinations will only be given in extreme circumstances, and will not be scheduled without prior consent.

Literature Reviews: 15% (due in class on Tuesday of the 3 weeks of your choosing)

During three weeks of your choosing you will be required to submit a short essay about the readings on the syllabus for that week. The essays are due in class on Tuesday on the weeks you have chosen. Each essay should be only 1 double-spaced page in length. These assignments should not be a summary of the readings. Instead, identify a key question that each of the readings addresses, and discuss how each of the readings answers that question. In doing so, compare and contrast the viewpoints put forth by the authors of each reading. When using key terms from the readings define them clearly.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism and cheating of any other kind will not be tolerated. By submitting materials to meet course requirements you assert that the work is your own. "Minor" infractions, such as failure to adequately cite source materials will lead to an F (0 points) on the assignment. Omission, outright copying of materials, or outright cheating in any form will lead to an F in the course and referral to the Honor Council.

Class Cancellation

In the event a class is canceled (e.g., natural disaster, instructor illness, etc.) you are still responsible for having done the work assigned on this syllabus by its due date.

Electronic Devices in the Classroom

Upon entering the classroom, your cell phone needs to be silenced (i.e. *not* on vibrate), and placed out of view in your bag or in your pocket. Students using their phones during class will be asked to leave. Laptops may only be used for note taking. If a student is seen using a laptop for any other purpose, they will be asked to leave.

Required Texts

The readings are provided on the course Blackboard page. You are required to have taken an introductory course in American politics to register for this course. However, you may wish to obtain an introductory American politics text, and review the chapters that are germane to each week's subject. Two good texts are *The New American Democracy* (Fiorina et al.) and *The Struggle for Democracy* (Greenberg and Page).

Class Schedule and Readings

January 13th: Introduction and Course Overview

January 15th: NO CLASS TODAY

January 20th & 22th: Public Opinion

Political Behavior of the American Electorate: Chapter 6

The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion: Chapters 1-3

The Rational Public: Chapters 1 & 10

Information, Participation, and Choice: Chapter 1

Congress as Public Enemy: Chapters 1, 5 & 8

January 27th & January 29th: Civic Engagement and Participation

Voice and Equality: Chapters 1-3, 9 & 17

“Talk Leads to Recruitment”

Bowling Alone: Chapters 1-3, 15-16, 21 & 23-24

“Disconnection and Reorganization...”

February 3rd & 5th: Elections and Voting

“Electoral Realignment”

“Abortion: Evidence of Issue Evolution”

Why Americans Split Their Tickets: Chapters 1-2

“Strategic Politicians and the Dynamics of U.S. House Elections”

“Money and Office: the Sources of Incumbency Advantage...”

February 10th & 12th: Interest Groups

The Logic of Collective Action: Chapters 1-2

“The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America”

Federalist #10

“Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias...”

“The Scope and Bias of the Pressure System” (excerpt from *The Semisovereign People*)

“The Rise of Citizen Groups”

February 17th & 19th: Political Parties and Partisanship

Why Parties?: Chapters 1 & 9

Party Government: Chapter 8

The American Voter: Chapters 6-7

Partisan Hearts and Minds: Chapter 1

“Affect and Cognition in Party Identification”

February 24th

Midterm Examination, Part 1

February 26th

Midterm Examination, Part 2

March 3rd: Interlude 1—Biology and Politics

No readings for today

March 5th: NO CLASS TODAY

March 7th – March 15th: SPRING BREAK HOLIDAY

March 17th & 19th: Congress

Legislative Leviathan: Chapters 4-5 & 7

Information and Legislative Organization: Chapters 1 & 4

Disjointed Pluralism: Chapter 1

Home Style: Chapters 1-2

March 24th & March 26th: The Presidency

Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: Chapters 1 & 3

Going Public: Chapters 1-2

Power Without Persuasion: Chapters 1 & 4

The Politics Presidents Make: Chapters 2-3

March 31st & April 2nd: The Courts and Law

The Choices Justices Make: Chapters 1-2

The Hollow Hope: Chapters 1-2 & 5

Judging on a Collegial Court: Chapters 2-3 (*Chapter 4 is optional if you are interested*)

April 7th & 9th: Race and Ethnicity in American Politics

Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency: Introduction and Chapters 1-3

Behind the Mule: Introduction, Chapters 1 & 4

Black Faces, Black Interests: Chapters 1 & 10

“Latino Attitudes toward Various Areas of Public Policy”

April 14th: Interlude 2—TBD

No readings for today

April 16th: NO CLASS TODAY

April 21st & 23rd: Policy Agendas

Agendas and Instability in American Politics: Chapters 1-2

Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy: Chapters 1 & 9

Politicians Don't Pander: Chapters 1-2

Wednesday, May 6th: 11:00am – 1:30pm

Final Exam