

# **POSC 5130-R01: POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND PROCESSES**

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Faber Hall 667

Office Hours: Monday, 1:00 – 3:00 PM and by appointment

Spring 2018

Faber Hall 668

Monday, 5:30 – 7:30 PM

*Aim of the Course:* The aim of this course is to provide you with fundamental knowledge of the types of political institutions that exist in the American political system, how they interact with each other, and some of the major theories that exist in political science as to how these institutions affect political outcomes. Specifically, we will assess Congress, the presidency, the courts, political parties and interest groups, and the interaction between them. By the end of the course you should have a thorough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the different perspectives we will be reading and discussing, and be able to identify how they relate to each other. While scholarship on political institutions is generally not directly focused on election campaigns, we will soon find that elections underlie many of the theories we will encounter. During class discussion we will identify implications these institutional theories may have for the management of election campaigns.

*Basic Rules:* You are expected to be present in class every session, and to participate actively in Q&A during class. You should make sure that you come to class having read all the readings for the day, and you should participate actively in our conversation about those readings. Because we meet only once a week the reading load is not small: make sure you start the readings ahead of time so you can actually finish them by Monday night (pro tip: the night before is too late). When you do the readings, make notes to summarize the main theories or arguments presented, how they relate to other readings that week (if applicable), and how (if at all) you think they could affect the management of an election campaign.

To create an atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable participating and have the ability to achieve their full potential, civility during the discussions is vital. During our conversations we will inevitably come to talk about day to day politics, and it is very much possible that you will find yourself disagreeing strongly with points put forward by your fellow students (and they with you). While you should absolutely feel free to challenge other students, it is crucial that you should be respectful of others' opinions and positions (and, of course, you can expect the same of your fellow students towards you).

*Absences:* If for some reason you cannot be present for understandable reasons (illness, personal circumstances clearly beyond your control, etc.) you should contact me about that

as soon as possible (if at all possible, before the start of class). Unexcused or unexplained absences will result in a lowering of your participation grade.

*Office Hours:* If you have any questions or want to chat about the course, you can come to my office hours on Monday between 1:00 and 3:00 PM. My office is in Faber Hall, room 667. I will also be available for brief meetings right after class.

If you want to meet but cannot make it to my office hours, send me an e-mail and we will schedule a meeting. You can also e-mail me with any questions or concerns – I try to respond to every e-mail within 24 hours.

*Grade:* Your grade is based on participation in class (20%), a midterm (20%) and final (30%), and a research proposal (30%).

The midterm and final will both follow the same format. The questions will be open-ended essay questions regarding both the readings and the material discussed in class. Both the midterm and final will be take home exams. The midterm will be due on **March 2**, the final will be held in finals week.

The research proposals consists of a 8-10 page paper presenting a specific research question regarding American political institutions in relation to the readings done in this course, and proposing a way in which to go about answering it. You can, but do not have to, connect this to other elements of the ECM program. You will be expected to provide me with a basic description of your research topic and question on **March 12**. The paper itself is due on **May 7** as a PDF file on Blackboard. Specific guidelines regarding the components of the research design will be distributed in early March. While doing the readings keep your eye open for a topic you might be interested expanding on for this assignment.

Your participation grade will partly be based on your role as discussion leader during one of our sessions. During our first class, each of you will sign up to (co-)lead a session. For these sessions you are expected to summarize the main arguments made by the authors, note any disagreements or debates between them, and lead discussion by proposing a series of discussion questions. Note that a good participation grade does not rely solely on your performance during 'your' sessions: you are expected to participate actively every week.

*Grade Complaints:* Your performance in this course (on the exams, the research design, and your participation) will be graded in comparison to your fellow students as well as predetermined expectations. This means that the grade you earn should be a fair representation of how you have performed in comparison both to my general expectations of all participants as well as your fellow classmates' work in this course. It is possible that you may be unhappy with a grade, and believe that it should be adapted. Should you want to challenge your grade, please email me to set up an appointment and bring with you the copy of your exam or assignment and a written description (approximately half a page) of why you believe your grade does not accurately represent your work. We will subsequently discuss your work and I will assess whether I believe your grade should be changed.

*Plagiarism and Other Violations of Code of Conduct:* All assignments in this course fall under Fordham University's code of conduct. All assignments will be checked for plagiarism using Blackboard's SafeAssign function – which compares your submissions to a database of existing books and articles, as well as work submitted by other students. Any violation (including, but not limited to, cheating on exams, and plagiarism) will result in the student being held accountable to the full extent of university guidelines.

*Note:* Fordham provides me with a class list that includes your legal name. If you prefer to be addressed by an alternate name or gender pronoun please let me know.

If you or someone you know is struggling with emotional or mental health concerns, and/or gender, sexual, or domestic violence, Fordham's Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can provide assistance. The Rose Hill office of CPS is open Monday through Friday and can be reached by phone at 718-817-3725. If you, or a student you know, is experiencing a mental health crisis or emergency that requires immediate attention you can contact Fordham's office of Public Safety at Rose Hill at 718-817-2222 (available 24/7).

## **Course Materials**

Nearly all readings for this course will be made available online through Blackboard. The only exceptions concern:

Sarah A. Binder, *Stalemate: Causes and Consequences of Legislative Gridlock* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2004).

David R. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946-2002* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2005).

Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2010).

Each of these books should be available at the Fordham bookstore and can also be ordered online at Amazon or through other booksellers.

## Course Syllabus

*January 22*

Topic: Introduction: Political Parties and Political Science

Readings:

Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics*, Chapters 2, 5, 9, and 10.

*January 29*

Topic: Congress and the Electoral Connection

Readings:

David R. Mayhew, *Congress* (in full).

*February 5*

Topic: Theories of Congressional Activity

Readings:

Barry Weingast and William Marshall, "The Industrial Organization of Congress: Or, Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets," *Journal of Political Economy* 96 (1998) 135-163.

Keith Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

*February 12*

Topic: No class due to conference travel.

Readings:

No readings.

*February 20*

[Note that because of Presidents Day Monday classes are moved to Tuesday this week.]

Topic: The American President I

Readings:

Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), Chapter 3.

Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1993, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1997) Chapters 1, and 7.

Sidney M. Milkis, *The President and the Parties: The Transformation of the American Party System Since the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) Chapter 6.

*February 26*

Topic: The American President II

Readings:

Terry M. Moe and William G. Howell, "Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (December 1999) 850-873.

William G. Howell, "Unilateral Powers: A Brief Overview," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (September 2005) 417-439.

Brandice Canes-Wrone, "The President's Legislative Influence from Public Appeals," *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 45, no. 2 (2001) 313-329.

*March 1*

Topic: Midterm Exam

Readings:

No readings.

*March 5*

Topic: Divided Government I

Readings:

David R. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946-2002* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2005), Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7.

*March 12*

Topic: Divided Government II

Readings:

Sarah A. Binder, *Stalemate: Causes and Consequences of Legislative Gridlock* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 6.

*March 19*

Topic: Divided Government III

Readings:

Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 6.

*March 26*

Topic: Spring break.

Readings:

No readings.

*April 2*

Topic: Easter break.

Readings:

No readings.

*April 9*

Topic: Courts

Readings:

Kenneth A. Shepsle, *Analyzing Politics*, Chapter 15.

Lee Epstein, Valerie Hoekstra, Jeffrey A. Segal, and Harold J. Spaeth, "Do Political Preferences Change? A Longitudinal Study of U.S. Supreme Court Justices," *Journal of Politics*, vol. 60, no. 3 (1998) 801-818.

Jeffrey A. Segal, Chad Westerland, and Stefanie A. Lindquist, "Congress, the Supreme Court, and Judicial Review: Testing a Constitutional Separation of Powers Model," *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 55, no. 1 (2011) 89-104.

Brandice Canes-Wrone, "Bureaucratic Decisions and the Composition of the Lower Courts," *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 47, no. 2 (2003) 205-214.

*April 16*

Topic: Political Parties I

Readings:

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993 – 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2007)  
Introduction and Chapters 5, 7, and 9.

Keith Krehbiel, "Where's the Party?" *British Journal of Political Science* 23 (1993) 235-266.

*April 23*

Topic: Political Parties II

Readings:

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4.

Jeffrey D. Grynавiski, *Partisan Bonds: Political Reputations and Legislative Accountability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 2.

*April 30*

Topic: Interest Groups

Readings:

Theda Skocpol, "Associations Without Members," *The American Prospect* (December 19, 2001).

Richard L. Hall and Frank W. Wayman, "Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees," *The American Political Science Review* vol. 84, no. 3 (1990) 797-820.

Kathleen Bawn, Martin Cohen, David Karol, Seth Masket, Hans Noel, and John Zaller, "A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands, and Nominations in American Politics," *Perspectives on Politics*, vol. 10, no. 3 (2012) 571-597.

Joshua L. Kalla and David E. Broockman, "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment," *American Journal of Political Science* vol. 60, no. 3 (2016) 545-558.