

**PRINCETON UNIVERSITY**  
**Department of Politics**

Politics 541  
The American Political System

Spring 2001  
R. Douglas Arnold

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This seminar is designed to introduce students to the scholarly study of American politics. The aim is to serve students with a variety of needs, including those who intend to specialize in American politics and those who want to acquire a basic understanding of American politics without further specialization. Although the seminar is intended to survey the field of American politics, it is not comprehensive. No one-semester course could possibly include all approaches or all subfields in American politics. The first half of the course focuses more on mass political behavior; the second half is oriented more toward institutions and public policy.

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**A. Weekly Schedule**

1. Organizational Meeting	February 6
2. The Analysis of Power in Politics	February 13
3. Public Opinion	February 20
4. The Mass Media	February 27
5. Elections	March 6
6. Agenda Setting	March 13
7. Congress and Public Policy	March 27
8. Political Parties and Public Policy	April 3
9. Separation of Powers	April 10
10. Courts	April 17
11. Presidents	April 24
12. Bureaucracy	May 1

**B. Course Requirements**

1. **Reading.** The course operates as a seminar. The amount of reading is reasonable (averaging 226 pages per week). Each student is expected to do the assigned reading *before* each seminar and come to class prepared for discussion.
2. **Discussion.** The main event each week is a structured discussion of the week's reading, focusing on the value of a scholar's theory, the appropriateness of the methods used, the adequacy of the evidence offered, and the contributions of each work to an understanding of American politics.

3. **Alternative Writing Requirements.** Students can choose to take the seminar as either a reading course or a research seminar.

- a. **Reading Course.** Students who choose the first option write *five* short papers that focus on the week's readings and one medium-length paper (maximum ten pages) that focuses on some theme that cuts across two or more weeks of reading.

Students select the weeks they would like to write their five short papers, subject to the constraint that they write at least two papers before fall break and at least two papers after fall break. The medium-length paper is due on Tuesday, May 15.

- b. **Research Course.** Students who choose the second option write *two* short papers that focus on the week's readings and one research paper (maximum 25 pages).

Students select the weeks they would like to write their two short papers, subject to the constraint that they write one paper before fall break and one paper after fall break. The research paper is due on Tuesday, May 22.

4. **Short Papers (all students).** The short papers are opportunities for you to discuss the week's required reading, unprompted by the instructor or your fellow students. Your papers should be typed, double-spaced, and a maximum of *five* pages. They are due at the *start* of the seminar in which their subjects are scheduled for discussion. I will return each of the short papers with my comments a week after they are due.

The key to a good paper is to pose an interesting question and then answer it. You might focus on the value of a scholar's theory, examining its logical rigor, the plausibility of the arguments, or its relation to other theories. You might focus on the adequacy of the empirical evidence, asking whether the scholar used appropriate methods, whether the evidence really supports the hypotheses, or whether other evidence contradicts it. Alternatively, you might address the question of how well a piece of scholarship helps to illuminate other happenings in the real world. Does a book help to explain why government makes the decisions it does? Under what conditions does it appear useful? These papers are *not* an opportunity to summarize the week's readings. You should assume that anyone who reads your paper has also done the week's reading.

These papers should be well organized and well written. A paper that fails to develop an argument until the last paragraph is called a first draft. A paper that fails to anticipate potential counter arguments, is written in the passive voice, or is filled with grammatical, spelling, or typing errors, is called a second draft. A paper that you would be proud to read to the class is called a final draft. I like final drafts.

5. **Final Paper (for reading course).** Each student who chooses the first option writes one medium-length paper (maximum of ten pages) that is due on Tuesday, May 15. Much like the

shorter papers, this paper is an opportunity to analyze a subject discussed in the assigned readings. For the final paper, however, the emphasis is on examining a theme that cuts across two or more weeks of readings.

6. **Research Paper (for research course).** Each student who chooses the second option writes an original research paper (maximum 25 pages). The exact subject is chosen in consultation with the instructor. You should select a topic by Tuesday, March 27, and submit a one-page description. The research paper is due on Tuesday, May 22.
7. **Grades.** Grades reflect effort and performance in seminar discussion and in written work.

### C. Availability of Readings

1. **Reserve Readings.** There is at least one copy of each required book on reserve in the Politics Graduate Study Room at Firestone Library.
2. **Additional Free Copies.** Many of the books for this course are also used in other Princeton courses and may be found in the appropriate libraries. You may find copies either in the Reserve Collection, located on A Floor of Firestone Library, or in the Wilson School Library in Wallace Hall.
3. **Books Available for Purchase.** I have also asked the Princeton University Store to order copies of 10 books that are used most intensively.
4. **Suggested Readings.** The suggested readings are places you might turn if you want to learn more about a given subject. Although all of these works are available somewhere in the Princeton University library system, I have not placed them on reserve for this course. For additional suggested readings, please refer to the Department's "Reading List for the Ph.D. General Examination in The Politics of the United States" (Spring 2000).

### D. Times and Places

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|-----------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <b>Seminar Meetings.</b> | Tuesday, 1:30-4:20   | Corwin Hall, Room 126    |
| 2. <b>Office Hours.</b>     | Wednesday, 1:30-3:30 | Robertson Hall, Room 310 |
|                             | Phone: 258-4855      | arnold@princeton.edu     |

Occasional changes in office hours will be announced during Monday's class. I am also available by appointment. Please send an e-mail outlining your constraints over the coming week. I will respond with an appointment that works for both of us.

## Weekly Readings

### 1. Organizational Meeting (February 6)

Please read the following article on “Dynamic Representation” before the first meeting and come to class prepared for discussion.

a. *Required* (23 pages)

James A. Stimson, Michael B. Mackuen, Robert S. Erikson, “Dynamic Representation,” *American Political Science Review* (Sept. 1995), pp. 543-565.  
Available from JSTOR at <http://www.jstor.org/jstor/>

### 2. The Analysis of Power in Politics (February 13)

Power is one of the fundamental concepts in political science. Gaventa reviews several alternative conceptions of power and then seeks to measure power in an isolated Appalachian community. How well does Gaventa capture power relations in this community? How generalizable are his findings to other communities? How useful are the various notions of power?

a. *Required* (266 pages)

John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (1980), pp. v-xi, 3-261.

b. *Suggested*

E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semi-Sovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (1960).

Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (1961).

Peter Bachrach and Morton Baratz, *Power and Poverty* (1970).

Stephen Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (1974).

Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (1974).

Jack H. Nagel, *The Descriptive Analysis of Power* (1975).

R. Douglas Arnold, *Congress and the Bureaucracy: A Theory of Influence* (1979).

Nelson Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory*, 2nd ed. (1980).

Paul Peterson, *City Limits* (1981).

Ian Shapiro and Grant Reeher (eds), *Power, Inequality, and Democratic Politics: Essays in Honor of Robert A. Dahl* (1988).

Robert A. Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*, 5th ed. (1991).

### 3. Public Opinion (February 20)

How do citizens acquire opinions about policies and politicians? Zaller offers a sophisticated theory to explain public opinion. How well does this theory explain your own opinions? Your friends and family? The mass public? What seems to account for the shape of mass opinion in society?

a. *Required* (309 pages)

John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (1992), pp. 1-309

b. *Suggested*

M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *The Political Character of Adolescence* (1974).

Jennifer Hochschild, *What's Fair? American Beliefs About Distributive Justice* (1981).

M. Kent Jennings and Richard G. Niemi, *Generations and Politics* (1982).

Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, and Amos Tversky, *Judgment under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases* (1982).

Herbert McClosky and Alida Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance: What Americans Believe About Civil Liberties* (1983).

Herbert McClosky and John Zaller, *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy* (1984).

Benjamin I. Page, Robert Y. Shapiro, and Glenn R. Dempsey, "What Moves Public Opinion?" *American Political Science Review* (March 1987), pp. 23-43.

Samuel L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns* (1991).

Larry M. Bartels, "Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policy Making: The Reagan Defense Buildup," *American Political Science Review* (June 1991), pp. 457-474.

Benjamin Page and Robert Shapiro, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American's Policy Preferences* (1992).

William A. Gamson, *Talking Politics* (1992).

Robert S. Erikson and Kent L. Tedin, *American Public Opinion: Its Origins, Content, and Impact*, 5th ed. (1995).

Michael H. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know about Politics and Why It Matters* (1996).

James Stimson, *Public Opinion in America: Moods, Cycles, and Swings*, 2nd. ed. (1999).

Martin Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Programs* (1999).

#### **4. The Mass Media (February 27)**

a. *Required* (162 pages)

John Zaller, "A Theory of Media Politics: How the Interests of Politicians, Journalists, and Citizens Shape the News," (book manuscript, October 1999).

b. *Suggested*

Herbert J. Gans, *Deciding What's News* (1979).

Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (1980).

Martin Linsky, *Impact: How the Press Affects Federal Policymaking* (1986).

Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* (1987).

Timothy Cook, *Making Laws and Making News: Media Strategies in the U.S. House of Representatives* (1989).

Richard Brody, *Assessing the President: The Media, Elite Opinion, and Public Support* (1991).

Stephen Hess, *Live from Capitol Hill* (1991).

Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues* (1991).

W. Russell Neuman, Marion R. Just, and Ann N. Crigler, *Common Knowledge: News and the Construction of Political Meaning* (1992).

Larry M. Bartels, "Messages Received: The Political Impact of Media Exposure," *American Political Science Review* (June 1993), pp. 267-285.

Thomas E. Patterson, *Out of Order* (1993).

Doris A. Graber (ed.), *Media Power in Politics*, 3rd ed. (1994).

Marion R. Just, Ann N. Crigler, Dean E. Alger, Timothy E. Cook, Montague Kern, and Darrell M. West, *Crosstalk: Citizens, Candidates, and the Media in a Presidential Campaign* (1996).

Timothy E. Cook, *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution* (1998).

## 5. Elections (March 6)

How can we explain election outcomes? How much are congressional elections national contests between two parties? How much are they local contests between pairs of candidates? How important are campaigns? Information? Money?

a. *Required* (201 pages)

Gary C. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 4th ed. (1997), pp. 1-178, 204-226.

b. *Suggested*

Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes, *The American Voter* (1960).

Angus Campbell, Philip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes, *Elections and the Political Order* (1966).

Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and John Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter* (1976).

Raymond Wolfinger and Steven Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* (1980).

Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections* (1981).

Stanley Kelley, *Interpreting Elections* (1983).

D. Roderick Kiewiet, *Macroeconomics and Micropolitics: The Electoral Effects of Economic Issues* (1983).

Larry M. Bartels, *Presidential Primaries and the Dynamics of Public Choice* (1988).

Linda L. Fowler and Robert D. McClure, *Political Ambition: Who Decides to Run for Congress?* (1989).

Richard Niemi and Herbert Weisberg (eds.), *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 3rd ed. (1993).

Richard Niemi and Herbert Weisberg (eds.), *Classics in Voting Behavior* (1993).

Jonathan S. Krasno, *Challengers, Competition, and Reelection: Comparing Senate and House Elections* (1994).

Marion Just, Ann Crigler, Dean Alger, Timothy Cook, Montague Kern, and Darrell West, *Crosstalk: Citizens, Candidates, and the Media in a Presidential Campaign* (1996).

Paul Herrnson, *Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington*, 3rd. ed. (2000).

## **6. Agenda Setting (March 13)**

How does government decide which problems to attack? Which solutions to consider? What are the roles of bureaucrats, executives, legislators, the mass media, interest groups, and public opinion in shaping the governmental agenda?



a. *Required* (230 pages)

John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd ed. (1995), pp. 1-230.

b. *Suggested*

Roger W. Cobb and Charles D. Elder, *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building* (1972).

Martha Derthick, *Policy Making for Social Security* (1979).

T. R. Reid, *Congressional Odyssey: The Saga of a Senate Bill* (1980).

John Mendeloff, *Regulating Safety: An Economic and Political Analysis of Occupational Safety and Health Policy* (1980).

Nelson W. Polsby, *Political Innovation in America: The Politics of Policy Initiation* (1984).

Martha Derthick and Paul Quirk, *The Politics of Deregulation* (1985).

R. Kent Weaver and Bert A. Rockman, *Do Institutions Matter? Government Capabilities in the United States and Abroad* (1993).

Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics* (1993).

Bryan D. Jones, *Reconceiving Decision-Making in Democratic Politics: Attention, Choice, and Public Policy* (1994).

David A. Rochefort and Roger W. Cobb (ed), *The Politics of Problem Definition: Shaping the Policy Agenda* (1994).

Richard Himelfarb, *Catastrophic Politics: The Rise and Fall of the Medicare Catastrophic Coverage Act of 1988* (1995).

Margaret Weir (ed.), *The Social Divide: Political Parties and the Future of Activist Government* (1998).

R. Kent Weaver, *Ending Welfare as We Know It* (2000).

## 7. Congress and Public Policy (March 27)

How do legislators respond to public opinion? What accounts for legislatures sometimes serving narrow and particularistic interests and sometimes serving more general interests? What strategies are available for encouraging legislators to adopt specific policies?

a. *Required* (233 pages)

R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (1990), pp. 3-223, 265-276.

b. *Suggested*

David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (1974).

Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts* (1978).

William Muir, *Legislature: California's School for Politics* (1982).

Bruce Cain, John Ferejohn, and Morris Fiorina, *The Personal Vote: Constituency Service and Electoral Independence* (1987).

John W. Kingdon, *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*, 3rd ed. (1989).

Keith Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization* (1991).

Carol Swain, *Black Faces, Black Interests: The Representation of African Americans in Congress* (1993).

Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan: Party Government in the House* (1993).

Richard F. Fenno, Jr., *Senators on the Campaign: Trail The Politics of Representation* (1996).

Richard L. Hall, *Participation in Congress* (1996).

Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Congress: A Political-Economic History of Roll Call Voting* (1997).

## 8. Political Parties and Public Policy (April 3)

What role do political parties play in the policy-making process? Does it matter whether a single party controls government? Mayhew first argues that it does not and then offers alternative macro-explanations for variations in policy making. Howell et al revisit the question with a larger data set.

a. *Required* (202 pages)

David R. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking, and Investigations, 1946-1990* (1991), pp. 1-7, 34-200.

Howell, William, Scott Adler, Charles Cameron, and Charles Riemann, "Divided Government and the Legislative Productivity of Congress, 1945-94," *Legislative Studies Quarterly* (May 2000), pp. 285-312

b. *Suggested*

V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949).

Austin Ranney, *The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government* (1954).

Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957).

James L. Sundquist, *Politics and Policy: The Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (1968).

James Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System* (1983).

David W. Brady, *Critical Elections and Congressional Policy Making* (1988).

Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (1989).

David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House* (1991).

Gary W. Cox and Samuel Kernell (eds), *The Politics of Divided Government* (1991).

John Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origins and Transformation of Party Politics in America* (1995).

David R. Mayhew, "Presidential Elections and Policy Change: How Much of a Connection Is There?" in Harvey L. Schantz (ed.), *American Presidential Elections: Process, Policy, and Political Change* (1996).

Morris Fiorina, *Divided Government, 2nd ed.* (1996).

## 9. Separation of Powers (April 10)

What kind of an imprint does separation of powers leave on the shape of public policy?

a. *Required* (234 pages)

Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (1998), pp. 3-236.

b. *Suggested*

David W. Brady and Craig Volden, *Revolving Gridlock: Politics and Policy from Carter to Clinton* (1998).

Charles M. Cameron, *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power* (2000).

## 10. Courts (April 17)

How much influence do courts have in the making of public policy? Can courts be used to bypass elected legislatures and executives? Under what conditions do courts matter?

a. *Required* (273 pages)

Gerald N. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* (1991), pp. 1-265, 336-343.

b. *Suggested*

Walter F. Murphy, *Elements of Judicial Strategy* (1964).

Robert G. Dixon, Jr., *Democratic Representation: Reapportionment in Law and Politics* (1968).

Donald L. Horowitz, *The Courts and Social Policy* (1977).

Martin Shapiro, *Courts: A Comparative and Political Analysis* (1981).

Jennifer Hochschild, *The New American Dilemma: Liberal Democracy and School Desegregation* (1984).

David M. O'Brien, *Storm Center: The Supreme Court in American Politics*, 2nd ed. (1990).

H. W. Perry, Jr., *Deciding to Decide: Agenda Setting in the United States Supreme Court* (1991).

G. Alan Tarr, *Judicial Process and Judicial Policy Making* (1994).

David L. Kirp, John P. Dwyer, and Larry Rosenthal, *Our Town: Race, Housing, and the Soul of Suburbia* (1995).

Charles M. Haar, *Suburbs Under Siege: Race, Space, and Audacious Judges* (1996).

Neal Devins, *Shaping Constitutional Values: Elected Government, The Supreme Court, and the Abortion Debate* (1996).

Robert A. Katzmann, *Courts and Congress* (1997).

David A. Schultz (ed.), *Leveraging the Law: Using the Courts to Achieve Social Change* (1998).

## **11. Presidents (April 24)**

How much influence do individual executives have on politics and public policy? Can we generalize about the secrets of effective leadership?

a. *Required* (200 pages)

Fred I. Greenstein, *The Presidential Difference: Leadership Style from FDR to Clinton* (2000), pp. 1-200.

b. *Suggested*

James David Barber, *The Presidential Character* (1977, 1992).

Irving Janis, *Groupthink* (1982).

Fred I. Greenstein, *The Hidden-Hand President: Eisenhower as Leader* (1982).

Jeffrey Tulis, *The Rhetorical Presidency* (1987).

Fred I. Greenstein (ed.), *Leadership in the Modern Presidency* (1988).

John P. Burke and Fred I. Greenstein, *How Presidents Test Reality: Decisions on Vietnam, 1954 and 1965* (1989).

Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan* (1960, 1990).

Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make* (1994).

Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency in a Separated System* (1994).

Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership*, 3rd ed. (1997).

## 12. Bureaucracy (May 1)

How do political forces affect and constrain the actions of bureaucratic actors?

a. *Required* (380 pages)

James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (1989), ix-xii, 3-378.

b. *Suggested*

Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior* (1947, 1976).

Philip Selznick, *Leadership in Administration* (1957).

Herbert Kaufman, *The Forest Ranger* (1960).

R. Douglas Arnold, *Congress and the Bureaucracy: A Theory of Influence* (1979).

Jeffrey Pressman and Aaron Wildavsky, *Implementation*, 3rd ed. (1984).

John DiIulio, *Governing Prisons* (1987).

Terry M. Moe, "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure," in John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson (eds.), *Can the Government Govern?* (1989), 267-329.

John E. Chubb and Terry M. Moe, *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools* (1990).

Gary Miller, *Managerial Dilemmas: The Political Economy of Hierarchy* (1992).

Gerald Garvey, *Facing the Bureaucracy: Living and Dying in a Public Agency* (1993).

Paul C. Light, *The Tides of Reform: Making Government Work, 1945-1995* (1997).

John Brehm and Scott Gates, *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage: Bureaucratic Response to a Democratic Public* (1997).