

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

Politics 541  
The American Political System

Fall 2002  
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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**\*\*\*\*\* Please Note: Seminar participants are \*\*\*\*\***  
**\*\*\*\*\* asked to read one short book before \*\*\*\*\***  
**\*\*\*\*\* the first seminar on September 17. \*\*\*\*\***

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**A. Weekly Schedule**

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|-----------------------------|--------------|
| 1. The Constitution         | September 17 |
| 2. Political Power          | September 24 |
| 3. Public Opinion           | October 1    |
| 4. Mass Media               | October 8    |
| 5. Race and Politics        | October 15   |
| 6. Elections                | October 22   |
| 7. Political Parties        | November 5   |
| 8. Separation of Powers     | November 12  |
| 9. Congress                 | November 19  |
| 10. Courts                  | November 26  |
| 11. Macro Politics          | December 3   |
| 12. Selected Short Subjects | December 10  |
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## B. Course Requirements

1. **Reading.** The course operates as a seminar. The amount of required reading is reasonable (averaging 260 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, January 7.

- 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, January 21.

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, January 7. 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, November 26 and submit a one-page description. The research paper is due on Tuesday, January 21.
7. **Grades.** Grades reflect effort and performance in seminar discussion and in written work.

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### 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 Donald E. Stokes in Wallace Hall. Check the University's online catalogue for details.
3. **Books Available for Purchase.** I have asked the Princeton University Store to order copies of 11 books that are used most intensively.
4. **Articles.** The University has Electronic Access Rights to many of the articles used in this course (marked EAR in the syllabus). You can find articles from the *American Political Science Review* and the *American Journal of Political Science* from JSTOR. Essays from the *Annual Review of Political Science* are also available electronically. A guide to finding these articles and essays appears at the end of this syllabus.

5. **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).
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#### **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>     | Thursday, 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.

On the web at: [www.princeton.edu/~arnold/](http://www.princeton.edu/~arnold/)

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#### **Weekly Readings**

##### **1. The Constitution (September 17)**

Please read the following book before the first meeting and come to class prepared for discussion.

- a. *Required* (157 pages)

Robert A. Dahl, *How Democratic is the American Constitution?* (2001), 1-157.

- b. *Suggested*

*The Federalist Papers* (1787-1788).

##### **2. Political Power (September 24)**

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 (October 1)**

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 Review Essays*

Philip E. Converse, "Assessing the Capacity of Mass Electorates," *Annual Review of Political Science* (2000), pp. 331-353. EAR

James N. Druckman and Arthur Lupia, "Preference Formation," *Annual Review of Political Science* (2000), pp. 1-24. EAR

c. *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).

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).

#### 4. Mass Media (October 8)

a. *Required* (250 pages)

Donald R. Kinder, "Communication and Opinion" *Annual Review of Political Science* (1998), 167-197. EAR

Shanto Iyengar and Donald R. Kinder, *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion* (1987), pp. 1-33, 47-53, 63-72, 82-89, 112-133.

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

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

b. *Suggested Review Essay*

Michael Schudson, "The News Media as Political Institutions," *Annual Review of Political Science* (2002), pp. 249-269. EAR

c. *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).

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).

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).

Howard Kurtz, *Spin Cycle: How the White House and the Media Manipulate the News* (1998).

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

Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect* (2001).

## 5. Race and Politics (October 15)

### a. Required (273 pages)

Tali Mendelberg, *The Race Card: Campaign Strategy, Implicit Messages, and the Norm of Equality* (2001), pp.3-275.

### b. Suggested

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

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

Patricia Gurin, Shirley Hatchett, and James Jackson, *Hope and Independence: Blacks' Responses to Electoral and Party Politics* (1989).

Charles Hamilton, *Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.: The Political Biography of an American Dilemma* (1991).

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

Jennifer Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation*, 1995.



Charles Cameron, David Epstein, Sharyn O'Halloran, "Do Majority-Minority Districts Maximize Substantive Black Representation in Congress?" *American Political Science Review* (December 1996), pp. 794-812.

Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, *Divided By Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals* (1996).

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

David T. Cannon, *Race, Redistricting, and Representation: The Unintended Consequences of Black Majority Districts* (1999).

## 6. Elections (October 22)

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 (251 pages)

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

Gary W. Cox and Jonathan N. Katz, "Why Did the Incumbency Advantage in U.S. House Elections Grow?" *American Journal of Political Science*, (May 1996), pp. 478-497. EAR

Larry M. Bartels, "Candidate Choice and the Dynamics of the Presidential Nominating Process," *American Journal of Political Science*, (Feb. 1987), pp. 1-30. EAR

### 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).

## 7. Political Parties (November 5)

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 (214 pages)

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

David R. Mayhew, updates for data series, 1991-2000 (12 pages).

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).

**8. Separation of Powers (November 12)**

What kind of an imprint does separation of powers leave on the shape of public policy? How can one measure the relative influence of presidents?

a. *Required* (234 pages)

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

b. *Suggested*

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

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).

**9. Congress (November 19)**

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.

Michael Bailey, "Quiet Influence: The Representation of Diffuse Interests on Trade Policy, 1983–94," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, (February 2001), pp. 45-80.

b. *Suggested Review Essay*

Nelson W. Polsby and Eric Schickler, "Landmarks in the Study of Congress since 1945," *Annual Review of Political Science* (2002), pp. 333-367. EAR

c. *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).

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

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).

Eric Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress* (2001).

## 10. Courts (November 26)

What role do courts play in the American system? How much influence do they have in the making of public policy? How do judges make decisions?

a. *Required* (274 pages)

Gerald N. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* (1991), pp. 1-169, 336-343.

Walter F. Murphy, *Elements of Judicial Strategy* (1964), 37-90.

Tracey E. George and Lee Epstein, "On the Nature of Supreme Court Decision Making," *American Political Science Review*, (June 1992), pp. 323-337. EAR

Jeffrey A. Segal, "Separation-of-Powers Games in the Positive Theory of Congress and Courts," *American Political Science Review*, (March 1997), pp. 28-44. EAR

b. *Suggested*

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).

Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth, *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model* (1993).

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).

Lee Epstein and Jack Knight, *The Choices Justices Make* (1998).

**11. Macropolitics (December 3)**

How can one understand the interactions among the various institutions of government? What impact do institutions have on citizens? On public policy? What impact do citizens have on institutions? On public policy?

a. *Required* (pages)

Robert S. Erikson, Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson, *The Macro Polity* (2002), xvii-xxii, 1-448.

**12. Selected Short Subjects (December 10)**

A week devoted to other subjects.

a. *Required* (160 pages)

Mathew D. McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz, “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms,” *American Journal of Political Science*, (February 1984), pp. 165-179. EAR

G. Bingham Powell, Jr., “American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective,” *American Political Science Review*, (March 1986), pp. 17-43. EAR

Richard L. Hall and Frank W. Wayman, “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees,” *American Political Science Review*, (September 1990), pp. 797-820. EAR

Nancy Burns, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba, “The Public Consequences of Private Inequality: Family Life and Citizen Participation,” *American Political Science Review* (June 1997), pp. 373-389. EAR

David R. Mayhew, “Electoral Realignment,” *Annual Review of Political Science* (2000), 449-474. EAR

One or two additional articles may be added.

### **A Note on Electronic Access to Various Journals**

1. You can gain electronic access to 23 journals in political science via JSTOR (although most journals do not place articles online for several years after publication). Six of them publish lots of articles in American politics.

American Journal of Political Science, 1957-2000

American Political Science Review, 1906-1998

British Journal of Political Science, 1971-1996

Journal of Politics, 1939-1998

Political Science Quarterly, 1886-1997

Public Opinion Quarterly, 1937-1999

The address for JSTOR is: <http://www.jstor.org/journals>

You must be logged into a computer on the University network to use JSTOR.

2. You can gain electronic access to review essays in the *Annual Review of Political Science*. Articles appear here at the same time the bound volumes are produced. There are currently five annual reviews (1998-2002).

The address is: <http://polisci.AnnualReviews.org/>

You must be logged into a computer on the University network to use this service.

3. You can gain electronic access to several journals published by Cambridge University Press, including:

American Political Science Review, 2001 - 2002

British Journal of Political Science, 1997 - 2002

Journal of American Studies, 1997 - 2002

Journal of Public Policy, 1998 - 2001

The address is: <http://journals.cambridge.org>

You must be logged into a computer on the University network to use this service.