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.

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

A. Weekly Schedule

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
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**

1. **Seminar Meetings.** Tuesday, 1:30-4:20 Corwin Hall, Room 126

2. **Office Hours.** 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/

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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)


   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?
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)

b. Suggested Review Essays


c. Suggested


4. Mass Media (October 8)

a. *Required* (250 pages)


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*


c. *Suggested*


5. **Race and Politics (October 15)**

   a. **Required (273 pages)**


   b. **Suggested**


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)


b. **Suggested**


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)


b. **Suggested**

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


### 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?
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)


b. Suggested Review Essay


c. Suggested


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)


b. Suggested


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)


12. Selected Short Subjects (December 10)

A week devoted to other subjects.

a. Required (160 pages)


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 Political Science Review, 1906-1998
   - 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

   The address is: http://journals.cambridge.org
   You must be logged into a computer on the University network to use this service.