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.

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**

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

2. **Office Hours.** 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)


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)


b. Suggested


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)


b. **Suggested**


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

   a. **Required** (162 pages)


   b. **Suggested**


**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)


b. **Suggested**


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)


b. *Suggested*


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)


b. Suggested


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)


b. Suggested

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


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)**


b. **Suggested**


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)**


b. **Suggested**


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)


b. **Suggested**


12. **Bureaucracy (May 1)**

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

a. **Required** (380 pages)


b. **Suggested**


