Keith E. Whittington

This course examines the growth and development of American political institutions over time. The focus is on patterns of political change in the United States, especially as they relate to the formation of political institutions and the extent to which such institutions in turn shape each other and political history. The course considers how such variables as political thought and ideology, social and economic interests, political movements and actors, and institutional structures and rules interact and variously shape political outcomes. To this extent, the course examines both theoretical approaches to politics and a variety of substantive political conflicts. The end result is less a cohesive understanding of any single institution, than the construction of an approach to understanding politics more generally and especially the nature of political change.

In addition to attending class, completing the readings, and engaging in discussions, the course requirements include completion of two short (6-8 page) papers and a final exam. The final exam will count for two-thirds of the grade, with the remainder determined by the short papers and oral contributions to the seminar. Study questions for each section will be distributed in class.

Each of the two short papers is to analyze some aspect of the substantive parts of the course listed below. One paper is to focus on a section drawn from parts 2-6 of the course; the other is to be drawn from a section in the latter half of the course. The papers are due in my mailbox the day before the relevant class. An independent research project (15-30 pages) may substitute for the final exam.

The following books are available for purchase:
  James Morone The Democratic Wish  
  Stephen Skowronek Building a New American State  
  Louis Hartz The Liberal Tradition in America  
  Martin Sklar The Corporate Reconstruction of American Politics  
  Ellis Hawley The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly

The remaining readings are on reserve in the library.

Part 1: Introduction: Politics in History

Part 2: Extraordinary and Normal Politics
  James Huntington American Politics ch. 1-3, 5  
  James Morone Democratic Wish ch. Introduction, 1-4  
  Bruce Ackerman We the People pp. 3-66, 259-72

Part 3: Critical Elections and Realignment Theory
  Walter Dean Burnham Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics ch. 1, 7  
  Martin Shefter "Party, Bureaucracy, and Political Change in the United States," in Political Parties  
  Everett Carll Ladd "Like Waiting for Godot," in The End of Realignment Theory?
Walter Dean Burnham "Periodization Schemes and 'Party Systems,'" Social Science History (1986)

Part 4: The Organizational Perspective and Society
Robert Wiebe  The Search for Order, 1877-1920  ch. 1, 6, 7, 11

Part 5: New Institutionalism and the Return of the State
Stephen Skowronek Building a New American State ch. 1

Part 6: Political Culture and Constitutional Founding
Louis Hartz  The Liberal Tradition in America  ch. 1-4
Gordon Wood  The Creation of the American Republic  ch. 2, 13-15
Isaac Kramnick "The 'Great National Discourse'" William and Mary Quarterly (1988)

Part 7: Constituting the Courts
Robert Lowry Clinton  Marbury v. Madison and Judicial Review  ch. 1, 3-6

Part 8: Political Ideology, Modernization, and Conflict
Thomas Haskell  The Emergence of Professional Social Science  ch. 2-4
Stephen Skowronek Building a New American State ch. 2-5

Part 9: Progressivism and Corporatism
Martin Sklar  The Corporate Reconstruction of American Politics  ch. 3-6

Part 10: The New Deal and Corporatism
Ellis Hawley  The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly  intro., ch. 1-10, 14-15, 22-24, concl.
Part 11: The New Deal Legacy

George Romasco  "Hoover-Roosevelt and the Great Depression" in The New Deal
Thomas Ferguson  "Industrial Conflict and the Coming of the New Deal," in The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order
Theda Skocpol  "Political Responses to Capitalist Crisis" Politics and Society (1980)
Sidney Milkis  "Franklin Roosevelt and the Transcendence of Partisan Politics" Political Science Quarterly (1985)

Part 12: Institutional Sources of Political Conflict

Stephen Skowronek  Building a New American State Part III
Andrew Polsky  "The Odyssey of the Juvenile Court" Studies in American Political Development (1989)
Ira Katznelson and Adam Pierrykowski  "Rebuilding the American State" Studies in American Political Development (1991)

Part 13: The Political Significance of the Federal Structure

Richard Bensel  Sectionalism and American Political Development  ch. 2

Part 14: Some Final Thoughts

Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek  "Beyond the Iconography of Order" in The Dynamics of American Politics
Elaine K. Swift and David W. Brady  "Common Ground: History and Theories of American Politics" in The Dynamics of American Politics