This seminar provides an overview of several subfields in American Politics. We will discuss and critique seminal research in the field as well as recent publications. This seminar is also designed to develop your ability to conduct and analyze original research. To this end, we will discuss general approaches to political inquiry, basic methodological issues, the review process, and other related topics.

Students are required to purchase the following books:

* Anthony Downs, An Economic Theory of Democracy (1957)
* Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action (1965)
* David Mayhew, Congress: The Electoral Connection (2004 edition)

Student performance evaluations are based on (1) course participation (30%), (2) a 12-15 page literature review on a relevant topic (30%), and (3) a final examination (40%). This is not a lecture course; participation is required. You must complete and think critically about the reading before you come to seminar. You will be evaluated on the quality of your analysis, which is comparable to serving as a discussant at an academic conference.

Literature Review. The literature review summarizes major findings, explains the underlying theory (or competing theories), discusses research methods, and addresses problems or gaps in the literature. In an empirical project, the review “sets up” the hypotheses and research design that are the foundation for analyzing the data.

Your literature review should address several general questions: What do we know about this? What are the various theories, perspectives, approaches or “schools of thought” in this area? What are the gaps in or problems with our existing knowledge base? What questions still need to be answered; what issues need to be addressed?

You should follow a format used by the major journals in the discipline (APSR, JOP, AJPS, PRQ, etc.). If you are unfamiliar with these formats, refer to any recent edition of a major Political Science journal or a recent edition of The Chicago Manual of Style.
Course Schedule

**August 20: Democratic Theory**
1. Publius. 1787. The Federalist Papers [No. 10-11, 47-51]
2. The Constitution of the United States

**August 27: Public Opinion: Opinion Formation**

**September 3: Public Opinion: Political Sophistication**

**September 10: Political Parties**

**September 17: Partisanship**
September 24: Participation and Civic Engagement

October 1: Voting

October 8: Interest Groups
1. Truman, David. 1951. The Governmental Process [chapters 2-3]
2. Olson, Mancur, Jr. 1965. The Logic of Collective Action. [chapters 1-2 and 5-6]

October 15: Congressional Elections

October 22: Institutional Change and American Political Development
October 29: no class meeting

November 5: Representation

November 12: The Executive Branch

November 19: Bureaucratic Politics
November 26: Courts

December 3: The Media and American Politics

Final Exam: Take-home examination, due date TBA
* Final exam will be placed in graduate student mailboxes to be completed within 24 hours of opening envelope. Submit hard copy to Political Science main office or to Dr. Vining.