PRE-SEMINAR IN AMERICAN POLITICS  
Political Science 6100  
Fall 2020  
M 4:00-6:45  
Baldwin Hall 301

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Course Description

This research seminar is intended as a broad survey of several subfields in American politics. Throughout the course, we will discuss and critique seminal political science research in the field as well as recent publications. Additionally, this seminar is designed to develop your ability to conduct and analyze original research. To this end, we will discuss general approaches to political science, basic methodological issues, the review process, and other related topics. Finally, this seminar will cover broader issues pertaining to graduate school in political science.

Course Goals

The primary goals of this research seminar are three-fold. First, students should be provided with a broad overview of American politics. Second, it is expected that upon completion of this course students will be able to both understand and conduct scholarly research. Finally, students should be familiar with the academic job market, publishing processes and basic issues pertaining to career development.

Required Books

The following books are required and can be purchased from amazon.com:


Additional readings are listed in the Tentative Course Outline/Readings Schedule. Students are responsible for all the readings listed under a given day and are encouraged to read an additional piece from the “Further Reading” section. Additionally, students will not only be expected to have done the reading assignments, but should also be aware of relevant news stories. As such, I recommend reading a daily newspaper – such as the New York Times (http://www.nytimes.com) and/or the Washington Post (http://www.washingtonpost.com) - or at least checking cnn.com. Additional links to political blogs or websites can be found on the instructors’ website.
Course Grading

As this is a graduate seminar, a basic understanding of American history and lawmaking is assumed. Your grade in this class will be assigned according to the following:

1. Class Attendance/Participation (30% of final grade): Students are expected to complete the required reading prior to class meetings. For each piece we read, you should be prepared to discuss how it fits in the literature, the theory, research design employed, and potential problems with the work. You should also be prepared to discuss why the paper or book might be important despite any shortcomings. As previously noted, students are responsible for all the readings listed under a given day and are encouraged to read an additional piece from the “Further Reading” section.

2. Response Papers (30% of final grade): In order to demonstrate an understanding of the literature, students will be required to write two reaction papers that summarize, synthesize, and critique readings for the week. The papers should run no longer than six double spaced pages. These papers should briefly synthesize the theory, methods, and findings of, and most importantly critique, the literature for that particular week. The first reaction paper is due before Monday, October 5. The second reaction paper is due before Monday, December 7.

3. Final Class Project (40% of final grade): Students will be expected to complete a final class project and have the option of completing either (1) an original research paper or (2) a policy history project. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor with questions regarding their project earlier in the semester. The final paper is due by Friday, December 11.

The research paper should be written in line with political science research papers, and will be judged according to the same criteria applied to a paper presented at a professional conference or submitted to a journal. Thus, it must address an empirical question related to Congress, relate that question to existing literature, and provide evidence in support of the conclusion(s) drawn. A research proposal (identifying the question, literature, theory, and method of analysis) is due no later than Monday, November 2.

The policy history should contain two to three separate legislative histories all in the same policy domain. A more detailed discussion of the assignment will be provided in class, however, the analysis should include the following labelled sections: (1) An “Overview” section, which provides identifying information and a brief summary of the act; (2) A “Background” section, which includes information on the broader political context; (3) “Initial House Consideration,” which discusses the bills chronological consideration in the House of Representative as observed in the Congressional Record; (4) “Initial Senate Consideration,” which discusses the bills chronological consideration in the Senate as observed in the Congressional Record; (5) A “Subsequent Action” section, which provides an overview of the bills consideration after initial consideration in both chambers; (6) An “Aftermath” section, which includes any relevant information on the bill after enactment and; (7) An “Additional Notes” section, which includes any additional discussion and information you may find relevant.

A policy history proposal (identifying the policy area and landmark bills to be analyzed) is due no later than Monday, November 2.

Final course grades will be assigned as follows: 100-93 = A, 90-92 = A-, 87-89 = B+, 83-86 = B, 80-82 = B-, 77-79 = C+, 73-76 = C, 70-72 = C-, 60-69 = D, and 60-0. Extra credit assignments will not be given in this course.
Disabilities

Students with disabilities of any kind are strongly encouraged to notify the instructor and the Office for Disability Services at the beginning of the semester, so appropriate accommodations can be made.

Instructor Availability

Students seeking to contact the instructor are encouraged to stop by during scheduled office hours. Students who are unable to attend office hours should e-mail ahead of time to ensure instructor availability. In addition to holding regular office hours in a Zoom Meeting Room, I am available via phone or e-mail and should be available for face to face meetings by appointment throughout the semester.

Classroom Behavior

Students should behave professionally throughout the course. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes cell phone usage, excessive talking and derogatory or offensive comments made during discussion.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will have their names forwarded to the University. It is each student’s responsibility to know what constitutes plagiarism. Further information regarding academic honesty can be found at http://www.uga.edu/honesty/.

Mental Health

If you or someone you know needs assistance, you are encouraged to contact Student Care and Outreach in the Division of Student Affairs at 706-542-7774 or visit https://sco.uga.edu. They will help you navigate any difficult circumstances you may be facing by connecting you with the appropriate resources or services.

UGA has several resources for a student seeking mental health services (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) or crisis support (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/info/emergencies).

If you need help managing stress anxiety, relationships, etc., please visit BeWellUGA (https://www.uhs.uga.edu/bewelluga/bewelluga) for a list of FREE workshops, classes, mentoring, and health coaching led by licensed clinicians and health educators in the University Health Center.

Additional resources can be accessed through the UGA App. See the link below for details:

https://eits.uga.edu/web_and_applications/mobileapps/
Tentative Course Outline/Readings Schedule

Below is a tentative Course Outline/Readings Schedule. The assigned readings may change depending on course discussions. Students are encouraged to contact the instructor if they have a reading they would like to suggest.

Please note: As a result of the challenges posed by the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19), several course meetings will be held online via zoom. Those meetings include our first course meeting on August 20th, and, per University policy, both meetings after Thanksgiving Break (November 26th and December 3rd).

August 24 – Introduction


Further Reading:


August 31 - Representation


**Further Reading:**


**September 7 – Labor Day**

*No class meeting.*

**September 14 – Voting**


**Further Reading:**


**September 21 – Public Opinion I**


**Further Reading:**


**September 28 – Public Opinion II**


Further Reading:


October 5 – Race and Politics


Further Reading:


October 12 – Political Parties


Further Reading:


**October 19 – Congressional Elections**


**Further Reading:**


**October 26 – Congressional Institutions**


**Further Reading:**


**November 2 – American Political Development**


**Further Reading:**


**November 9 – Judicial Politics**


**Further Reading:**


**November 16 – The Executive Branch**


**Further Reading:**


**November 23 – Bureaucratic Politics**


**Further Reading:**


**November 30 – Interest Groups**


**Further Reading:**


**December 7 - Media**


**Further Reading:**


