This graduate seminar provides an introduction to and overview of some of the most important research in various subfields of American politics. It is designed to be the first graduate course on American politics that students take. It is intended to be broad in scope and to provide a theoretical, methodological, and substantive foundation for further study of American politics. To achieve this goal, a sampling of both some of the “classics” in the professional literature and samples of some of the current “hot” approaches to the study of politics are included. Students planning to be examined in American politics are expected to master recommended readings on their own and should review additional readings included in versions of this seminar offered in previous years. This course is not a course on contemporary American politics; this is a seminar on basic, political science research in American politics.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

The main requirements for this course are simple – READ, THINK ANALYTICALLY, and DISCUSS! This is a graduate seminar, which means that our meetings will be governed by the insights you draw from your readings and writings. It is not a lecture course! You are expected to read and critically analyze all assigned readings prior to class. Your preparation for each class should be based on the assumption that you will be responsible for leading and stimulating the class discussion. This is successfully accomplished by sharing your critical insights with the group, offering significant questions for seminar discussion, and engaging your colleagues (and me) in scholarly debate. I understand that you begin this course as a “student” who completes assignments. I hope that you end it as an engaged participant who takes on the study of American politics as an exciting personal enterprise.

Your *full* participation in the seminar (even if you are auditing) is fundamental to its success.

**PREREQUISITES:**

This course has no *formal* prerequisites. Yet, as a graduate course, it assumes that you are familiar with the basic character of American politics. If your background does not include formal training in Political Science, or if you feel as though you might benefit from a review, you might want to purchase an undergraduate textbook and read the material carefully. I recommend Samuel Kernell and Gary C. Jacobson. 2000. *The Logic of American Politics*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press. This text offers students the “nuts and bolts” of the American political system with a strong theoretical (rational choice) perspective. Please let me know if you expect difficulties here.

**EVALUATION:**

Your final grade will be based upon a final examination, a series of 3-5 page papers, and the quality of your verbal participation in class. The take home *final examination* (25%) will consist of four questions
on American politics which are similar in nature to those found in recent comprehensive field examinations. You will be required to answer two of the four questions, and will be given two days to complete the exam. Each student also will prepare five critical papers (50%) during the course of the semester. These papers should be no more than five pages long (they can be, and most often will be, shorter!), and should be e-mailed to seminar participants (this, obviously, includes me) no later than noon the day before class. The papers should critique the theoretical and/or methodological approaches taken in the assigned readings for the week, give suggestions for alternative perspectives or explanations, or identify links to alternative literature. In completing your critical paper, you must select at least one work from the “Supplementary Readings” for the week for inclusion in your essay. Finally, your seminar participation accounts for the remaining 25% of your grade.


Additional readings can be found on reserve in the International Studies Library, 4th Floor Gambrell.

Abbreviations of Journals Used

*AJPS* = American Journal of Political Science

*APSR* = American Political Science Review

*APQ* = American Politics Quarterly (now *American Politics Review*)

*BJPS* = British Journal of Political Science

*JOP* = Journal of Politics

*MJPS* = Midwest Journal of Political Science (now *AJPS*)
Many articles from the *APSR*, *AJPS*, and *JOP* can be downloaded electronically and printed from JSTOR, which can be accessed directly from the course webpage:

http://www.cla.sc.edu/gint/faculty/gomezbt/gint760.htm
(Simply click on the electronic version of the course syllabus)

**COURSE OUTLINE**

**Week 1: The American Ethos and Experience**

*Required Readings*

- *Articles of Confederation*, 1777.
- *U. S. Constitution*, 1787.

*Additional Important Readings and Classics*

- Weber, Max. 1904. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

**Week 2: Democratic Theory**

*Required Readings*


**Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week**


**Additional Important Readings and Classics**


**Week 3: The Mass Public: Opinion, Ideology, and Information**

**Required Readings**


**Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week**


**Additional Important Readings and Classics**


Week 4: Voting and Elections

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week


Additional Important Readings and Classics


**Week 5: Political Participation and Civic Engagement**

*Required Readings*


*Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week*


McAdam, D., J.D. McCarthy, and M.N. Zald, eds. 1996. *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobility Structures, and Cultural Forms*. NY: Cambridge University Press.


*Additional Important Readings and Classics*


**Week 6: Political Parties**

**Required Readings**


**Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week**


**Additional Important Readings and Classics**

• Summary of Conclusions and Proposals, 1-14.
• Part I: The Need for Greater Party Responsibility, 15-36
• Part II: Proposals for Party Responsibility, 37-84
• Part III: The Prospect for Action, 85-96


**Week 7: Interest Groups and Social Movements**

Required Readings


**Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week**


*Additional Important Readings and Classics*


*Week 8: Congress I: Representation*

*Required Readings*


*Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week*


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 9: Congress II: Institutions

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 10: The Presidency

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week

**Additional Important Readings and Classics**


**Week 11: The Public Bureaucracy**

**Required Readings**


**Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week**


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 12: The Supreme Court: Precedents, Preferences, and Policy Making

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 13: Representation and Democratic Responsiveness

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week


*Additional Important Readings and Classics*


**Week 14: America in Comparative Perspective**

*Required Readings*


*Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on this Week*

Additional Important Readings and Classics


