This graduate seminar provides an introduction to and overview of some of the most important research in the field of American politics. It is designed to be the “core seminar” on American politics for students in the Ph.D. program. 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 “classic readings” and “frontier approaches” to the study of American politics are included. Students who plan to be examined in the field of American politics are expected to master the recommended readings on their own.

This is not a course on contemporary American politics; it is a seminar on political science research in American politics. As such, you should approach the required readings with the following questions in mind: 1) What is the puzzle (or research question), and why is it important? 2) What is the author’s theory? 3) What are the hypotheses, and are they based on a broader theoretical framework? 4) Were the hypotheses adequately tested, and what are the results of the tests? 5) How does the reading add to our knowledge of the research question? [Note: Some of the readings make use of mathematical and/or statistical models that are beyond your current skill level. Nevertheless, each of the readings offers sufficient information in the text for you to answer the previously listed questions.]

**REQUIREMENTS:**

The main requirements for this seminar are simple—READ, THINK ANALYTICALLY, and DISCUSS! This is a graduate seminar, which means that our meetings will be governed by the insights that you draw from your readings and writings. 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. Your full participation in the seminar is fundamental to its success.

**Assignments and Grading:**

Your final grade for the course will be based upon a final examination, a series of 3-5 page papers, and the quality of your participation in seminar meetings. The take-home final examination (25%) will be composed of four questions on American politics that are similar in nature to those found on recent comprehensive field examinations. You are required to answer two of the four questions, and your answers to each question must not exceed 15 double-spaced pages. Students will be expected to pick up the exam before noon on Friday, December 4, 2009 and must return the completed exam by 5 p.m. on Monday, December 7, 2009. (We will discuss the exam and my expectations for answers in further detail later in the semester). Each student also will prepare five critical papers (50%) during the course of the semester. These papers should be no more than five double-spaced pages in length (they can be, and most often will be, shorter!), and should be emailed to seminar participations (this, obviously, includes me) no
later than noon on the day before class. In these papers, you should discuss your understanding of the research as a body of work, point out theoretical and/or empirical strengths and weaknesses, and suggest directions for future work. The papers should not be simple summaries of the work; they are expected to be critical essays, where you espouse a position (in agreement or disagreement with the work) and make an argument for your view. In completing your critical papers 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.

**Grade Scale:**

All grades will be assigned based on the following criteria as evaluated by the instructor:

A to A+ (Excellent): Student demonstrates exceptional mastery of the material by offering novel and insightful comments about the readings and demonstrates the ability to integrate ideas from multiple readings.

B+ to A- (Good): Student demonstrates normal mastery of the material by offering cogently argued points that accurately reflect the content of the reading, but did not necessarily demonstrate novel insights or integrate the readings with other material.

B- to B (Fair): Student was able to clearly articulate the main arguments and evidence of the assigned research, but did not argue beyond basic reiteration of main points.

C+ or lower (Poor): Student did not participate, or the student’s writing or participation reflected a general lack of knowledge about the readings.

Students will be given a 0 for participation if absent from class without being previously excused. Incompletes are only granted in the case of a non-academic, documented emergency or illness.

**Texts:** The following texts have been ordered through both the FSU Bookstore and Bill’s Bookstore and are required for this course:


**POLICY ON ACADEMIC HONESTY**

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense. All academic work must meet the standards contained in the Academic Honor Code, published in the *Florida State University Bulletin* and *The Graduate Handbook*. Students are responsible for informing themselves about those standards before performing academic work. Students who are suspected of violating the principles of academic honesty will be reported to the Graduate Director.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the Student Disability Resource Center, 97 Woodward Ave. South (Student Services Bldg.), 850-644-9566, or on the web at [http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/](http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/)

**OFFICE HOURS AND AVAILABILITY**

If at any time you feel confused by the material or simply want to discuss your academic progress, please feel free to seek my help during office hours or by appointment. My formal office hours are Monday and Friday from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. If you need to contact me outside of office hours, email is probably the best way to do so. I check my email regularly and will respond as quickly as possible.
COURSE OUTLINE

Week 1:  The American Ethos and Democratic Tradition

Required Readings


Additional Important Readings and Classics

*Articles of Confederation*, 1777.
*U. S. Constitution*, 1787.
Week 2: **Theoretical Approaches to the Study of American Politics**

*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: Political Participation and Civic Engagement**

*Required Readings*


*Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on This Week*


Staton, Jeffrey K., Robert A. Jackson, and Damarys Canache. 2007. “Dual Nationality Among Latinos: What are the Implications for Political Connectedness?” *Journal of Politics* 69: 470-482

Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 5: Voting and Elections

**Required Readings**


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


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 6: Political Parties

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on This Week


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 7: Interest Groups

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on This Week


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 8: Congress I: Representation and Elections

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 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, Responsiveness, and Democratic Performance**

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on This Week


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 14: Race in American Politics

Required Readings


Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on This Week


Additional Important Readings and Classics


Week 15: America in Comparative Perspective

Required Readings

Supplementary Readings for Those Focusing on This Week


Additional Important Readings and Classics


