POL 610: Proseminar in American Political Systems, Processes, and Behavior

Try; fail. Try again. Fail better.
-Samuel Beckett

This course is designed to introduce students to theories, concepts, controversies, and important literature shaping the study of political institutions and political behavior. The course will focus on books (18) that have paved (or have the potential to pave) the way for future inquiry into basic questions about democracy (what makes democracy possible—its essential parts, so to speak); the operations of political institutions (for instance, do politicians faithfully represent the best interests of voters or just manipulate the latter, and can or how do we control our elected officials), mass behavior (for example, why are small groups so effective in politics, what is the role of ideology in voting), and public opinion (for instance, how is public opinion molded). In particular, the course focuses on many issues that have persistently shaped political inquiry in American Politics.

The course also addresses long-standing controversies in the study of American Politics. For instance, are presidents leaders, merely “clerks” responding to the expectations and prescriptions of the job, or do they opportunistically manipulate the economy to promote economic boon and their own reelections; do the interests of bureaucrats affect agency outcomes and internal administrative processes; how do special interests affect government? A number of articles (12) will be sprinkled in to alert students to these controversies within particular areas of inquiry.

The emphasis in the seminar will be in enhancing student understanding of the development of analytic arguments, the construction of theories, the utility of conceptual constructs, and how
scholars use empirical evidence to test hypotheses—all within the context of the study of American Politics. Thus, the readings are designed not only to acquaint students with basic questions in the study of American Politics, but also with the conduct of political inquiry in this area. Accordingly, students will focus on: (1) identifying the central argument and how it is developed within the assigned readings; (2) the ways in which empirical evidence is mustered in support of the argument; and (3) the implications stated and unstated of the research. Students will be guided through the most challenging of the assigned books with study questions, attached to this outline, which should help to alleviate some of the problems involved in grasping the essential ideas of the more difficult readings. For organizational purposes, the readings are arranged under the following categories, though the order in which the books are read may differ from the outline.

1. The Conduct of Inquiry: Are We Blinded By Science?


2. Democracy


   Hearing The Other Side, Diana Mutz, 2006. The influence of interpersonal contact and discussion in promoting democracy.

economic argument comparing the efficiency of markets to the behavior of parties and politicians.

3. Models of American Politics


4. Political Institutions

Congress

Congress: The Electoral Connection, David Mayhew, 1974. A model of Congress based upon the assumption that reelection is at the bottom of everything.

Capitol Investments: The Marketability of Political Skills, Glenn R. Parker, 2008. An alternative to the reelection paradigm: politicians acquire valuable human capital (e.g., skills) in office which they market once they leave, thus the institution is structured to facilitate such skill acquisition.

Home Style, Richard Fenno, 1978 (or most recent edition). Chapters 1-6, appendix. An important but neglected side of congressional politics—to wit, how and why politicians behave as they do within their constituencies.

**Presidency**


**Bureaucracy**


**Judiciary**

5. Political Behavior

Voting


Public Opinion


George Bishop, Robert Oldendick, and Alfred Tuchfarber. 1978. “Change in the Structure of American Political Attitudes:


Grading:

The student’s grade will be determined by seminar participation (40%), and a final examination (60%) that is comprehensive in nature and deals with questions and issues raised in seminar about the readings. Seminar participation requires that: (1) students actively participate in seminar discussions, (2) complete all assignments prior to class, and (3) come to class fully prepared to discuss the assigned readings, and answer the study questions.

Students are responsible for obtaining class notes and assignments from other students for classes they may have missed, not the instructor.

Texts:

A limited number of copies of the 18 required books are available for loan from the instructor.

NOTE: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances. Here are ways to get information about changes in this course. Blackboard Vista web pages; my email address: parker6@purdue.edu; and my office phone: 496-3342.

The following is a message from Purdue University Administration:
As we begin this semester I want to take a few minutes and discuss emergency preparedness. Purdue University is a very safe campus and there is a low probability that a serious incident will occur here at Purdue. However, just as we receive a “safety briefing” each time we get on an aircraft, we want to emphasize our emergency procedures for evacuation and shelter in place incidents. Our preparedness will be critical if an unexpected event occurs.

Emergency preparedness is your personal responsibility. Purdue University is continuously preparing for natural disasters or human-caused incidents with the ultimate goal of maintaining a safe and secure campus. Let’s review the following procedures:

- To report an emergency, call 911.

- To obtain updates regarding an ongoing emergency, and to sign up for Purdue Alert text messages, view www.purdue.edu/ea

- There are nearly 300 Emergency Telephones outdoors across campus and in parking garages that connect directly to the Purdue Police Department (PUPD). If you feel threatened or need help, push the button and you will be connected immediately.

- If we hear a fire alarm, we will immediately suspend class, evacuate the building, and proceed outdoors, and away from the building. Do not use the elevator.

- If we are notified of a Shelter in Place requirement for a tornado warning, we will suspend class and shelter in the lowest level of this building away from windows and doors.
• If we are notified of a Shelter in Place requirement for a hazardous materials release, or a civil disturbance, including a shooting or other use of weapons, we will suspend class and shelter in our classroom, shutting any open doors or windows, locking or securing the door, and turning off the lights.

• Your course syllabus includes additional preparedness information as it might impact this class, including class suspension for severe weather or other emergencies. Please review the syllabus and the Emergency Preparedness website for additional information.

http://www.purdue.edu/ehps/emergency_preparedness/index.html
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: THE STRUCTURE OF SCIENTIFIC REVOLUTIONS BY Thomas S. Kuhn

1. What is the central theme of the book? (Keep this question in mind as you read the book)
2. What is Kuhn’s view of science? (Keep this question in mind as you read the book)
3. What are “paradigms”?
4. Why do scientific revolutions occur?
5. What is “normal science”?
6. What are the two basic characteristics of paradigms?
7. How do paradigms generate consensus?
8. Why does “truth emerge more readily from error than confusion”? 
9. What happens to the adherents to older schools of thought or paradigms that have been replaced?
10. How are paradigms limiting?
11. What are the three foci for scientific investigation?
12. Is normal science designed to produce major novelties, like new concepts?
13. Why are problems undertaken in normal science?
14. What is the difference between “problems” and “puzzles”? 
15. What is the negative result or impact on the selection of problems for study once a paradigm has been established?

16. What motivates scientists?

17. What are the three categories of commitments that scientists display toward a paradigm?

18. How would you characterize the “pre-paradigm period”?

19. What is the problem with normal science?

20. What role do anomalies play?

21. Why is dating discoveries so arbitrary?

22. What are the three characteristics of discovery?

23. Why “normal science, a pursuit not directed to novelties and tending a first to suppress them, should nevertheless be so effective in causing them to arise”?

24. What lends to the emergence of new theories?

25. On what basis do scientists reject a previously accepted theory?

26. Do scientists readily alter their theories when confronted with anomalies?

27. What causes scientific “crises”?

27. How do crises begin and end?

28. How would you define scientific revolutions and how do they
start?

29. What are the three types of phenomena that *might* lead to the development of new theories?

30. Why can’t normal science resolve choices between competing paradigms?
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: THE LOGIC OF COLLECTIVE ACTION
BY Mancur Olson, Jr.

1. What is meant by “collective action”?

2. What is the fundamental function of organizations?

3. Why can small groups provide themselves with collective goods without relying upon coercion or any positive inducement apart from the collective good itself?

4. What determines whether or not a group will provide a collective good in the absence of coercion or outside inducements?

5. What is meant by the exploitation of the great by the small, and what implications does this have for democracy?

6. What keeps larger groups from furthering their own interests?

7. Describe “privileged”, “intermediate”, and “latent” groups.

8. What stimulates rational individuals to act in group-oriented ways in large (latent) groups?

9. Why do social pressures and incentives operate only in groups of smaller size?

10. Why are “privileged” groups “twice-blessed”?

11. How did the American labor movement begin?

12. Why have unions sought job control?
13. What is the essence of unionism?


15. What is the logical failing in the pluralists' treatment of economic groups?

16. Is Olson’s interpretation relevant to noneconomic groups, like the League of Women Voters? Explain.

17. Will special interests balance each other, especially in politics? Explain.

18. Describe the “by-product theory” of interest groups.

19. What are “tied sales” and what role do they play in Olson’s theory?

20. Why in the American Medical Association such a powerful interest group?

21. Why are business interests more effective in lobbying than other groups, like labor?
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: A PREFACE TO DEMOCRATIC THEORY BY Robert A. Dahl

1. What is the central theme of this book?
2. What is “Madisonian Democracy”?
3. What is the central proposition of Madisonian theory?
4. What is the “objective” test of tyranny?
5. What two conditions are seemingly essential for the existence of a non-tyrannical Republic?
6. Does the accumulation of power—legislative, executive, and judicial—in the same hands necessarily lead to tyranny, as Madison believed?
7. Who (what social and economic groups) benefits from Madisonian democracy?
8. There seem to be some inconsistencies in Madison’s reasoning. Why?
9. What is the “rule” underlying “populistic democracy”?
10. What inadequacies and problems surround the application of this rule to the running of democracies?
11. What does “populistic democracy” seek to maximize?
12. What does “polyarchal democracy” depend upon?
13. How is consensus engineered in polyarchal democracy?
14. What is “polyarchy”?

15. What is Dahl’s theory of polyarchy?

16. What is the problem of “intensities”?

17. Are constitutional arrangements solutions to problems of equality and intensity in democratic rule?

18. How are minorities protected in the United States, according to Dahl?

19. To what extent is “majority tyranny” a myth?

20. How does Dahl describe the “normal American process”, and how does this protect minorities?

21. How does Dahl describe policymaking in the United States?

22. Do elections, and even inter-election activity, assure the representation of majority opinion?

23. What are the main protections for minorities?

24. What is the purpose of constitutional rules?
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: THE CALCULUS OF CONSENT BY James M. Buchanan and Gordon Tullock

Read: Chapters 1-10, 16, 18, and 19.

1. What is the basic question for society to decide?
2. How do the authors' perceive or characterize “government”?
3. How can we judge improvements in the rules or “Constitution” governing society?
4. What is the economic assumption underlying individual choice?
5. How would you characterize the authors’ view of “politics”?
6. What is the difference between the Buchanan and Tullock’s conceptualization of utility-maximizing individuals and a “power-maximization” approach?
7. How is individual rationality limited in collective-choice decisions?
8. Describe individual rationality in market decisions.
9. Describe individual rationality in collective decision-making.
10. What does rational action require?
11. What is the difference between the behavior of individuals in the market and the political process in terms of individual choice and final action?
12. What are the types of “costs”?

13. What should be the objective of rational individuals in making institutional and constitutional changes?

14. What determines the choice between voluntary, individual (cooperative), and political action?

15. How do we know if we should collectivize an activity by shifting it to Government?

16. Does the existence of external effects from private behavior require governmental involvement?

17. When will rational individuals choose to collectivize activities?

18. Does the existence of externalities require the decision to be made through collective rather than private action?

19. What are the expected costs to individuals under the unanimity rule?

20. What is the trade-off for individuals in deciding upon constitutional rules?

21. What decision rule is rational when a decision will modify or restrict human rights?

22. What are “externalities”?

23. What determines whether an activity will be placed in the private
or public sector?

24. What effect does the existence of externalities have under unanimity?

25. What is the key feature of market-behavior that the authors “cherish”?

26. What is the *ideal* decision-making rule and why are there departures from it?

27. If all parties to an agreement expect to benefit, why is decision-making so time-consuming?

28. What is the relationship between the expected costs of organizing for collective action and the size of the population?

29. What is the effect of homogeneity of a populace on decision-making costs?

30. Why is it so difficult to export American political institutions to other parts of the world?

31. What is the impact of intensity of individual preferences on vote-trading?

32. What is the major benefit of vote-trading?

33. Are there external costs from majority rule decisions? Who suffers the costs?
34. What is the key factor in determining the results of voting by either unanimity or majority rule in a bicameral legislature as compared to a single-chamber?

35. What is the justification for a two-chamber legislature?

36. Does the existence of conflict preclude unanimity?

37. Why do special interests arise?

38. How would you succinctly describe the major theory underlying The Calculus of Consent?
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: INSIDE BUREAUCRACY BY Anthony Downs

Read: Chapters 2, 6-12 (read chapters 8 and 9 first).

1. What are the internal characteristics common to bureaus? What is a “bureau”?

2. How can we classify hierarchies?

3. What problems arise in tall and flat hierarchies?

4. What are the implications of hierarchy regarding the distribution of power, income, and prestige?

5. Why is there a need for formal rules?

6. What are the positive benefits to informal structures?

7. Why do officials create informal networks of associates and friends in bureaus?

8. What are some of the disadvantages to personal loyalty to a single official?

9. Describe the types, motivations, and behavior of “bureaucrats”.

10. What three factors determine the type of official a bureaucrat is likely to be?

11. How or why do some bureaucrats become “conservers”?

12. What is the Law of Increasing Conserverism?
13. Why do conservers “stick to the rules”?

14. Where are “statesmen” found in bureaucracies? Why?

15. What three attributes are related to the genesis of bureaus?

16. Why are bureaus initially dominated by zealots?

17. Why is the survival of new bureaus so precarious?

18. What two factors enable bureaus to attain an initial survival threshold?

19. Why are fast-growing bureaus dominated by “climbers”?

20. What factors slow the growth of bureaus?

21. What effect does the lack of growth in a bureau have on climbers?

22. What is the effect of the decline in climbers on innovation in bureaucracies?

23. Why do bureaus seek to expand?

24. What is the “age lump” phenomenon, and what are the consequences for bureaucracies?

25. Why are bureaus unlikely to die after they have become established?

26. How does biased behavior relate to conflicts of interest?

27. What are the four major biases common to all bureaucrats?
28. Describe the anti-distortion devices that can be used by higher-level officials to control subordinates.
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: AN ECONOMIC THEORY OF DEMOCRACY BY Anthony Downs

Read: Chapters 1-9, 11-14.

1. Describe in detail what factors enter the voters’ decision on who to support and how they are related.

2. How does government go about making decisions? How about budgetary decisions?

3. What are the basic assumptions?

4. What role do party ideologies play?

5. How do party ideologies differ in multiparty as compared to two-party political systems, like the U.S.?

6. Why are special interests so powerful in politics?

7. Why do voters seem so minimally informed?

8. Why do political parties seem so ambiguous and equivocal in their policy positions?

9. Why is voting turnout so low?

10. Do political parties keep their promises? Explain.

11. What determines the number and ideological nature of political parties?

12. Describe the consequences of a highly ideological candidate on
13. How does rational behavior by political parties discourage rational behavior by voters?

14. How are majority-pleasing governments defeated?
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: CONGRESS: KEYSTONE OF THE WASHINGTON ESTABLISHMENT BY Morris P. Fiorina

1. Why is the membership of Congress so stable?
2. What was David Mayhew’s “important observation”?
3. What are the goals of voters, legislators, and bureaucrats?
4. Describe the types of activities members of Congress engage in.
5. In what two important ways does “lawmaking” differ from constituency-oriented activities?
6. How would you explain the increased demand for the services provided legislators? Any other reasons?
7. How does the subgovernment or “cozy triangle” system operate?
8. What is the magnitude of the “incumbency effect”?
9. How would you explain the timing and growth of the incumbency advantage?
10. Why does Congress write vague laws?
11. How can we explain the growth in government?
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: POLITICAL CONTROL OF THE ECONOMY BY Edward R. Tufte

1. What is the politicians “theory” of the impact of economic conditions on elections?
2. What are the important features of the economic policy instruments used to stimulate the economy?
3. With respect to elections, what are the president’s political priorities?
4. What is the economic-electoral cycle in the U.S.?
5. Why does everyone in Washington go along with stimulating the economy?
6. Are there limits to the economic manipulation of elections? Explain.
7. How do political parties on the “left” and “right” differ?
8. What are the economic interest of Democrats and Republicans?
9. What three factors influence economic (macro) policy?
10. How does the electorate influence the direction of macro-economic policy?
11. What is your own prediction for the economy for 2004? Why?
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: PRESIDENTIAL POWER AND THE MODERN PRESIDENTS BY Richard Nuestadt

1. Why are presidents considered “clerks”? 
2. Why is the president not assured of the support of everyone, even though everyone depends on him for some services? 
3. What is necessary for the execution of presidential orders? 
4. Why is the separation of institutions sharing power so important? 
5. What advantages in persuading others does a president have? 
6. How are a president’s advantages in bargaining and persuasion checked? 
7. What is the essence of a president’s persuasive task? 
8. What is a president’s reputation composed of? 
9. Describe the “Washington community”. 
10. Describe the law of anticipated reactions. 
11. What is the greatest danger to a president’s influence? 
12. What shapes a president’s bargaining advantages? 
13. What are the goals that underlie a president’s reputation? 
14. What shapes a president’s reputation? 
15. How is the influence of presidents shaped by the public standing of the president?
16. What is “officialdom’s pragmatic substitute” for public opinion?

17. What is the dynamic factor in a president’s prestige?

18. What threatens a president’s prestige?

19. What is the importance of “events”?

20. What is the significance of “events” in the president’s role as “teacher”?
STUDY QUESTIONS FOR: The End of Liberalism By Theodore J. Lowi

1. What is the common trait shared by private organizations and governments?

2. Pluralism replaced capitalism as the basic public philosophy. What two features of the pluralist ideology made this replacement possible?

3. What is the pluralist equilibrium?

4. What is interest-group liberalism?

5. What are the assumptions of interest-group liberalism?

6. How is the public “shut out” of interest-group liberalism?

7. Why were administrative agencies created in the agriculture sector?

8. What is the purpose of the Departments of Commerce and Labor?

9. Delegation is inevitable in a modern state; hence, it hardly warrants criticism. When is the practice pathological?

10. What has made the delegation of power a constitutional problem?

11. In order to overcome institutional decentralization, presidents tend to “oversell” to promote cohesion among those in the foreign policy establishment. What do they oversell?

12. Why are cities “well run but poorly governed”?

13. What is the practical form that pluralism assumes when applied to administration?