

**Political Science BC3200y  
American Political Development  
Spring 2003**

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2-4 and by appointment

Class meeting: 404 Milbank, MW 10:35-11:50

### **Course Description**

This course explores the development and evolution of the American political system. The course will seek to answer the following questions: What is an institution? When and how do institutions change? How do institutions shape our political life? How do politics change institutions? How can historical approaches to American politics help us to understand some of the current dilemmas now facing the American political system? This course is not an American history course. Rather, it is an attempt to explore current as well as past debates in political science by using historical evidence, as well as concepts and tools used in political science.

This class reflects one of the exciting new developments occurring in the field of political science. I hope that students will discover how many of the issues that we face today, have been confronted (although in slightly different form) by politicians and citizens in the past. Please do not hesitate to email me or to come to office hours if you have any questions or comments about the material or issues covered in class. I especially encourage students to meet with me in the first stages of planning the research paper.

### **Class Participation**

An overview of the readings for the week will be covered at the beginning of each class. The rest of the class time will focus on answering the questions for the week, as well as the broader questions and themes that are our focus for the semester. Please keep in mind that these questions are a start, not an end, to our discussion. Students share a responsibility in ensuring that class time is used productively. You must prepare for class by reading the assignments and thinking about the issues and questions they raise before coming to class. The last 2 sessions of the class will be spent in individual presentation of research findings, and class discussion of those findings.

### **Paper**

A research paper will be required for this class. Instructions for the research paper are attached to the end of the syllabus. Summary due dates:

Research proposal	February 19
Draft Paper	April 16
Final Paper	May 5

### **Grading**

Class Participation	30%
Midterm	20% (March 12)
Final Paper	<u>50%</u> (10% proposal; 20% draft; 20% final paper)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Course Readings

Course books are available at Columbia University Bookstore. Books will also be available at Barnard Library Reserve. A class reader will be available from Quick Copy (Amsterdam and 120<sup>th</sup> Street). Readings marked with an asterisk (\*) are available in the course reader.

### Required Books (available at bookstore and Barnard Library Reserve)

Fiorina, Morris. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.  
 Huntington, Samuel. *American Politics: the Promise of Disharmony*.  
 Morone, James. *The Democratic Wish*.  
 Sinclair, Barbara. *The Transformation of the U.S. Senate*.  
 Skowronek, Stephen. *The Politics Presidents Make*.  
 Young, James. *The Washington Community*.

### Additional Books on Reserve

Clemens, Elisabeth S. *The People's Lobby*.  
 Dodd, Lawrence & Jillson, Calvin. *The Dynamics of American Politics*.  
 Mansbridge, Jane. *Why We Lost the ERA*.  
 Skowronek, Stephen. *Building a New American State*.

## Statement on Academic Honesty

In this class, we will be analyzing the thoughts, arguments and evidence of others. This work will be critical in helping you to develop your own ideas. Plagiarism occurs when you present someone else's ideas, arguments, or evidence as your own without attribution or acknowledgement. Plagiarism occurs in (but is not limited to) the following instances: copying or paraphrasing someone else's writing without acknowledgement; using someone else's facts or ideas without acknowledgement; handing in someone else's work, or work that you have handed in for credit for another course.

## Course Schedule

### I. Theories of Change in American Politics

### Weeks 2 & 3

#### Readings

Huntington: pp. 5-23, 39-41, 85-87, 112-129, 138-146.

Morone: Introduction

Skowronek, *Building a New American State*: Chapters 1,2

\* Dodd & Jillson, The Dynamics of American Politics: Chapters 2,3,4,8 (pp. 24-104;182-206).

\* John, "Governmental Institutions as Agents of Change: Rethinking American Political Development in the Early Republic, 1787-1935"

\* Shade, "'Revolutions Can Go Backwards': The American Civil War and the Problem of Political Development"

#### Questions

1. How does political change happen (or not) in the United States? How do we know when change has (or has not) occurred?
2. Compare the arguments, which one is more persuasive?
3. Try to define the following terms: **realignment, periodicity, equilibrium, creedal passions, political time, secular time**. And also these terms: **the state, institutions, organizational theory, rational choice, political culture, administrative capacity**.
4. What does Morone mean by the "democratic wish"?
5. What does Skocpol mean by "identities, goals, capacities"?
6. What does Skowronek mean by "state-building"?

7. What does Steinmo mean by the phrase, “American exceptionalism”?
8. Is there such a thing as “political time”? How much of history/politics can it explain?

## II. Congress

Weeks 4 & 5

Young: Chapters: 1-4, 5,7,8,11, Epilogue

Sinclair, *Transformation of the U.S. Senate* TBA

Fiorina: Chapters 1,5,7-10,12-13

\*Thompson, *The Spider Web*

\* Polsby, “The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives”

1. How would the changes described in Polsby’s article affect the policy process?
2. Are there key institutional differences between the Congress described by Thompson and the one described by Fiorina?
3. In what ways has the U.S. Senate remained a “House of Lords”?
4. Can we evaluate Congress using concepts such as “political time” or “exceptionalism”?

### Research Paper Proposal Due - February 19<sup>th</sup>.

## III. Presidency

Weeks 6 & 7

Skowronek: Structure and Action (Chapter 3); Jefferson & Jackson, T. Roosevelt, Hoover & F.

Roosevelt, Johnson & Carter, Reagan, Bush and Beyond; Clinton

\* Neustadt, “Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency”

1. Did institutions shape the early presidents, or did the early presidents shape American political institutions?
2. Could Theodore Roosevelt have pursued a different strategy for increasing presidential power?
3. What explains Franklin Roosevelt’s election: creedal passions, political realignment, or institutional breakdown?
4. Was Hoover (or Carter) a victim of bad timing, his personality, or the limitations of American political institutions?

### Week 9 - Spring Break

## IV. Bureaucracy

Week 10

Morone: All.

Skowronek, *Building a New American State*: Chapters 3 & 6

\* Nelson, “A Short, Ironic History of American National Bureaucracy”

\* Light, *Thickening Government*,

1. How is the process of “patchwork” different from “reconstitution”?
2. Is thickening of government inevitable?
3. What were the key institutional transformations that shaped the emergence of the modern American bureaucracy?

## V. Interest Groups

Week 11

Huntington: Chapter 7 (pp. 167-220)

\* Clemens, *The People’s Lobby*

- \* McCormick, “The Discovery that Business Corrupts Politics”
- \* Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*
- \* Truman, “In Defense of Pluralist Politics”

1. Why do interest groups suddenly become more important during the Progressive Age?
2. Why was the presence (real or imagined) of corruption such an important issue during the Progressive Era?
3. Is the problem with American democracy really the problem of too much pluralism?
4. What can critiques of pluralism show us about process of state building?

## **VI. Race & Gender**

**Week 12 & 13**

### Race

- \* Civil rights readings: Frederick Douglass, Plessy v. Ferguson - Harlan dissent, Brown v. Board of Education, Baker v. Carr
- \* Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation*
- \* Katznelson, et al. “Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950”
- \* Carmines and Stimson, *Issue Evolution*, TBA

### Gender

- \* Baker, “The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920”
- \* Gordon, “Black and White Visions of Welfare: Women’s Welfare Activism, 1890-1945”
- \* Harvey, The Political Consequences of Exclusion: Organizations, Institutions, and the Electoral Mobilization of Women” SSH, 1996: 97-132.
- \* Mansbridge, *Why We Lost the ERA*

1. Are race or gender exceptions to American politics and institutions?
2. Was the ERA “lost” because of gender or because of institutions?
3. Does individual agency matter?

## **VII. Contemporary Politics and Policy in Historical Perspective**

**Week 14**

- \* Weir, Orloff and Skocpol, *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, TBA.

## **VIII. Student Research Presentations**

**Week 15 & 16**

**Final paper due May 5<sup>th</sup>.**

## Term Paper Instructions

**Purpose of the Paper:** The purpose of the term paper is to enable you to apply some of the theories that we have outlined in the class to specific features of American politics. Your term paper assignment is to analyze some feature of American politics, noting its change or continuity (non-change) over some period of time. An example of an institutional feature is Congress, the Presidency, or the bureaucracy (see Skowronek or Polsby). For interest groups or policies, see Morone, Clemens, or Mansbridge.

- If your analysis focuses on change, explain which theory of change best applies. That is, was the change a result of a unique event, or part of some recurring cycle?
- If your analysis focuses on some feature that has not changed, explain why we might have expected change, and why it did not happen (see Mansbridge).

Since this course covers American political development, your analysis must cover a span of time, and the time span should end by 1980. Whatever your analysis, you need to show why your explanation of events is more plausible than other explanations. More importantly, to demonstrate your understanding of the course readings and discussion, your paper must refer to the appropriate readings.

**What topic should you choose?** It helps to focus on a topic in which you're interested. For example, if you're interested in the exploring the impact of money on elections, you might examine campaign finance reform during the Progressive Era. If you're interested in gender/women's issues, you might focus on the beginnings of the League of Women Voters. If you're interested in institutions, you might try applying theories of political change to developments in the Supreme Court, and seeing if those theories fit. You could also compare or contrast presidents (one not discussed in Skowronek), Congresses, interest groups, or policies.

**Where to start?** The bibliography for the Dodd & Jillson readings will be on reserve at the library. This is a good source for tracking down topic ideas/research material. Another source of ideas are the following journals: Journal of Policy History, Studies in American Political Development, or Social Science History. Use the articles in these journals as a guide in structuring your paper.

**Structure of Paper:** All submitted papers (proposal, draft and final) should be: typed, double-spaced, left-justified with ragged right margin, numbered, and proofread. The final paper must be at least 10 pages (maximum 15) in length, not including bibliography and title page. Footnotes and Bibliography are required, and should be single-spaced. MLA style is preferred.

### Paper Due Dates:

- A research proposal and outline (3-5 pages) is due February 19<sup>th</sup>. You should describe briefly what feature and time span you would be looking at. In addition, you should tell me why you are interested in this topic, and how this topic is important in terms of what we have been discussing in class. Finally, you should present a short list of references. The references should not consist of class readings since their inclusion is a given. You may decide to refine your topic as the semester progresses, and you have read more material. Just keep in mind that the requirement to submit a paper topic is to help you focus on your paper, sooner rather than later.
- A draft of the final paper is due April 16<sup>th</sup>.
- The final paper due date is May 5<sup>th</sup> at the beginning of class period in class. Papers deposited in the departmental office or at my office will be considered late. Papers must be turned in by this date so I can give each paper a comprehensive evaluation. If an extension is needed, you must contact me either by phone or email at least 3 days before the due date. Extensions will not be automatically granted simply by leaving a message (phone/email), I must approve each request. For papers without an approved extension, a penalty of 5 points will be applied for each day the paper is late.