Topics in American Political Development

Government 381L, Fall 2012
Unique No. 38900
W 330-630, BAT 1.104

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Office Hours: M: 2:00-5:00pm

This is a research seminar on American Political Development. The course will expose students to a number of topics related to the application of political science to American history. Topics to be investigated include American Political Development as subfield, the state, the American South, Reconstruction, religion, industrialization, liberalism, immigration, gender, coercion, and the geopolitics of US political development. The seminar accordingly features a number of critically acclaimed works in the field of American political development, books and articles mostly of which date from the 1990s and ’00s.

The seminar will explicitly consider the comparative dimensions to institutional changes in US politics and government. It will also focus on the qualitative methodologies used in APD research, and focus on levels-of-analysis issues and questions of evidence.

Students will be responsible for leading classroom discussion, for a 20-25 page research paper OR a combination of a book review and a 24-hr. take-home exam at the end of the semester. Students who choose the book review will make a five-minute presentation of the book they review and students who choose to write a research paper—an article quality, original work on a topic chosen by the student in consultation with her or his instructor—will be responsible for presenting their work at the end of the semester. A proposal for the research paper is due on the fifth week of class, and a draft of the paper is due on 13th week. The book review consists of a 1500 word review of a book not assigned in class, chosen in consultation with her or his instructor. The take-home final is designed to be a mock prelim exam for first and/or second year students.

The reaction papers are to ask questions, express opinions, and otherwise remark on the reading(s) assigned for that week.

The oral presentations are to be no more than 15-20 minutes in length. You are to summarize the book’s argument, the evidence used, the methods which the author uses, the premises or assumptions of the work, and express your own reaction/point of view with respect to the research being discussed.
Documented Disability Statement:

The University of Texas will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact Services for Students with Disabilities at 471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (Video Phone) as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations.

Grading: Ten reaction papers, 20 percent (10 out of 14 weeks); oral presentation(s) and class participation 30 percent; research paper OR book review and take-home exam 50 percent.

Required Readings


Course Schedule

Aug. 29: Week 1 Introduction: Overview
Tocqueville, Hartz, V.O. Key, Burnham, and political science before APD

Sept. 5: Week 2 American Political Development as a Subfield
- Walter Dean Burnham, “Pattern Recognition and ’Doing’ Political History, in Dodd and Jillson, eds., The Dynamics of American Politics.
- Orren and Skowronek, “Beyond the Iconography of Order” in Dodd and Jillson, eds., The Dynamics of American Politics.
- Skocpol and Pierson, “Historical Institutionalism,” in Katznelson and Milner, Political Science: State of the Discipline.

Sept. 12: Week 3 The United States and the Founding

Sept. 19: Week 4 What Kind of Liberalism?

Sept. 26: Week 5 Religion

- 1-page research paper proposal due for students writing the research paper

Oct. 3: Week 6 A Matter of Timing

Oct. 10: Week 7 Race and Reconstruction

• **Book review due (for those not writing a research paper)**
• **Book review presentations for students writing a review**

Oct. 17: Week 8 Industrialization

Oct. 24: Week 9 Gender and Public Policy
• Suzanne Mettler *Dividing Citizens: Gender and Federalism in New Deal Public Policy* (Cornell University Press, 1998).

Oct. 31: Week 10 Coercion

Nov. 7: Week 11 Geography and APD
• Bartholomew Sparrow, *The Insular Cases and the Emergence of American Empire*

Nov. 14: Week 12 Land-use Policy

Nov. 21: Week 13 Agency and Institutional Change

• **Student research presentation(s)**
• **Draft of research paper due**

Nov. 28: Week 14 War and State-Building

Dec. 5: Week 15 The United States among States
- Nettl, “The State as a Conceptual Variable,” World Politics
- Katzenelson and Shefter, eds. Shaped by War and Trade.

- December 11: Take-home exam (mock prelim) distributed
- December 15: Research paper due