Course Description and Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to provide you with an overview of the field of American politics, though with a focus on theoretical and empirical paradigms and approaches - and especially focused on contemporary work paired occasionally with classic works. Most field courses in American politics divide topics by substantive field (Congress, courts/judicial politics, voting behavior, public opinion, etc.). Your previous American politics field seminar (fall semester) was devoted in part to those questions. This second segment in the field seminar is meant to make you think across substantive topics by focusing on the theories, dominant paradigmatic approaches, questions of causality, and methodological approaches in American politics. In this course, linkages across different substantive fields should be drawn. Additionally, my intention is for the course to link the past of the field in American politics to the present and the future. In addition, many of the readings in the course will be contemporary and recent publications. Many of the readings will be drawn from the last few years of articles published in major journals in the discipline.

One of the goals of the course is to give a foundation of the variety of subfields, approaches, methods, etc. in the field of American politics. Another, more practical, goal of the course is to give you a foundation to prepare for your American politics qualifying exam and to develop and execute a research project. While quite extensive, there is no way that we can cover every key or core piece of material in the field. This syllabus should be considered a very small foundation and starting point for the field of American politics. For your qualifying exam preparation, this syllabus is clearly not exhaustive. Obviously, you will need to be familiar with more readings than those on this syllabus and on the first-semester field course for the qualifying exam. You should be familiar with many books and articles in the field of American politics, especially those from the last 50 years to the present.

The syllabus is structured around required readings. I am requiring a few readings each week so that we all have a common set of readings to discuss. The required readings early in the semester will include a few classics, as well as more recent articles that build directly off of one of the older, “classic” readings to provide a baseline of comparison of substantive, theoretical, and methodological similarities and differences in the field across time. Later in the semester, we will focus mostly on more recent publications in the field of American politics. I reserve the right to change the readings, and may do so conditional upon interests of students in the course. I will also provide a much more extensive list of recommended readings that we will not discuss in depth during the semester that may help you on your qualifying exam.

We will sometimes have each student give a presentation on other readings not on the syllabus for certain topics. Those students giving class presentations for that week will need to read at least 5-10 additional articles/readings and report on them to the class. More details on this will be given in class.

*I will update the syllabus throughout the semester as needed, and may add or delete readings given your substantive interests that emerge during the semester.*
Objectives

The purpose of this course is fourfold. First, you will learn about the field of American politics. Specifically, I want you to think about the field not just as separate subfields but also as a field with interesting theoretical and empirical approaches.

Second, I want you to generate research questions for your future research and think about theoretical and empirical puzzles in the extant literature of the field.

Third, I hope you will learn about the direction of the field of American politics, and learn a broad overview of the field.

Fourth, I want you to learn how to become writers and scholars in this course. I require a final research paper that could eventually be published in an academic journal. By focusing the course on writing throughout the semester, I hope to help you learn how to develop a research question, theorize about your topic, and empirically test your question. The final paper requirement of the course can be accomplished in multiple ways. You could each individually write your own paper, or I also encourage co-authorship for your final paper. We can talk more about these options during the first week of class. For those of you who previously took Prof. Crigler’s class where a research design was required, you may write the full paper for this class or you may decide to write a different research design and/or paper. We will talk more about this in class.

Books required:


Articles required:

Most of the readings are from articles. You can access the journals using the resources provided by the USC libraries web site. You can search directly for the journal for the newest articles, use JSTOR or other journal databases for some articles, or in instances in which the articles are forthcoming or not yet published, you should be able to find them via web links listed on the syllabus or by searching for the title of the article in google scholar.

Grading and Evaluation:

Class participation: formal presentations 7%

Class participation: general weekly discussion & response questions to weekly readings 20%

2 article peer reviews 10%

Paper draft and design 13%

Final research paper 50%
Finally, I want to note that plagiarism is unacceptable and can result in serious penalties. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, please consult the USC student affairs web site that details plagiarism: http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/student-conduct/ug_plag.htm. Please feel free to ask me as well if you have any questions or concerns. Copying text directly from any source without quotations is one form of plagiarism, as is writing similarly-phrased words and sentences without attribution. Again, please consult the above link for a very detailed description of the types of plagiarism (all of which are unacceptable).

How to Reach Me: My office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus. If you cannot make office hours, I am happy to schedule an appointment with you as teaching and training graduate students is one of the key missions of the university and the POIR program. The best way to contact me is by email, which is cgrose@dornsife.usc.edu.

1/10 Week 1. Introduction to course

-Assignment for the next class period: pick one article published (or online first) in the American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, or Journal of Politics since 2013. The article should be focused on American politics. Please write a response paper of one page or less that clearly details the (1) research question; (2) the argument/theory; (3) the method/research design; and (4) the findings. In addition, based on reading the article, please develop at least one research question you could answer in your own research paper spurred from reading the article. Finally, be prepared to briefly discuss the article in class.

1/17 A Science of American Politics?


1/24 Rational and behavioral approaches to policy-making in political institutions I

ARTICLE “REVIEW” THIS WEEK. Please write one page where you recommend whether you would accept, reject, or invite this article for revise and resubmit and justify your argument by praising or critiquing the theory and/or methods of the article.


**1/31 Rational and behavioral approaches to policy-making in political institutions II**


Keith Krehbiel, selection of Pivotal Politics.

Cox and McCubbins, selections of Setting the Agenda.

**2/7 Inequality and American politics I**


**2/14 Inequality and American politics II**


Jordan Peterson, “The Outer Limits of Bureaucratic Neutrality.”
2/21 Presentation in class outlining research paper. 3-5 page research design presentations due in class along with empirical analysis plan and timeline.

2/28 Individual meetings scheduled this week to discuss your proposed research papers

3/7 Causality in Research on American Politics

ARTICLE REVIEW THIS WEEK


3/14 Spring recess – No class

3/21 Qualitative and ethnography in American politics


4/4 DUE IN CLASS: SHORT 2-4 PAGE WRITE UP OF MAIN EMPIRICAL RESULTS IN YOUR PAPER INCLUDING RESULTS/TABLES

EMPIRICAL ANALYSES OF STUDENT FINAL PAPER MUST BE COMPLETE AND WILL BE PRESENTED AND WORKSHopped IN CLASS

4/11 Returning to theory: EITM and spatial model applications


Timothy Groseclose, “A Model of Candidate Location When One Candidate Has a Valence Advantage.” American Journal of Political Science


Poole and Rosenthal or Lo, Poole, Rosenthal.

4/18 Theory and American politics

ROUGH DRAFT OF FINAL RESEARCH DESIGN DUE – EVEN IF VERY ROUGH


4/25 Presentations on final papers

May 2 FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 5pm.

Please send PDF copies by email or place hard copies in my mailbox.
**Recommended readings:** I have purposely kept the reading list short to encourage extensive discussion, and I will likely update and change some readings on the syllabus once I learn more about your research interests.

I will provide a very long list of recommended readings that are not required but that may be of use for you qualifying exam or more specific interests once the semester begins.