

U.S. Political Institutions

University of Rochester, PSC 540

Spring 2021

Mondays, 10:25 am - 1:15 pm, Harkness 210

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Course Information

Description This course aims to provide graduate students with a foundation from which to conduct original research on U.S. political institutions.¹ We will survey theoretical and empirical literature across areas of focus in the sub-field of U.S. politics. We will also explore perspectives on the institutions-based approach to research, especially in the context of U.S. politics. In addition to reading published research, students will gain exposure to a set of “workhorse” models and empirical strategies that practitioners rely upon when conducting research on U.S. political institutions. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions as well as to lead some discussions of assigned articles. The central assignment will be the development of a research proposal that demonstrates promise for development into a publishable paper.

Assignments and Expectations Students must carefully and thoughtfully read the assigned materials before each class and arrive (in-person or virtually) to class prepared to discuss and interrogate the readings. For each piece of scholarship we read in class, you should be able to articulate the research question, the methodology employed (and the reasons for adopting it), the key findings, some strengths of the work, important weaknesses of the work, its context within the broader literature, and ideas for novel research work prompted by the piece. We are going to adopt a less-is-more approach

¹This course is one of two core courses in the U.S. politics sequence, with the other laying the foundation for conducting original research on U.S. political behavior. The two may be taken in either order. NOTE: The prerequisites for this class include the first semester of the graduate theory and methods training.

to the readings, making it all the more important that you really engage with every piece that we do read and contribute to lively, productive discussions. Instead of trying to survey foundational works in every sub-sub-field, we will make significant use of published review articles. For these articles, please try to distill the fundamental questions and challenges in a given field, as well as received wisdom and established facts within those fields. The substantive works we do read will either be of active importance for current research or representative of the frontier in a given area. Clearly, these will not constitute an exhaustive survey of scholarship in an area.

Students will present three articles each throughout the class, and we will treat these presentations as though it is your work you are explaining and defending. We will discuss some tips on giving effective presentations early in the class, and we will workshop the presentations afterwards. I will look to see substantial improvement in the quality of the presentations over the term, and this will be the basis for the “presentation” portion of your grade.

The paper proposal may take a number of forms, but I/we will strive to make it as useful to your budding research projects/agendas as possible. We will start thinking about possible avenues early in the course and continue an open dialogue throughout. More broadly, please be in touch about anything I can do to facilitate your learning and success as early as you are aware of a need.

Grade breakdown:

50% participation

25% presentations

25% paper proposal

Materials There are two **required** books:

- Gehlbach, Scott. 2013. *Veto Players*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. 2010. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*. New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2nd edition.

(This is a bit too remedial for a course like this, but it’s a good resource for its citations/perspective, and it will get us all on the same page.)

All other materials will be published articles, working papers, or copied excerpts from books, all found on Blackboard under Readings and the corresponding unit.

1 The Study of Political Institutions and the Institutional Study of Politics

Overview of course; allot papers to present and discuss presentations; talk institutions and how it fits with everyone's research

- Shepsle chapters 1-2, 8-10, 11, 17
- Riker, William H. 1980. "Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions." *American Political Science Review*, 74(2): 432-446.
- Diermeier, Daniel and Keith Krehbiel. 2003. "Institutionalism as a methodology." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 15(2): 123-144.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A., 2009. "Rational Choice Institutionalism." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1-17.
- Amadae, S. M. and Bruce Bueno De Mesquita. 1999. "The Rochester school: The origins of positive political theory." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2: 269-295.

2 Elections

2.1 Spatial competition

- Gehlbach chapters 1-2
- Grofman, Bernard. 2004. "Downs and two-party convergence." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7: 25-46.
- Duggan, John, 2008. "Candidate Objectives and Electoral Equilibrium." In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, October, pp. 1-21.
- Fowler, Anthony and Andrew B. Hall. 2016. "The Elusive Quest for Convergence." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 11(February): 1-34.
- Dewan, Torun and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2011. "Political economy models of elections." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14: 311-330.

2.2 Political accountability

- Gehlbach chapter 7
- Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan. 2016. *Political Economy for Public Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, section on electoral accountability.
- Ashworth, Scott. 2012. “Electoral accountability: Recent theoretical and empirical work.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15: 183–201.
- Duggan, John and César Martinelli. 2017. “The Political Economy of Dynamic Elections: Accountability, Commitment, and Responsiveness.” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55(3): 916–984.
- Alt, James, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Shanna Rose. 2011. “Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections: Evidence from U.S. Term Limits.” *The Journal of Politics*, 73(01): 171–186.

3 Congress

3.1 Ideology (and measurement) in Congress

- Shepsle chapter 5
- Gehlbach chapter 4
- Clinton, Joshua D. 2012. “Using roll call estimates to test models of politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15: 79–99.
- Wawro, Gregory J. and Eric Schickler. 2010. “Legislative obstructionism.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13: 297–319.
- Binder, Sarah. 2015. “The dysfunctional Congress.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18: 85–101.
- Clinton, Joshua D. and John S. Lapinski. 2006. “Measuring legislative accomplishment, 1877–1994.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 50(1): 232–249.

3.2 Distributive approaches

- Shepsle chapter 12
- Gehlbach sections 6.1-2
- Krehbiel, Keith. 1990. “Are Congressional Committees Composed of Preference Outliers?” *American Political Science Review*, 84(1): 149–163.
- Adler, E. Scott and John S. Lapinski. 1997. “Demand-Side Theory and Congressional Committee Composition: A Constituency Characteristics Approach.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 41(3): 895.
- Cann, Damon M. 2008. “Modeling Committee Chair Selection in the U.S. House of Representatives.” *Political Analysis*, 16(3): 274–289.
- Jenkins, Jeffery A. and Nathan W. Monroe. 2012. “Buying Negative Agenda Control in the U.S. House.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(4): 897–912.

3.3 Parties

- Shepsle chapter 16
- McCarty, Nolan and Eric Schickler. 2018. “On the Theory of Parties.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21: 175–193.
- Snyder, James M. and Tim Groseclose. 2000. “Estimating Party Influence in Congressional Roll-Call Voting.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(2): 193.
- Chiou, Fang Yi and Lawrence S. Rothenberg. 2003. “When pivotal politics meets partisan politics.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 47(3): 503–522.
- Schickler, Eric. 2000. “Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models.” *American Political Science Review*, 94(2): 269–288.
- Berry, Christopher R., Barry C. Burden, and William G. Howell. 2010. “The President and the Distribution of Federal Spending.” *American Political Science Review*, 104(04): 783–799.

4 The Executive

4.1 Unilateral policymaking

- Shepsle chapter 14
- Howell, William G. 2005. “Unilateral Powers: A Brief Overview.” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 35(3): 417–439.
- Lowande, Kenneth and Jon C. Rogowski. 2021. “Presidential Unilateral Power.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24(1): 1–23.
- Bolton, Alexander and Sharece Thrower. 2016. “Legislative Capacity and Executive Unilateralism.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3): 649–663.
- Barber, Michael, Alexander Bolton, and Sharece Thrower. 2019. “Legislative Constraints on Executive Unilateralism in Separation of Powers Systems.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 44(3): 515–548.
- Thrower, Sharece. 2019. “Presidential action and the Supreme Court: The case of signing statements.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 31(4): 677–698.

4.2 The bureaucracy and the constrained president

- Shepsle chapter 13
- Bendor, Jonathan, A Glazer, and T Hammond. 2001. “Theories of Delegation.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 4: 235–269.
- Lewis, David E. 2011. “Presidential appointments and personnel.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14: 47–66.
- Yackee, Susan Webb. 2019. “The politics of rulemaking in the United States.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22: 37–55
- Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2017. “Slow-rolling, fast-Tracking, and the pace of bureaucratic decisions in rulemaking.” *Journal of Politics*, 79(3): 841–855.
- Bolton, Alexander and Sharece Thrower. 2019. “The constraining power of the purse: Executive discretion and legislative appropriations.” *Journal of Politics*, 81(4): 1266–1281.

- Gehlbach chapter 5
- Miller, Gary J. 2005. “The political evolution of principal-agent models.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 8: 203–225.
- Gailmard, Sean and John W. Patty. 2012. “Formal models of bureaucracy.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 15: 353–377.

5 The Judiciary

- Shepsle chapter 15
- Baum, Lawrence. 2003. “The Supreme Court in American Politics.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6: 161–180.
- Barnes, Jeb. 2007. “Bringing the courts back in: Interbranch perspectives on the role of courts in American politics and policy making.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10: 25–43.
- Lax, Jeffrey R. 2011. “The new judicial politics of legal doctrine.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14: 131–157.
- Lauderdale, Benjamin E. and Tom S. Clark. 2012. “The supreme court’s many median justices.” *American Political Science Review*, 106(4): 847–866.
- Beim, Deborah, Alexander V. Hirsch, and Jonathan P. Kastellec. 2014. “Whistleblowing and compliance in the judicial hierarchy.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(4): 904–918.

6 Interest Groups

- Gehlbach chapter 3
- De Figueiredo, John M. and Brian Kelleher Richter. 2014. “Advancing the empirical research on lobbying.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17: 163–185.
- Bonica, Adam. 2013. “Mapping the Ideological Marketplace.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(2): 367–386.

- Bertrand, Marianne, Matilde Bombardini, and Francesco Trebbi. 2014. “Is It Whom You Know or What You Know? An Empirical Assessment of the Lobbying Process.” *The American Economic Review*, 104(12): 3885–3920.
- Snyder, James M. and Michael M. Ting. 2008. “Interest groups and the electoral control of politicians.” *Journal of Public Economics*, 92(3-4): 482–500.

7 Sub-National Institutional Analysis

7.1 State politics

- Morehouse, Sarah M. and Malcolm E. Jewell. 2004. “States as laboratories: A reprise.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7: 177–203.
- Besley, Timothy and Anne Case. 2003. “Political institutions and policy choices: Evidence from the United States.” *Journal of Economic Literature*, 41(1): 7–73.
- Kroeger, Mary. 2019. “Groups as Lawmakers: Group Bills in a U.S. State Legislature.” *working paper*.
- Tausanovitch, Chris and Christopher Warshaw. 2013. “Measuring constituent policy preferences in congress, state legislatures, and cities.” *Journal of Politics*, 75(2): 330–342.

7.2 Local political economy

- Trounstine, Jessica. 2010. “Representation and accountability in cities.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 13: 407–423.
- Goldstein, Rebecca and Hye Young You. 2017. “Cities as Lobbyists.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(4): 864–876.
- Kirkland, Patricia A. 2020. “Business Owners and Executives as Politicians: The Effect on Public Policy.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Magazinnik, Asya. 2018. “Elective Enforcement: The Politics of Local Immigration Policing.” *working paper*.