Introduction

This is the second in a sequence of two fields seminars in American politics intended for graduate students in political science, in preparation for taking the general examination in American politics. The material covered in this semester focuses on American political institutions. (17.200, the first semester, covers political behavior.) The readings covered here are not comprehensive, but it is sufficiently broad to give students an introduction to major empirical questions and theoretical approaches that guide the study of American political institutions these days.

Requirements

Weekly attendance and class participation are mandatory.

Depending on enrollments, everyone will lead the seminar discussion at least once, and perhaps twice or thrice.

Weekly one-page memos are required, summarizing an important theme raised in the preceding week’s readings and proposing a question or line of discussion to be pursued during the seminar. The one-page memos are due the day before class at 5:00 p.m. and must be distributed to all seminar participants beforehand. (I need to figure out how to do this through Stellar, but if that fails, it will be via e-mail.)

Four longer, four-page essays are also required at various times throughout the semester. The assignment is as follows: You will take a week’s reading and pose a general exam-like question that pertains to the reading. You will then write an answer to your question. I will grade the essay and return it to you for your revision, which you will complete by the end of the term. The schedule for these assignments is as follows:

- Congress, due February 26
- Presidency, due March 19
- Courts/Bureaucracy, due April 30
- Parties and groups, due May 14
Book Purchases

The following books are available for purchase at the Coop. Each belongs on the shelf of any student of American politics, and so you should own all of them:


Most of these books are in multiple editions. Buy the most recent one for use in class, but we will generally only be reading chapters from the original editions.

Everything that’s not at the Coop is available at Dewey or on Stellar.

Reading Schedule

**February 2. Introduction**

**February 9. Congress — representation and institutionalization**


February 16. MONDAY CLASSES. 17.202 doesn’t meet

February 23. Congress — party, polarization, and ideology


Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative leviathan*, University of California Press, 1993


March 2. President I


March 9. No class meeting

March 16. President II


Charles M. Cameron, 2000, *Veto bargaining and the politics of negative power*, Cambridge University Press (ch. 1, 3, 5, 6)
March 23. Spring break

April 6. Courts I — The Supreme Court as an institution

Gerald Rosenberg, *The hollow hope*, chap. 1, part I.
Keith Whittington, “‘Interpose your friendly hand’: Political supports for the exercise of judicial review by the United States Supreme Court,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 99 (2005), pp. 583–596.

April 13. Courts II — Judicial behavior


April 20. Patriots Day break — no class meeting

April 27. Bureaucracy


**May 4. Political parties**

V.O. Key, *Southern politics in state and nation*, chap. 3.


**May 11. Interest groups**


