

Political Science BC 3327
Colloquium on
Content of American Politics: American Political Development

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Office Hours: Thursday 12-3; and by appointment.

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 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 20
Draft Paper	April 17
Final Paper	May 6

Grading

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

Course Readings

Course books are available at Labyrinth Bookstore. Books as well as other readings will also be available at Barnard Reserve. A class reader will be available from Quick Copy (Amsterdam and 120th Street).

Required Books

Fiorina, Morris. *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment*, 2nd ed.

Huntington, Samuel. *American Politics: the Promise of Disharmony*.

Morone, James. *The Democratic Wish*.

Skowronek, Stephen. *The Politics Presidents Make*. 1997. Referred to as **Skowronek I**.

Skowronek, Stephen. *Building a New American State*. **Skowronek II**.

Young, James. *The Washington Community*.

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*.

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Course Schedule

I. Introduction

Week 1 (1/23)

II. Theories of Change in American Politics

Weeks 2 & 3 (1/30,2/6)

Readings

Morone: Introduction

Skowronek I: Chapters 1,2

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

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

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”?

III. The Pre-Civil War Era

Weeks 4 & 5 (2/13,2/20)

Readings

Morone: Chapters 1,2

Skowronek I: Jefferson & Jackson

Skowronek II: Chapter 2

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

Articles

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. Morone argues that there is a tension between popular rule and political authority. What is the tension, and why does it exist?
2. Did institutions shape the early presidents, or did the early presidents shape American political institutions?
3. Does John’s article weaken or reinforce Skowronek’s argument?
4. Was American state capacity weakened by too much democracy, too soon?
5. How does Shade’s article address theories of political development or change?
6. Compare Young’s account of early American governance (legislators and the presidency) to Skowronek I or II.

IV. The Progressive Era**Weeks 6 & 7** (2/27, 3/6)Readings

Morone: Chapter 3

Skowronek I: Theodore Roosevelt

Skowronek II: Chapters 3 & 6

Clemens, The People's Lobby (1-40, 318-325)Articles

Polsby, "The Institutionalization of the U.S. House of Representatives"

McCormick, "The Discovery that Business Corrupts Politics"

Questions

1. Could Theodore Roosevelt have pursued a different strategy for increasing presidential power?
2. Why do interest groups suddenly become more important during the Progressive Age?
3. How is the process of "patchwork" different from "reconstitution"?
4. How would the changes described in Polsby's article affect the policy process?
5. Why was the presence (real or imagined) of corruption such an important issue during the Progressive Era?

V. Midterm**Week 8** (3/13)**VI. Spring Break****Week 9** (3/20)**VII. The New Deal****Weeks 10 & 11** (3/27, 4/3)Readings

Morone: Chapters 4, 5

Skowronek I: Hoover & F. Roosevelt

Articles

Galambos, "The First Crisis of the Fiscal Commonwealth"

Katznelson, et al. "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950"

Questions

1. What explains Franklin Roosevelt's election: creedal passions, political realignment, or institutional breakdown?
2. Was the New Deal a turning point in American political history and institutions?
3. Why was the South an important factor in shaping New Deal liberalism? (First, define New Deal liberalism.)
4. Was Hoover a victim of bad timing, his personality, or the limitations of American political institutions?

VIII. The 1960s & 1970s: A Pivotal Era?**Weeks 12 & 13** (4/10,4/17)Readings

Fiorina: Chapters 1,5,7-10

Morone: Chapter 6 or 7

Skowronek I: Johnson & Carter

Huntington: Chapter 7 (pp. 167-220).

Mansbridge, Why We Lost the ERA, Chapters 1-4 (pp. 1-35)

Articles

Galambos, "The Second Crisis of the Corporate Commonwealth, 1970 to the Present"

Questions

1. Was the Great Society comparable to the New Deal in terms of its effect on society? On American politics?
2. Was Carter a victim of bad timing, his personality, or the limitations of American political institutions?
3. What best explains the failure of the ERA: the weakness of interest group politics, or the structure of American political institutions?
4. Compare Huntington to Mansbridge and Morone. How would Huntington explain the ERA, the Civil Rights/Anti-poverty, or the health care politics?
5. How did fiscal/economic crises of the 1970s differ from the crisis of the 1930s? Did political institutions respond differently? If so, why?

IX. Conclusions**Week 14 (4/24)**Readings

Fiorina: Chapters 12,13

Morone: Chapter 8

Skowronek I: Structure and Action (Chapter 3); Reagan, Bush and Beyond; Clinton

Dodd & Jillson, The Dynamics of...: Chapter 5 (pp. 132-159)

Questions

1. How did the 1960s & 1970s affect American politics in the 1980s and 1990s?
2. Did New Deal "liberalism," and the New Deal coalition, come to an end in the 1980s?
3. Has more democracy strengthened or weakened the American state? American political institutions?
4. What does Steinmo mean by the phrase, "American exceptionalism"?
5. Is there such a thing as "political time"? How much of history/politics can it explain?

X. Class presentations**Weeks 14 & 15 (4/24, 5/1)**

Research Paper Instructions

Purpose of the Paper: The purpose of the paper is to enable you to apply some of the theories that we have analyzed in class to specific features of American politics. Your paper assignment is to analyze an aspect of American politics such as: Congress, presidency, bureaucracy, interest groups or specific policy; and note its change or continuity (non-change) over some period of time.

- 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.

Since this course covers American political development, your analysis must be historical in structure (i.e., cover a span of time). The analysis 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 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 I), Congresses, interest groups, or policies.

Where to start? The bibliography for the Dodd & Jillson readings will be included in the reading packet. This is a good source for tracking down topic ideas/research material. Other sources of ideas can be found in 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: Your paper should be: typed, double-spaced, left-justified with ragged right margin, numbered, and proofread. It must be 20 to 25 pages, not including bibliography and title page. Footnotes and bibliography are required, and should be single-spaced.

Research Proposal: You must submit a two-page (minimum) research proposal by February 20. Briefly describe what feature and time span you will be analyzing in your paper. 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 also include a short annotated bibliography. The bibliography should not consist of class readings since their inclusion is a given.

Paper Due Dates: A draft of the paper is due April 17th. Papers must be turned in by this date, so that I can give each paper a comprehensive evaluation, and enough feedback for you to make needed changes. The final paper due date is May 6. Papers must be delivered to my office between 9 AM to 5 PM. If an extension is needed, you must contact me either by phone or email at least 3 days before this 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.