

POL 530: American Political Institutions

3 Credits

Fall 2009

Location: University Center
Class Time: Mondays from 6-8:50pm

Instructor: Dr. Heather K. Evans

Office: CHSS 488

Office Hours: Mondays from 5-6pm and by appointment

E-mail: hke002@shsu.edu

Course Description

This course is designed to provide an introduction to the field of American political institutions. The course is concerned with the design of American national institutions, their interaction with one another, and with the effects of American institutions on policy outcomes. We will cover some of the major literature, but far from everything, in a wide range of sub-fields. These sub-fields *include*--but are not limited to--Congress, the Presidency, the bureaucracy, and the Court.

The goal of the course is not only to introduce students to the vast literature on American institutions, but also to identify areas, issues, and questions that should be the focus of new research. To that end, we will analyze and critique current research with an eye toward laying the foundation for making original contributions to this body of literature.

Course Objectives

During the course of the semester students should come away with a better understanding of:

1. American political institutional concepts we discuss in class
2. research techniques in the field of American political institutions
3. how to read and evaluate research in the field
4. how to write concisely and to the point
5. how to develop your own research study design including identifying an interesting issue, putting it in the context of prior research and thinking of a concrete way to test your hypotheses.

Texts Recommended for Purchase

Mayhew, David. (1975) Congress: The Electoral Connection. Yale University Press.

Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. (1996) Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions. W. W. Norton Press.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice. (2006) Who Leads Whom?: Presidents, Policy, and the Public. University of Chicago Press.

Kernell, Samuel. (2006) Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership. 4th Edition. CQ Press.

Wilson, James Q. (2005) Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It. University of Chicago Press.

The remainder of the readings will come from political science journals or from chapters of other books. Most of the journal articles are available from JSTOR (www.jstor.org). The most recent articles and book selections will be available on the course Blackboard website.

Attendance

Regular and punctual class attendance is expected of each student. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to become informed on what was covered in class. Please get class notes from a fellow student.

Exams

An exam will not be given in this course.

Grading

Course grades will be based upon:

- (1) class participation/leading discussion (25 percent)
- (2) short memos analyzing the readings (20 percent)
- (3) research design paper (3 assignments totaling 45 percent)
- (4) oral presentation of research design paper (10 percent)

Class Participation/ Leading Discussion (25%)

Students will be expected to complete all required readings by class time, and to be prepared to participate actively in the discussion of these materials. I feel strongly that active involvement in class discussion is an important part of one's learning experience and vital to one's preparation for teaching and research. Students will be expected to summarize the readings but also point out their strengths and weaknesses in theory, methods, evidence, and analysis and suggest further lines of research. Attendance is expected.

Each student will serve as a discussion leader twice during the seminar. The schedule will be coordinated by a lottery at the 1st meeting. On those days, students will write a short 5 page paper responding to the readings. Students will lead the class for approximately 45 minutes on each day they act as discussion leader. Students should meet to consult with me about what they intend to do well before the class they are assigned to teach.

Response papers will be due at the beginning of the class for which the reading is assigned. I will not accept late papers. All papers should be typed, double spaced and in 12 point font.

****Note:** weeks where you are not a discussant you are still expected to do the reading and be an active participant in the class – but when you are the discussant you should be extra-familiar with the material.

Short Memos (20%)

After reading the assigned readings each week, students will be required to prepare and hand in a 1-2 page memo about the readings (except during the weeks that students serve as a discussion leader). In these memos, students will briefly summarize but mostly **react** to the assigned materials. Memos are due by 5pm on the day before the class meetings and should be e-mailed to me at hke002@shsu.edu. I will distribute memos in class to the rest of the participants.

Research Design (Three assignments totaling 45%) ***5% Idea Statement, 10% Preliminary Draft, 30% Final Draft***

The paper assignment in this class requires you to identify a specific question that interests you related to American political institutions. In the final paper you will have to (1) express why the question you are looking at is important or interesting (2) summarize political science research that has been done related to your topic (3) formulate specific hypothesis about your question based on existing research and (4) describe an original research design that could be used to effectively test your hypothesis. There are three assignments related to the paper designed to help you progress through the course of the semester.

It is best to have some idea of what you want to do early in the semester. I suggest you use the syllabus and examine the readings to help you accomplish this task. Also I would be happy to meet with you to discuss your ideas.

Statement of Research Question

On **September 21** all students will submit a two page statement setting forth the broad contours of a question they would like to investigate in the final paper. This statement should briefly say why the issue is important, what you hope to discover about the political phenomenon you are investigating and how research methods may be used to advance our understanding of your question. NOTE: The research question is not written in stone. It may be changed or refined once you start your research or consider the feasibility of different research methods.

Preliminary Draft

In the paper you may cite readings from class but it should also involve additional research (books or articles in the discipline). The reference section at the end of each research article is a good place to start. You can find many of the articles cited using www.jstor.org or using the library electronic journal collection. You can also use these recourses to do a search of key terms relevant to your topic.

The preliminary draft (10-12 pages) is due on **October 26** should demonstrate that you have started thinking seriously about your paper. I expect a clear statement of why the topic you are covering is interesting or important **and a review of relevant literature** demonstrating that you have done outside research on the topic. The design section may be less well developed but you

should indicate some preliminary hypotheses about your topic and how you would go about testing these ideas. I will review these drafts for clarity and content – I may ask you to flesh out ideas or give you suggestions on references you should seek out and consider inclusion in the final paper.

Final Paper

The preliminary draft must be completed and revised into a final paper (20-25 pages) due on **December 14**. The final paper should include all of the elements mentioned above. In it you should incorporate core concepts from the class where appropriate. Papers will be graded based on content and quality of writing – they should be free of grammatical errors.

Oral Presentation (10%)

To help prepare you for professional participation in academic conferences, you will be asked to present your paper to the seminar. Students will present their papers to the class on **December 7**.

Flexibility

I am confident that the course plan is realistic and attainable. However, I reserve the right to make adjustments as the class progresses. I will consult you if such adjustments become necessary.

Instructor Evaluations

Students will be given the opportunity to complete a course/instructor evaluation form near the end of the semester.

Academic Dishonesty

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/administrative/faculty/sectionb.html#dishonesty>.

Americans with Disabilities Act

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance are expected to visit with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Counseling Center. They should then make arrangements with their individual

instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If a student has a disability that may affect adversely his/her work in this class, then the student is encouraged to register with the SHSU Counseling Center and to talk with the instructor about how best to deal with the situation. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: no accommodation can be made until the student registers with the Counseling Center.

Religious Holidays

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

"Religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Tax Code.

Classroom Rules of Conduct

Students are expected to abide by the Classroom Rules of Conduct as outlined by the Dean of Students: <https://www.shsu.edu/students/guide/dean/codeofconduct.html>.

Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

Week 1 (August 24) - Introduction and Course Overview

No Readings Assigned

Week 2 (August 31) - Introduction to Institutions

Do we need Intrusive Institutions? Maybe.... Maybe Not!

- Madison, James. Federalist #10
- Hobbes, Thomas. Chapter 13 in Leviathan
- Rousseau, John Jacques. Book 3 (Chapters 12-15), Book 4 (Chapter 1), The Social Contract. Available: <http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon.htm>.
- Ostrom, Elinor. (1998) "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action." *American Political Science Review*.

Suggested Readings

- Arrow, Kenneth J. (1950) "A Difficulty in the Concept of Social Welfare." *Journal of Political Economy*.
- Riker, William. (1980) "Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions." *American Political Science Review*.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. (1996) Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions. W. W. Norton Press. Chapter 4.

Week 3 (September 7) – No Class!

Week 4 (September 14) - Introduction to Institutions

Studying Institutions and New Institutionalism

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. (1996) Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions. W. W. Norton Press. Chapter 1, 2, and 3.
- Aldrich, John H. (1990) "Rational Choice Theory and the Study of American Politics." in Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillison's Dynamics of American Politics: Approaches and Interpretations. Available on Google Books.
- Hall, Peter and Rosemary Taylor. (1996). "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms." *Political Studies*.
- Moe, Terry. (1990) "Political Institutions: The Neglected Side of the Story." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*.

Suggested Readings

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. (1989) "Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*.
- Immergut, Ellen. (1997) "The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism." *Politics and Society*.

Week 5 (September 21) – Congress as an Institution

Idea Statement Due

- Polsby, Nelson. (1968) “The Institutionalization of the US House of Representatives.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Schickler, Eric. (2000) “Institutional Change in the House of Representatives.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Theriault, Sean. (2003) “Patronage, the Pendleton Act, and the Power of the People.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Weingast, Barry R. and William J. Marshall. (1988) “The Industrial Organization of Congress; or, Why Legislatures, Like Firms, Are Not Organized as Markets.” *Journal of Political Economy*.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. (1996) Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions. W. W. Norton Press. Chapter 12.

Week 6 (September 28) – Congressional Decision-Making: The Electoral Connection

- Mayhew, David. (1975) Congress: The Electoral Connection. Yale University Press. “The Electoral Incentive” pg 13-77. *Article available on Blackboard*.
- Discussion of The Electoral Connection, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (June 2001): 251-266, essays by Mayhew, Bond, Aldrich, Abramowitz, Hurley, Dodd, and concluding observations by Mayhew.
- Rothenberg, Lawrence S. and Mitchell S. Sanders. (2000) “Severing the Electoral Connection: Shirking in the Contemporary Congress.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Miller, Warren E. and Donald E. Stokes. (1963) “Constituency Influence in Congress.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Erickson, Robert S. (1978) “Constituency Opinion and Congressional Behavior: A Reexamination of the Miller-Stokes Representational Data.” *American Journal of Political Science*.

Other Suggested Readings

- Bishin, Benjamin. (2000) “Constituency Influence in Congress: Does Subconstituency Matter?” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.
- Bartels, Larry M. (1991) “Constituency Opinion and Congressional Policymaking: The Reagan Defense Build-Up.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Stratmann, Thomas (2000) “Congressional Voting Over Legislative Careers: Shifting Positions and Changing Constraints.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Page, Benjamin I. and Robert Y. Shapiro. (1983) “Effects of Public Opinion on Policy.” *American Political Science Review*.

Week 7 (October 5) – Congressional Parties and Rules

- Aldrich, John H. (1995) Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America. University of Chicago Press. Chapter 7

- Aldrich, John H., and David W. Rohde. (2001) “The Logic of Conditional Party Government: Revisiting the Electoral Connection.” In Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds., *Congress Reconsidered*, Seventh Edition. Washington: CQ Press.
- Krehbiel, Keith. (1993) “Where’s the Party?” *British Journal of Political Science*.
- Cox, Gary and Keith Poole. (2002) “On Measuring Partisanship in Roll Call Voting.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Krutz, Glen. (2005) “Issues and Institutions: Winnowing in the U.S. Congress.” *American Journal of Political Science*.

Suggested Readings

- Ladewig, Jeffrey. (2005) “Conditional Party Government and the Homogeneity of Constituent Interests.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Cox, Gary. (2000) “On the Effects of Legislative Rules.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly*.

Week 8 (October 12) – The Presidency

- Kernell, Samuel. (2006) Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership. 4th Edition. CQ Press. Chapters 1-4.
- Deering, Christopher J. and Forrest Maltzman. (1999) “The Politics of Executive Orders: Legislative Constraints on Presidential Power.” *Political Research Quarterly*.
- Mayer, Kenneth. (1999) “Executive Orders and Presidential Power.” *Journal of Politics*.

Week 9 (October 19) – Presidential Influence

- Canes-Wrone, Brandice. (2006) Who Leads Whom?: Presidents, Policy, and the Public. University of Chicago Press. All.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. (1996) Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions. W. W. Norton Press. Chapter 14.

Week 10 (October 26) – Divided Government and Gridlock

Preliminary Draft Due

- Madison, James. Federalist #51.
- Mayhew, David. “Divided We Govern,” in Nivola and Rosenbloom, eds. Classic Readings in American Politics, ch. 25, pp. 298-213 – *available on Blackboard*.
- Binder, Sarah. (1999) “The Dynamics of Legislative Gridlock.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Coleman, John J. (1999) “Unified Government, Divided Government, and Party Responsiveness.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Edwards, George C., III, Andrew Barrett, and Jeffrey Peake. 1997. “The Legislative Impact of Divided Government.” *American Journal of Political Science*.

Week 11 (November 2) – The Bureaucracy: An Overview

- Wilson, James Q. (2005) Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It. University of Chicago Press. Chapters 1-10, 17
- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. (1996) Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions. W. W. Norton Press. Chapter 13.

Week 12 (November 9) – Research on the Bureaucracy

- McCubbins, Matthew, Roger Noll and Barry Weingast. (1987) “Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control,” *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*.
- McCubbins, Mathew D., and Thomas Schwartz. (1984) “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Moe, Terry M. (1984) “The New Economics of Organization.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Wood, B. Dan and Richard Waterman. (1991) “The Dynamics of Political Control of the Bureaucracy.” *American Political Science Review*.

Suggested Readings

- Huber, John and Nolan McCarty. (2004) “Bureaucratic Capacity, Delegation, and Political Reform.” *American Political Science Review*.
- McCarty, Nolan. (2004) “The Appointments Dilemma.” *American Journal of Political Science*.

Week 13 (November 16) – The Judiciary

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. (1996) Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions. W. W. Norton Press. Chapter 15.
- Dahl, Robert. (1957) “Decision Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as National Policy Maker.” *Journal of Public Law*.
- Casper, Jonathan. (1976) “The Supreme Court and National Policy Making.” *American Political Science Review*.
- Songer, Donald and Stefanie Lindquist. (1996) “Not the Whole Story: The Impact of Justices Values on Supreme Court Decision Making.” *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Mishler, William and Reginald Sheehan. (1993) “The Supreme Court as a Counter-majoritarian Institution? The Impact of Public Opinion on Supreme Court Decisions.” *American Political Science Review*.

Suggested Readings

- Calderia, Gregory A. and John R. Wright. (1990) “Amici Curiae before the Supreme Court: Who Participates, When and How Much?” *Journal of Politics*.
- Epstein, Lee and Jack Knight. (2000) “Field Essay on Judicial Research.” *Political Research Quarterly*.

- Gillman, Howard. (2002) “How Political Parties Can Use the Courts to Advance their Agendas: Federal Courts in the United States, 1875-1891.” *American Political Science Review*.

Week 14 (November 23) – Interest Groups Influence in Congress and the Court

- Schlozman, Kay Lehman. (1984) “What Accent the Heavenly Chorus? Political Equality and the American Pressure System.” *Journal of Politics*.
- Evans, Diana. (1996) “Before the Roll Call: Interest Group Lobbying and Public Policy Outcomes in House Committees,” *Political Research Quarterly*.
- Hall, Richard and Frank Wayman. (1990) “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees,” *American Political Science Review*.
- Caldeira, Gregory A. and John R. Wright. (1998) “Lobbying for Justice: Organized Interests, Supreme Court Nominations, and the United States Senate.” *American Journal of Political Science*.

Suggested Readings

- Shepsle, Kenneth A. and Mark S. Bonchek. (1996) Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions. W. W. Norton Press. Chapter 8 and 9.
- Salisbury, Robert H. (1984) “Interest Representation: The Dominance of Institutions” *American Political Science Review*.

Week 15 (November 30) – Do Institutions Matter?

- Przeworski, Adam. (2004) “Institutions Matter?” *Government and Opposition*
- Besley, Tim and Anne Case (2003) “Policy Institutions and Policy Choices: Evidence from the United States.” *Journal of Economic Literature*.

Week 16 (December 7) - Presentations of Research Papers During Class

Final papers are due by 5pm on December 14.