PSC 540.01: Seminar in American Politics

Gregory Koger

The University Of Montana, gregory.kroger@umontana.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi/6649

This Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the Course Syllabi at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Syllabi by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
This course surveys political science research on American politics. It is intended to introduce students to classic texts and contemporary debates. I assume that you are familiar with the basic principles and institutions of American politics. Thus the central purpose of this class is to deepen your understanding of the mechanisms of American democracy. In particular, we will focus on the ability of American institutions to represent citizens. We will focus on federal spending as a tangible metric of government responsiveness.

One of the underlying aims of this course is to introduce students to the practice of political science—formulating questions, framing research plans, gathering data, and analyzing. As part of the class, we will analyze federal appropriations bills. These annual spending bills provide an excellent basis for understanding the relationship between public opinion, parties, and institutions. You will learn how to use Excel (hence the two homework assignments) and make a presentation to the class using Powerpoint. This effort culminates in a research paper on federal spending.

In addition, you are responsible for preparing a summary of each week's reading and e-mailing it to me by midnight before class. I will begin each class by asking randomly selected students to summarize the readings.

Grading
Discussion: 20%
Reading Summaries: 10%
Homework Assignments (2): 10%
Research paper: 50% Due date:
Presentation: 10%

Also, students wishing to take the field exam will have a take-home exam at the end of the semester.

Texts:
- James Stimson, Tides of Consent, 2004 (at bookstore)
- David Brady and Craig Volden, Revolving Gridlock, 2005 (2nd ed) buy online
- Richard Fenno, Congress at the Grassroots, 2000 buy online
- Other articles and papers as noted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topics &amp; Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept. 12</td>
<td>Public Opinion. Stimson, <em>Tides of Consent</em>, 1-95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Oct 17   | Money and Inequality | - APSA report: “American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality”  
- Open Secrets survey of campaign donors  
- Larry Bartels, “Income Inequality and Representation” |
| Oct 24   | Interest Groups | Loomis, Godwin & Seldon, Kersh from *Interest Group Politics*, 185-248  
| Oct 31   | Parties and Polarization |  
- “The Partisan Divide,” *CQ Researcher*, April 2004  
- Abramowitz and Saunders, “Why Can’t We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America,” *Forum*, 2005  
Aldrich and Rohde, “The Republican Revolution and the HAC,” JOP 2000 |
Kernell, *Going Public*, 1-10, 104-178  
| Nov. 28  | Supreme Court | O’Brien, *Storm Center*, selections |
| Dec. 5   | Presentations |                                                                            |
| Dec. 15  | Optional MA exams due by noon |                                                                            |