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PSC 540.01: Seminar in American Politics

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Political Science 540
Seminar in American Politics
Fall 2005
Tues 12:30-3:30 LA 344

Professor Gregory Koger
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Office: LA 354 Phone: 243-4418
Office Hours: Wed. 9:00-11:30 and by appointment

Course Content

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 and our goal is to deepen your understanding of political science research on American politics.

Part of the course is also familiarizing you with 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. As part of this project 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 analyzing the federal appropriations process for a specific year.

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: Nov. 29
Presentation:	10%	

Course Schedule

Date	Topics & Readings
Aug. 30	Introduction.
Sept. 6	Federalist papers 2, 10, 35-6, 39, 49, 51, 54, 57-8, 62-3, 68, 78 Available online at: http://thomas.loc.gov/home/histdox/fedpapers.html <i>Paper assignment distributed.</i>
Sept. 13	Public Opinion. Stimson, <i>Tides of Consent</i> , 1-95.
Sept. 20	Public Opinion. Stimson, <i>Tides of Consent</i> , 96-171. <i>Homework 1 distributed.</i>
Sept. 27	Budgets and Process. Brady and Volden, <i>Revolving Gridlock</i> , 1-100
Oct. 4	<i>No Class. I'll be in a corn silo.</i>
Oct. 11	Budgets and Process. Brady and Volden, <i>Revolving Gridlock</i> , 101-182. <i>Homework 1 due. Homework 2 distributed.</i>
Oct. 18	Representation. Richard Fenno, <i>Congress At The Grassroots</i> , all.
Oct. 25	Money and Inequality. -APSA report: "American Democracy in an Age of Rising Inequality". -Open Secrets survey of campaign donors.
Nov. 1	Interest Groups. Loomis, Godwin & Seldon, Kersh from <i>Interest Group Politics</i> , 6 th ed., 185-248. Koger, Masket, and Noel: "We Appreciate Your Support" draft paper. <i>Homework 2 due.</i>
Nov. 8	Parties and Polarization - "The Partisan Divide," <i>CQ Researcher</i> , April 2004 - Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders, "Why Can't We All Just Get Along? The Reality of a Polarized America" <i>Forum</i> , 2005 - Gary Jacobson, "Explaining the Ideological Polarization of the Congressional Parties Since the 1970s."
Nov. 15	Appropriations Process. Fenno, "The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System," <i>APSR</i> 1962; Aldrich and Rohde, "The Republican Revolution and the HAC," <i>JOP</i> , 2000.
Nov. 22	Presidency. Kernell, <i>Going Public</i> , 1-10, 104-178
Nov. 29	Supreme Court. O'Brien, <i>Storm Center</i> , 72-125, 202-271 <i>Paper due.</i>
Dec. 6	Presentations
Dec. 13	MA Exam. 10:10 – 12:10