Course Objective:

The purpose of this seminar is to introduce graduate students to some of the concepts, questions, and approaches that are central to the study of American politics. The scholarly research on American politics is vast, and our time is limited. I have selected topics and readings that attract broad and recurring interest within the discipline. The readings include classic works along with more contemporary studies, and they cover the diverse methodologies that scholars use to analyze American politics. Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss, in detail, all of the assigned readings. Students may be asked to present assigned readings without prior notice. In so doing, be prepared to discuss main themes, contributions, problems, and unanswered questions.

Course Evaluation:

Grading will be done on the basis of four components. Class participation will account for 50%, two literature critiques will be worth 10% each, and a final project will constitute 30% of the final grade.

Seminar Participation:

Your primary responsibility in this course is to complete the readings and to actively participate in seminar discussions each week. Participation is critical to making this seminar a useful learning experience. As such, the success of this seminar relies on the preparedness of its participants. Each
week, two individuals will lead discussion. As a discussion leader, you are required to submit a list of questions and/or discussion topics by 5:00 pm on Wednesday. These questions/topics should reflect a critical reading of the weeks assigned readings. Second, for sessions in which you are a discussion leader, you will be responsible for presenting a set of articles from the assigned readings (the two discussion leaders may divide the readings as they see fit). These presentations should:

- Describe the main themes of the reading.
- Explain what its contributions are to our understanding of area of research.
- Provide specific criticisms of the study (e.g., its theoretical argument, hypotheses, evidence, analysis, etc.).
- Raise questions about specific theoretical or empirical issues that you did not understand.

**Literature Critiques:**

For two of the topics on which you are a discussion leader, you will be required to write a literature critique. In writing the literature critique, you will evaluate the theoretical and empirical arguments of one or more of the readings contained in that unit. Each essay should be approximately 3-4 pages in length and is due no later than one week following the seminar on that topic.

**Final Project:**

You will be required to write a research paper (or research design) approximately 15 pages in length. This project will ideally lay the foundation for the completion of a piece that may eventually be publishable. *All topics must first be cleared with me.* Near-final versions of the projects are to be submitted to your classmates and me no later than Monday, November 30, 2015 at 5 p.m. You will present your paper to the class the following week and will be responsible for serving as a discussant on one of the other papers presented. The final version of the project is due on Friday, December 11, 2015 by 5 p.m.

**Academic Conduct**

All students are expected to carry out their responsibilities with regard to academic honesty. Temple University’s standards for academic honesty appear in the undergraduate bulletin: [http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilities_rights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm](http://www.temple.edu/bulletin/Responsibilities_rights/responsibilities/responsibilities.shtm). All work submitted in this class is expected to be the product of individual effort. Failure to cite text or ideas borrowed from other sources and copying written assignments from other students are acts of academic misconduct. Penalties may include a failing grade for the course, a report to the Dean of Students, and dismissal from the University. For more information about plagiarism and techniques for using and citing source materials, visit the website of the University’s Writing Center: [http://www.temple.edu/writingctr/student_resources/sr_research.htm](http://www.temple.edu/writingctr/student_resources/sr_research.htm).
Required Texts:

All required texts are available at the Temple University Bookstore and on-line. In addition to the texts, we will be reading several articles. Most of these articles are available through JSTOR. The required texts are as follows:


Required readings also include substantial portions of the following texts, which I encourage (but do not require) you to purchase. However, you remain responsible for procuring the readings.

Course Outline (weekly readings listed Chronologically):

Week 1. Introduction (8/27)

Week 2. Studying American Politics

Week 3. Political Participation: Micro-level Determinants (9/10)


Week 4. Voting Behavior: Vote Choice (9/17)


Week 5. Public Opinion (9/24)


Week 6. Political Parties (10/1)


• Karol, David. 2009. Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Chapters 1 and 3) [ebook]


Week 7. Interest Groups (10/8)


**Week 8. Congress and Legislative Representation (10/15)**


**Week 9. Legislative Organization (10/22)**

• Shepsle, Kenneth. 1979. “Institutional Arrangements and Equilibrium in Multidimensional Voting Models.” *American Journal of Political Science* 23: 27-59. **Note: This paper is mathematically dense, but the general argument is straightforward. I recommend that you peruse this article for the basic logic of “structure-induced equilibrium.”**


• Cox, Gary and Mathew McCubbins. 2007. Legislative Leviathan, 2nd Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Chapters 4-5)

Week 10. The Presidency (10/29)


Week 11. Bureaucratic Politics (11/5)


Week 12. The Courts (11/12)


• Epstein, Lee and Jack Knight. 1998. The Choices Justices Make. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (Chapters 1 and 3)

• Segal, Jeffrey A. and Harold J. Spaeth. 2002. The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (Chapters 2-3 and 7-8)


Week 13. Inequality and American Politics (11/19)


• Mucciaroni, Gary. 2008. Same Sex, Different Politics. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (Chapters 1 and 7)


Week 14. No Class – Thanksgiving Break (11/26)

Week 15. Power and Policy Agendas (12/3)


**PRESENTATION OF FINAL PROJECTS**