

## **POLI7903: American Institutions**

Spring 2022

Tuesdays, 1-3:50 p.m., 210 Stubbs

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Office Hours: Mondays, daye5

The study of American political institutions is a vast topic, one that encompasses Congress, the president, the courts, and the bureaucracy at the national, local, *and* state level.

Several themes will run through these discussions, including authority and who wields it, especially within and among the branches of government; representation and what motivates it, including participation and institutional structures; the role of agendas in representation and power; and the tension between democracy and inequality. Most importantly, as we discuss these issues, we constantly will be assessing the evidence presented in the readings and reflecting on how we know what we claim to know about American politics.

The assignments are designed to habituate you to the norms of graduate school seminars and the best of professional life: come prepared, pitching to your highest, and humble in the recognition that, in most rooms, you are speaking casually about someone else's area of expertise. The assignments are likewise designed to prepare you to succeed in graduate school and socialize you to the tasks demanded by the profession.

### **Required Materials**

As part of the course, we will read both journal articles and books. All are listed below in the individual weeks, but these are books that we will read fully or excerpts of throughout the semester:

1. Gaventa, John. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
2. Arnold, Douglas. 1990. *The Logic of Congressional Action*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
3. Curry, James M., and Frances E. Lee. 2020. *The Limits of Party: Congress and Lawmaking in a Polarized Era*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
4. Neustadt, Richard. 1991. *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents: The Politics of Leadership from Roosevelt to Reagan*. Simon and Schuster.
5. Kousser, Thad, and Justin H. Phillips. 2012. *The power of American governors: Winning on budgets and losing on policy*.

New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

9. Lipsky, Michael. 2010. *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
10. Michener, Jamila. 2018. *Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid, Federalism, and Unequal Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.



4. A one-paragraph discussion of what the authors found
5. One way to build on the research moving forward. This can include a criticism of the piece, but if you choose to do that, you must also offer a way to fix the issue.

30% of your grade is determined by a 15–20-page *research proposal* due **May 10 by 11:59 p.m.** This paper is an original research paper, whereby you are expected to engage with the readings in this class and others, put forth an original argument, and provide some detail on how you may test your argument empirically (though you do not have to implement your research design). If you intend to work as an academic, developing interesting and clever research ideas is of the utmost importance. This paper is comprised of several elements: review the topic and link it to politics; describe the scholarly literature regarding this topic; put forth an original hypothesis on this topic; and suggest a possible research design to test this hypothesis (this can be qualitative or quantitative, or a mix of both). Note that you do not have to carry out this research design but provide a plausible way someone interested in your hypothesis could test it empirically. **10 points of the final grade is given to you by meeting with me PRIOR TO SPRING BREAK to discuss your proposed idea.** This will give you a sense of how to go forward, any concerns I may have, and what to consider as you finish the paper proposal.

Finally, 10% of your grade is a *conference-style presentation* on your final paper, 8-10 minutes, during our final class of the semester. You will present your final paper to your classmates following academic conference-style presentation structure, in which you briefly go over your topic, your argument, and your proposed research design. You must use presentation software like Beamer, PowerPoint, Keynote, or the like. Your classmates are then encouraged to ask you questions about your paper for approximately 5-10 minutes after the presentation.

## Grade Scales



4. *If you have experienced sexual violence, assault, harassment, or stalking*, see the Lighthouse Program at LSU (

## **Academic Integrity and Honesty**

Plagiarism is not tolerated and will result in disciplinary action. The LSU Code of Student conduct defines plagiarism as “the unacknowledged inclusion, in work submitted for credit, of someone else's words, ideas, or data.” Please review the University's guidelines on plagiarism here:

[https://www.lsu.edu/hss/english/university\\_writing/faculty\\_resources/policies\\_and\\_procedures/plagiarism.php](https://www.lsu.edu/hss/english/university_writing/faculty_resources/policies_and_procedures/plagiarism.php) and the guidelines on academic integrity here: <https://www.lsu.edu/saa/students/academicintegrity/index.php>.

Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to cheating on exams, plagiarizing, buying or selling assignments, altering grades, intentional deception, and collaborating with others without permission. I reserve the right to investigate when I suspect a violation of any of these policies. All violations of the university's academic conduct policies are turned over to the Dean of Students.

## **Accommodations for Disabilities**

The Americans with Disabilities Act requires that reasonable accommodations be provided for students with physical, cognitive, systemic, learning, and psychiatric disabilities. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester to discuss any such accommodations for this course. To have any accommodations met, you must be registered with the LSU Office of Disability Services, located in 124 Johnston Hall. They can be reached at 225-578-

<p>Tuesday, February 1, 2022</p>	<p>Legislatures: Congress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Arnold, Douglas. 1990. <i>The Logic of Congressional Action</i>. New Haven: Yale University Press. <b>Chapters 1-4, 10.</b></li> <li>- Curry, James M., and Frances E. Lee. 2020. <i>The Limits of Party: Congress and Lawmaking in a Polarized Era</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. <b>Chapters 1-4, 6-7.</b></li> </ul>
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<p>Tuesday, February 8, 2022</p>	<p>Legislatures: State Legislatures and City Councils (<b>Sydney</b>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trounstine, Jessica. 2016. "Segregation and Inequality in Public Goods." <i>American Journal of Political Science</i> 60 (3): 709-725.</li> <li>- Trounstine, Jessica. 2009. "All Politics is Local: The Reemergence of the Study of City Politics." <i>Perspectives on Politics</i> 7(3), 611-618.</li> <li>- Sances, Michael and Hye Young You. 2017. "Who Pays for Government? Descriptive Representation and Exploitative Revenue Sources." <i>Journal of Politics</i> 79(3): 1090-1094.</li> <li>- de Benedictis-Kessner, Justin, and Christopher Warshaw. 2020. "Politics in Forgotten Governments: The Partisan Composition of County Legislatures and</li> </ul>
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Tuesday, February 22, 2022 Executives: Governors and Mayors (**Sydney**)

- Holman, Mirya R. 2014. "Sex and the City: Female Leaders and Spending on Social Welfare Programs in US Municipalities." *Journal of Urban Affairs* 36 (4): 701-715.
- de Benedictis-Kessner, Justin, and Christopher Warshaw. 2016. "Mayoral Partisanship and Municipal Fiscal Policy." *The Journal of Politics* 78 (4): 1124-1138.
- de Benedictis-Kessner, Justin. 2020. "Strategic Government Communication about Performance." *Political Science Research and Methods*. 1-16.
- Gerber, Elisabeth, and Daniel J. Hopkins. 2011. "When Mayors Matter: Estimating the Impact of Mayoral Partisanship on City Policy." *American Journal of Political Science*





Tuesday, April 12, 2022      Race, Gender, and Intersectionality

- Jardina, Ashley. 2019. *White Identity Politics*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. **Chapters 2 and 8.**
- Strolovitch, Dara Z. 2006. "Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged?"

Tuesday, May 3, 2022	<i>Presentations</i>
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