

Core Seminar: The Domestic Politics of the United States
POL-GA 1350.001
Fall 2018
Professors Sanford Gordon

I. Introduction

This course provides graduate students with a broad overview of important topics in the study of the domestic politics of the United States. We will explore the frontiers of research on political participation, political parties, polarization, elections, legislative politics, bureaucratic politics, civil rights, interest groups, and the role of the media in politics. The course has two goals: First, to introduce students to important controversies in the study of American domestic politics; and second, to encourage students to think rigorously about the process of conducting political research.

Even if your primary focus is not American politics, there are four reasons why you should seriously consider taking this course. First, the United States is a political system about which we know a great deal. For better or worse, both U.S. citizens and foreign students are likely to have a better understanding of this particular political system than that of any political system picked at random off the map. Second, there is a wealth of data on American political phenomena. This facilitates testing a variety of different theories about politics (especially if you do not confine yourself to national politics). Third, political science as a discipline has progressed in large part due to advances in the study of American politics that were later applied elsewhere. Understanding how the field has developed is an important part of becoming a well-rounded student of politics. Finally, with full knowledge of the fact that many of the students who take the course do not focus on US politics, I have designed the course to emphasize (a) fundamentals of research design and (b) the connection between theory and empirical analysis. The aim of this emphasis is to provide an exportable skill set and approach valuable to students who plan on pursuing substantive applications elsewhere.

II. Contact and meeting Information

Professor

Sanford Gordon

19 West 4th Street, Room 311

Office Hours: Mondays 9-11am, or by appointment

Phone: (212) 998-3708

E-mail: sanford.gordon@nyu.edu

(Please do not hesitate to e-mail for appointments outside of office hours or just drop by)

Class Meetings

Tuesday 2-4pm, 19 West 4th Street, Room 212/217.

III. Student Responsibilities and Course Grading

Participation: _____ 20%

Participating in seminar is an essential component of satisfactory completion of the course.

Presentations: _____ 10%

In addition to normal participatory duties, each student will spend several of our meetings providing a public good as “defender” of a particular text or perspective, which will include a 10-15 minute presentation at the beginning of the class.

Thought papers: _____ 20%

Each student will write a paper *no longer than one single-spaced page* each week he/she is not presenting. The paper should be uploaded to NYU Classes by close of business (5pm) on the day before class so that we can incorporate its insights into class discussion. Once the 5pm deadline has passed, I will compile the papers into a zip file for distribution to the whole class. The paper may critically examine a particular feature of a single reading; draw comparisons among multiple readings for that week; or suggest avenues for future research. At the end of the semester, I will drop the lowest short paper score. (This has the practical effect of permitting you to miss writing one thought paper.)

Research paper: _____ 50%

A final research paper will count for 50% of the grade. Details will be discussed in class. You should be thinking about your paper and discussing the topic with me by mid- to late-October. Note that if your research interest lies primarily in topics covered toward the end of the class, you should read ahead. The research paper is due by 5pm on Friday, December 21.

- I am reluctant to set firm rules with respect to length, but your paper should probably be on the order of 20-30 pages.
- If you would like to submit versions of the same paper to fulfill the requirements of this and another course, *you must convene a meeting with me and the other professor to secure our consent and to discuss guidelines and expectations.* Needless to say, the expectations will be higher for such joint submissions.

A note on grading criteria: How I evaluate students in the performance of the above responsibilities depends on the stage of the program that they are in. Expectations are higher for veteran students than they are for first years.

IV. Readings

Most of the readings are articles and can be found on NYU Classes. Please purchase the following

- Keith Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Ideology and Congress.*

V. Weekly Schedule

Week 1. September 4, 2018

Introduction and Orientation

Week 2. September 11, 2018*Rosh Hashanah: Class will Not Meet***Week 3. September 18, 2018****Presenters: KL, FT***Political Participation I: Turnout – Theory and Evidence*

- Feddersen, Tim. 2004. “Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18: 99-112.
- Gerber, Alan, et. al. 2008. “Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Experiment.” *American Political Science Review* 102(1): 33-48.
- Hajnal, Zoltan, et. al. 2017. “Voter Identification Laws and the Suppression of Minority Votes.” *Journal of Politics* 79(2): 363-379.
- Grimmer, Justin, et. al. 2018. “Obstacles to Estimating Voter ID Laws’ Effect on Turnout.” *Journal of Politics* 80(3): 1045-1051.

Week 4. September 25, 2018**Presenters: MP, JS***Political Participation II: On the “Irrationality” of Voters*

- Ashworth, Scott, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Amanda Friedenberg. 2017. “Learning about Voter Rationality.” *American Journal of Political Science* 62(1): 37-54.
- Bartels, Larry M., and Christopher H. Achen. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, ch. 5.
- Fowler, Anthony, and Andrew B. Hall. 2018. “Do Shark Attacks Influence Presidential Elections? Reassessing a Prominent Finding on Voter Competence.” Forthcoming, *Journal of Politics*.
- Bartels, Larry M., and Christopher H. Achen. 2018. “Statistics as If Politics Mattered: A Reply to Fowler and Hall.” Forthcoming, *Journal of Politics*
- Fowler, Anthony, and Andrew B. Hall. 2018. “Politics as if Evidence Mattered: A Reply to Achen and Bartels.” Typescript.

Week 5. October 2, 2018**Presenters: ZG, TL***The Formation of Mass Attitudes: Learning and Persuasion*

- Lenz, Gabriel. 2009. “Learning and Opinion Change, Not Priming: Reconsidering the Priming Hypothesis.” *American Journal of Political Science* 53: 821-837.
- Gerber, Alan S., et. al. 2011. “How Large and Long-Lasting are the Persuasive Effects of Televised Campaign Ads? Results from a Randomized Field Experiment.” *American Political Science Review* 105(1): 135-150.
- Egan, Patrick J., and Megan Mullin. 2012. “Turning Personal Experience into Political Attitudes: The Effect of Local Weather on Americans’ Perceptions about Global Warming.” *Journal of Politics* 74(3): 796-809.
- Broockman, David E., and Daniel M. Butler. 2015. “The Causal Effects of Elite Position-Taking on Voter Attitudes: Field Experiments with Elite Communication.” *American Journal of Political Science* 61(1): 208-221.

Week 6. WEDNESDAY October 10, 2018 (location TBD)**Presenters: MM, GL***Introduction to the Spatial Model, with Applications to the Theory of Partisan Alignment*

- Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 2007. *Ideology and Congress*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishing, chs. 1-5.

Week 7. October 16, 2018**Presenters: PL, ZG***Political Parties, Primaries, and Polarization*

- Hirano, Shigeo, et. al. 2010. "Primary Elections and Partisan Polarization in the U.S. Congress." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 5(2): 169-191.
- Thomsen, Danielle M. 2014. "Ideological Moderates Won't Run: How Party Fit Matters for Partisan Polarization in Congress." *Journal of Politics* 76(3): 786-797.
- McGhee, Eric, et. al. 2014. "A Primary Cause of Partisanship? Nomination Systems and Legislator Ideology." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(2): 337-351.
- Hall, Andrew Benjamin. 2015. "What Happens when Extremists Win Primaries?" *American Political Science Review* 109(1): 18-42.

Week 8. October 23, 2018**Presenters: AD, DL***Elections I: Representation and Agency*

- Skim: Ashworth, Scott. 2012. "Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15:183-201.
- Gordon, Sanford C., and Gregory A. Huber. 2007. "The Effect of Electoral Competitiveness on Incumbent Behavior." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 2: 107-138.
- Ferraz, Claudio, and Frederico Finan. 2011. "Electoral Accountability and Corruption: Evidence from the Audits of Local Governments." *The American Economic Review* 101(4): 1274-1311.
- Anzia, Sarah F., and Christopher R. Berry. 2011. "The Jackie (and Jill) Robinson Effect: Why do Congresswomen Outperform Congressmen?" *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3): 478-493.

Week 9. October 30, 2018**Presenters: FT, MP***Elections II: Parties and Position Taking*

- Skim: Alesina, Alberto, and Howard Rosenthal. 1995. *Partisan Politics, Divided Government, and the Economy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, ch. 2.
- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan. 2002. "Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *American Political Science Review* 96(1): 127-140.
- Burden, Barry C. 2004. "Candidate Positioning in U.S. Congressional Elections." *British Journal of Political Science* 34(2): 211-227.
- Lee, David S., Enrico Moretti, and Matthew J. Butler. 2004. "Do Voters Affect or Elect Policies? Evidence from the U.S. House." *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 119: 807-59.

Week 10. November 6, 2018**Presenters: DL, MC***Agenda Control: Theory and Recent Applications to Legislative Politics*

- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics*, selections.
- Wawro, Gregory J., and Eric Schickler. 2004. "Where's the Pivot?" Obstruction and Lawmaking in the Pre-cloture Senate. *American Journal of Political Science* 48(4): 758-774.
- Clinton, Joshua D. 2012. "Congress, Lawmaking, and the Fair Labor Standards Act, 1971-2000." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(2): 355-372.

Week 11. November 13, 2018**Presenters: AD, YL***Legislative Organization and the Distribution of Federal Resources*

- 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* 96(1): 132-163.
- Dynes, Adam, and Gregory A. Huber. 2015. "Partisanship and the Allocation of Federal Spending: Do Same-Party Legislators or Voters Benefit from Shared Party Affiliation?" *American Political Science Review* 109(1): 172-186.
- Berry, Christopher R., and Anthony Fowler. "Cardinals or Clerics? Congressional Committees and the Distribution of Pork." *American Journal of Political Science* 60(3): 692-708.
- Gordon, Sanford C., and Hannah K. Simpson. 2018. "The Birth of Pork: Local Appropriations in America's First Century." *American Political Science Review* 112(3): 564-579.

Week 12. November 20, 2018**Presenters: MM, GL***Bureaucratic Politics*

- Carpenter, Daniel P. 2013. "Detecting and Measuring Capture." In Carpenter, Daniel P., and David Moss, eds., *Preventing Regulatory Capture*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Gordon, Sanford C., and Catherine Hafer. 2013. "Conditional Forbearance as an Alternative to Capture: Evidence from Coal Mine Safety Regulation." In Carpenter, Daniel P., and David Moss, eds., *Preventing Regulatory Capture*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Hollibaugh, Jr., Gary E., Gabriel Horton, and David E. Lewis. 2014. "Presidents and Patronage." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 1024-1042.

Week 13. November 27, 2018**Presenters: YL, JS***Political Geography*

- Trounstine, Jessica. 2018. "The Geography of Inequality: How Land Use Regulation Produces Segregation and Polarization." Typescript.

- Chen, Jowei, and Jonathan Rodden. 2013. “Unintentional Gerrymandering: Political Geography and Electoral Bias in Legislatures.” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 8(3): 239-269.
- Hersh, Eitan, and Clayton Nall. 2015. “The Primacy of Race in the Geography of Income-Based Voting: New Evidence from Public Voting Records.” *Journal of Politics* 60(2): 289-303.

Week 14. December 4, 2018

Presenters: TL, KL

Minorities and the State

- Washington, Ebonya, and Elizabeth U. Cascio. 2014. “Valuing the Vote: The Redistribution of Voting Rights and State Funds Following the Voting Rights Act of 1965.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129(1): 379-433.
- Weaver, Vesla M., and Amy E. Lerman. 2010. “Political Consequences of the Carceral State” *American Political Science Review* 104(4): 817-833.
- Mummolo, Jonathan. 2018. “Militarization Fails to Enhance Police Safety or Reduce Crime but May Harm Police Reputation.” Proceedings of the National Academy of Science, forthcoming.

Week 15. December 11, 2018

Presenters: PL, MC

Private Influence in Public Policy

- Blanes I Vidal, Jordi, Mirko Draca, and Christian Fons-Rosen. 2012. “Revolving Door Lobbyists.” *American Economic Review* 102: 3731-3748.
- Bonica, Adam. 2013. “Ideology and Interests in the Political Marketplace.” *American Journal of Political Science* 57: 294-311.
- Thieme, Sebastian. 2018. “Moderation or Strategy? Political Giving by Corporations and Trade Groups.” Typescript.
- Rashin, Steven. 2018. “Private Influence on the Regulatory Process: Evidence from Comments on Rules.” Typescript.