

## PSCI 540: U.S. Political Institutions

University of Rochester  
Department of Political Science  
Fall 2024

Professor Sidak Yntiso

### **I. Course Description**

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This course will provide graduate students with a foundation from which to conduct original research on American political institutions.<sup>1</sup> We will survey the theoretical and empirical literature in this area, and in doing so, explore perspectives on the institutions-based approach to research and learn about the "workhorse" models and empirical strategies that practitioners rely upon when conducting research on American political institutions. Students will be expected to participate actively in class discussions and prepare conversation starters in advance of class to set the stage for class discussion. The central assignment will be the development of a research proposal that demonstrates promise for development into a publishable paper.

### **II. Contact and Meeting Details**

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#### Contact Details

Email: syntiso@urochester.edu

Office Hours: Monday 10:00am– 12:00pm, or by appointment (Harkness 320)

#### Class Meetings

Monday 12:30-3:15pm, Harkness Room 329

### **III. Student Responsibilities**

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Class participation: 40%

Active participation in classroom discussion is expected. Students should be prepared to demonstrate their understanding of the readings and engage with their peers' presentations.

Presentations: 20%

In our first meeting, students will have the opportunity to choose four readings from the syllabus to present in class. While the format of the presentations may vary according to the content of the readings, each presentation should be approximately 15-20 minutes in length and must include at least two elements:

1. An opening slide that introduces the question or set of questions covered by the reading

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<sup>1</sup> This course is one of two core courses in the American politics sequence, with the other laying the foundation for conducting original research in American political behavior. The two may be taken in either order. The prerequisites for this class include the first semester of the graduate theory and methods training.

2. A concluding slide that includes three questions for your classmates about the assigned reading. These questions may, for example, address a deficiency in one or more of the arguments presented in the readings. Alternatively, students may argue for the importance of a question related to the general topic of the week that is not addressed in the reading.

Conversation Starters: \_\_\_\_\_ 20%

Each student will write a 1-2 page “conversation starter” *in the weeks they are not presenting*. These essays should reflect on all of the readings in ways that open the door to class discussion, for example by outlining a specific set of questions the readings raise for the student, a research direction implied by the readings, or puzzles raised by the readings. Conversation starters should *not* summarize the readings. These assignments must be uploaded to course site by 5 PM on the Sunday before our course meeting. Shortly after 5 pm, the option to upload a new assignment will close and submitted assignments will be made available for viewing by the entire class.

Research proposal/paper: \_\_\_\_\_ 40%

You will be asked to prepare a research design with a clear question and a plan for answering that question. We will discuss details in class.

#### **IV. Course Materials**

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There are no books or materials to purchase for this course. All readings or links to readings will be made available by the instructor.

#### **V. Schedule**

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**Week 1. August 26, 2024**

***The Study of Political Institutions***

- Riker, William H. 1980. “Implications from the Disequilibrium of Majority Rule for the Study of Institutions.” *American Political Science Review*, 74(2): 432–446.
- Amadae, S. M. and Bruce Bueno De Mesquita. 1999. “The Rochester School: The Origins of Positive Political Theory.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2: 269–295.
- Diermeier, Daniel and Keith Krehbiel. 2003. “Institutionalism as a methodology.” *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 15(2): 123–144.
- Shepsle, Kenneth A., 2009. “Rational Choice Institutionalism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–17.

**Week 2. September 2, 2024**

***Labor Day: No class meeting***

**Week 3. September 9, 2024**

**Elections I: Representation and Agency**

- Snyder Jr, James M., and David Strömberg. 2010. "Press Coverage and Political Accountability." *Journal of Political Economy* 118(2): 355-408.
- 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.
- Alt, James, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Shanna Rose. 2011. "Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections: Evidence from U.S. Term Limits." *Journal of Politics* 73(1): 171-186
- Ashworth, Scott. 2012. "Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work." *Annual Review of Political Science* 15:183-201.
- Duggan, John and César Martinelli. 2017. "The Political Economy of Dynamic Elections: Accountability, Commitment, and Responsiveness." *Journal of Economic Literature*, 55(3): 916–984.

**Week 4. September 16, 2024**

**Elections II: 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.
- Dewan, Torun and Kenneth A. Shepsle. 2011. "Political economy models of elections." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 14: 311–330
- Fowler, Anthony and Andrew B. Hall. 2016. "The Elusive Quest for Convergence." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, 11 (February): 1–34.
- Hall, Andrew Benjamin. 2015. "What Happens when Extremists Win Primaries?" *American Political Science Review* 109(1): 18-42.
- Alexander, Dan and Asya Magazinnik, 2022. "Income Inequality and Electoral Theories of Polarization." *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy*, 3(3-4):317-342.

**Week 5. September 23, 2024**

**Congress I: Agenda Control**

- Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking*. University of Chicago Press. (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.
- Binder, Sarah. 2015. "The Dysfunctional Congress." *Annual Review of Political Science* 18:85–101.
- Hitt, Matthew P., Craig Volden, and Alan E. Wiseman. 2017. "Spatial Models of Legislative Effectiveness." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(3):575-590.

**Week 6: September 30, 2024**

**Congress II: Legislative Organization and the Distribution of Federal Spending**

- 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.
- Jenkins, Jeffery A. and Nathan W. Monroe. 2012. "Buying Negative Agenda Control in the U.S. House." *American Journal of Political Science*, 56(4): 897-912
- Berry, Christopher R., and Anthony Fowler. 2016. "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 7: October 7, 2024**

**Congress III: Parties**

- Schickler, Eric. 2000. "Institutional Change in the House of Representatives, 1867-1998: A Test of Partisan and Ideological Power Balance Models." *American Political Science Review*, 94(2): 269-288.
- Snyder, James M. and Tim Groseclose. 2000. "Estimating Party Influence in Congressional Roll-Call Voting." *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(2): 193.
- Chiou, Fang-Yi, and Lawrence S. Rothenberg. 2003. "When Pivotal Politics Meets Partisan Politics." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(3):503-522.
- McCarty, Nolan and Eric Schickler. 2018. "On the Theory of Parties." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21: 175-193.

**Week 8: October 14, 2024**

**Fall Break: No class meeting.**

**Week 9: October 21, 2024**

**The Presidency**

- Howell, William G. 2005. "Unilateral Powers: A Brief Overview." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 35(3): 417-439.
- Bolton, Alexander and Sharece Thrower. 2016. "Legislative Capacity and Executive Unilateralism." *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3): 649-663.
- Barber, Michael, Alexander Bolton, and Sharece Thrower. 2019. "Legislative Constraints on Executive Unilateralism in Separation of Powers Systems." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, 44(3): 515-548.
- Thrower, Sharece. 2019. "Presidential action and the Supreme Court: The case of signing statements." *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 31(4): 677-698.
- Lowande, Kenneth and Jon C. Rogowski. 2021. "Presidential Unilateral Power." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 24(1): 1-23.

**Week 10: October 28, 2024**

**The Bureaucracy**

- Gailmard, S. and Patty, J.W., 2007. “Slackers and zealots: Civil service, policy discretion, and bureaucratic expertise.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 51(4): 873-889.
- Hollibaugh Jr, Gary E., Gabriel Horton, and David E. Lewis. 2014. “Presidents and patronage.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 1024-1042.
- Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2017. “Slow-rolling, fast-Tracking, and the pace of bureaucratic decisions in rulemaking.” *Journal of Politics*, 79(3): 841–855.
- Yackee, Susan Webb. 2019. “The Politics of Rulemaking in the United States.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22:37–55.
- Bils, Peter. 2020. “Policymaking with Multiple Agencies.” *American Journal of Political Science* 64(3):634-648.

**Week 11: November 4, 2024**

**The Judiciary**

- Barnes, Jeb. 2007. “Bringing the Courts Back In: Interbranch Perspectives on the Role of Courts in American Politics and Policy Making.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 10:25–43.
- Clark, Tom S. 2009. “The Separation of Powers, Court Curbing, and Judicial Legitimacy.” *American Journal of Political Science* 53(4):971-989.
- Lax, Jeffrey R. 2011. “The New Judicial Politics of Legal Doctrine.” *Annual Review of Political Science* 14:131-157.
- Lauderdale, Benjamin E., and Tom S. Clark. 2012. “The Supreme Court’s Many Median Justices.” *American Political Science Review* 106(4):847-866
- Beim, Deborah, Alexander V. Hirsch, and Jonathan P. Kastellac. 2014. “Whistleblowing and Compliance in the Judicial Hierarchy.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4):904-918

**Week 12. November 11, 2024**

**Interest Groups**

**Readings**

- Snyder, James M. and Michael M. Ting. 2008. “Interest groups and the electoral control of politicians.” *Journal of Public Economics*, 92(3-4): 482–500.
- De Figueiredo, John M. and Brian Kelleher Richter. 2014. “Advancing the empirical research on lobbying.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17: 163–185.
- Bonica, Adam. 2013. “Mapping the Ideological Marketplace.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(2): 367–386.
- Bertrand, Marianne, Matilde Bombardini, and Francesco Trebbi. 2014. “Is It Whom You Know or What You Know? An Empirical Assessment of the Lobbying Process.” *American Economic Review* 104(12):3885–3920
- Hirsch, Alexander V., Karam Kang, B. Pablo Montagnes, and Hye Young You. 2023. “Lobbyists as Gatekeepers.” *Journal of Politics*, 85(2)

**Week 13. November 18, 2024**

**Federalism**

- Morehouse, Sarah M. and Malcolm E. Jewell. 2004. "States as laboratories: A reprise." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7: 177–203.
- Volden, Craig. 2004. "Origin, Operation, and Significance: The Federalism of William H. Riker." *Publius* 34 (4): 89-107.
- Gordon, Sanford C., and Dimitri Landa. 2021. "National Conflict in a Federal System." *Journal of Politics* 83(3): 961-974
- Magazinnik, Asya. 2024. "An Agency Perspective on Immigration Federalism." Working paper.

**Week 14. November 25, 2024**

**State and Local Politics**

- Besley, Timothy, and Anne Case. 2003. "Political Institutions and Policy Choices: Evidence from the United States." *Journal of Economic Literature*, 41 (1): 7–73.
- Berry, Christopher. 2008. "Piling On: Multilevel Government and the Fiscal Common-Pool." *American Journal of Political Science* 52(4):802-820.
- Goldstein, Rebecca, and Hye Young You. 2017. "Cities as Lobbyists." *American Journal of Political Science* 61(4):864-876.
- Warshaw, Christopher. 2019. "Local Elections and Representation in the United States," *Annual Review of Political Science* 22(1): 461–479
- Hankinson, Michael, and Asya Magazinnik. 2023. "The supply-equity trade-off: The effect of spatial representation on the local housing supply." *The Journal of Politics*, 85 (1): 1033-1047.

**Week 15. December 2, 2024**

**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.
- Schickler, Eric. 2016. *Racial Realignment*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. (Selections)
- Komisarchik, Mayya, and Ariel White. 2022. "Throwing Away the Umbrella: Minority Voting after the Supreme Court's Shelby Decision."