American Political Development

American Political Development involves using historical methods and questions to explore questions of Political Science and Politics. Using historical analysis we will be exploring key questions and issues in American politics. This course will be an analysis of the two currents of continuity and change. The course will by design provide more questions than answers but students will learn to explore questions of American politics and policy in a historical context.

Looking at the historical trajectory of American politics allows for an understanding of many of the crucial issues of the contemporary era. Tea Party supporters use the discourse of individual liberty in the same way that various social movements have used since the founding era. President Barack Obama is attempting to be a transformational president, historical accounts can explore why he is or is not succeeding. Why some leaders and some ideas succeed while others don’t will be a key question explored in this course. Why and how events such as elections and electoral patterns will also be explored. In addition, whether political patterns are applicable to studies of the United States and its relationship with external peoples such as migrants and military and foreign competitors and allies. Through virtually every issue of American politics, we will be using a historical lens to situate seemingly unconnected events within a broader and more systematic study.

The course is divided into three parts. In the first portion of the course students will consider what American Political Development is and some of the unique and salient features of American political culture. The second portion of the course will explore American political development in the context of state formation, the development of the various branches of government and the development of the coalitions and alignments that characterize the American electoral system. In the final portion of the course we will consider the relationship between the United States and the world, exploring issues of immigration, trade, foreign policy and the military.

Learning Outcomes

Students completing this course should be able to:

1. Explore themes of continuity and change throughout American politics.

2. Develop their writing, reading and communication skills through completing readings and assignments.
3. Critically assess contemporary American politics and political issues through understandings of historical developments gained.

Assignments

1. Participation (15%)-The success of this course depends on informed and appropriate participation. The instructor will devote some class time to interpreting the readings since many are fairly advanced, the course will be based on discussion and Socratic questioning. Quality and quantity of participation will each be considered.
2. Blackboard Posting (10%)- Students will be expected to post weekly responses to the readings. You may respond to reading on one of any of the three class meetings per week but for a response to be counted, it must be submitted by 10pm on the night prior to the class meeting. Responses will receive full credit if they show engagement with the readings. If responses are either merely summaries of the readings or if they are opinions expressed that do not show evidence of completion of the readings students will not receive full credit.
3. Discussion Leadership (10%)-Each student will be expected to lead discussion for one of the course readings. Students should prepare a handout that outlines their interpretation of the reading and include questions for discussion. A sign-up sheet for discussion days will be distributed shortly after the course begins. In addition, during an early course we will go into more detail about discussion leadership.
4. 2 6-8 Page Papers (20% each) -Students will write two 6-8 page papers. The instructor will post a list of possible topics prior to the due date of the paper but students may also write on a topic of their choice, subject to the approval of the instructor.
5. Take Home Final (25%) On the last day of class a take home final consisting of one essay question chosen from a list of five will be distributed. The resulting product should be an 8-10 page paper.
6. Discussion leadership and all paper assignments must be completed to pass the course.

Course Readings
Four books have been ordered for the course:
Louis Hartz, The Liberal Tradition in America
Ira Katznelson, When Affirmative Action was White
Richard Valelly, The Two Reconstructions

The Hartz, Katznelson and Valelly books are each on reserve.

The remainder of the readings will be available through Blackboard.

Course Policies

1. The two papers and final are all due on the dates explained in the syllabus. No extensions will be given except in extraordinary circumstances such as documented medical
emergencies. Students who do not turn in the two papers on the due date will be penalized one full letter grade for each class period following the assignment due date. Students who do not turn in the final on time will be penalized one letter grade for each day the final is not turned in. No incompletes will be given without medical documentation and only for the most dire of circumstances.

2. Laptop and portable internet device use should be minimized.

3. Students are reminded to consult the College honor code which is available at http://new.oberlin.edu/students/policies/11-Policies-Honor.pdf.

4. Any student with a documented disability should consult the instructor to arrange appropriate accommodation. The student should be in touch with Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Disability Services who coordinates support services for students.

Schedule

**Part I: American Political Development and American Political Culture**

Questions to Consider: What can be gained from historical analysis? What is American Political Development? What are some of the key characteristics of APD? Why American Political Development and not Political Development? How does American Political Development intersect with political philosophy?

September 8th Introduction: What is American Political Development?

**American Political Culture**

Questions to Consider: Is the United States a Liberal polity? What are the features of the Hartzian notion of liberalism? Are Hartz’s arguments on the Civil War sufficient to account for ascriptive differences?

September 10th American Liberalism and Exceptionalism

Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Chapter 1

Recommended:

Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Chapters 2, 3, 4

September 13th Liberalism, the Civil War and the Question of Race

Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Chapter 6

Recommended:

Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Chapters 4 and 5

September 15th The Hazards of American Exceptionalism
Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, Chapter 11

Recommended:

Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*, 8, 9, 10

September 17th  Multiple Orders and American Political Culture

Rogers Smith and Desmond King “Racial Orders in American Political Development” *American Political Science Review*. Vol 99 No. 1 February 2005

Recommended:

Rogers Smith “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal and Hartz: Multiple Traditions in America” *American Political Science Review* Vol. 87 No. 3


September 20th  Equality and Difference in American Political Culture


September 22nd  (Why) Is American Political Development Necessary?

Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development*, Chapter 1

Recommended:

Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development*, Chapter 3

September 24th  Durable Shifts in Authority: A Possible Framework for studying American Political Development

Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development*, Chapters 4 and 5

**Part II American Political Development: Policy, Institutions and Political Behavior**

**American Political Development: State and Policy**

Questions: Is there a cohesive American state? What role have policy entrepreneurs historically played? How have the racial and ethnic features of American society informed policy
development? How have institutions developed in the United States? Why have some groups succeeded in gaining state assistance and institutional development while others have been ignored or excluded?

September 27th The United States: A State of Courts and Parties?
Stephen Skowronek, Building a New American State Chapters 1 and 2

September 29th Building the National State
Stephen Skowronek, Building a New American State Chapters 6 and 8

October 1st Who receives assistance and why?
Theda Skocpol, Protecting Soldiers and Mothers Introduction

October 4th Exploring Institutional Autonomy
Daniel Carpenter, Forging Bureaucratic Autonomy Introduction and Chapter 1

October 6th Building Institutional Niches and Uncommon Exercise of Power
Daniel Carpenter, Forging Bureaucratic Autonomy Chapter 8 and Conclusion

October 8th Welfare State Development and the Politics of Race
Ira Katznelson, When Affirmative Action was White, Chapter 2

Recommended:
Ira Katznelson, When Affirmative Action was White, Chapters, 1, 3, 4

October 11th The G.I. Bill: Race, Service and Upward Mobility
Ira Katznelson, When Affirmative Action was White, Chapter 5

October 13th Community Groups and the Exercise of Power
Robert Lieberman, Chapter 8 “Weak State, Strong: Paradoxes of Antidiscrimination Policy” Shaping Race Policy Pg. 174-201

October 15th Political Entrepreneurs
Adam Sheingate “The Terrain of the Political Entrepreneur.” In Stephen Skowronek and Matthew Glassman, eds. Formative Acts. Pg. 13-32

Paper 1 Due

American Political Development: The Presidency, Congress and the Supreme Court
Questions to Consider: What role does temporality play for each of the branches of government? Are there similarities in each of the branches developments? How does historical analysis change conceptions of the development of the branches? Is the concept of political time one that can be applied to multiple branches and areas of government? How do the branches of government relate to interest groups and social movements?

October 18th Secular and Political Time: The American Presidency

Stephen Skowronek, “Presidential Leadership in Political Time” in Presidential Leadership in Political Time: Reprise and Reappraisal. Pg. 27-78

Recommended:


October 20th President as Social and Policy Leader

Elizabeth Sanders, “Presidents and Social Movements: A Logic and Preliminary Results.” In Stephen Skowronek and Matthew Glassman, eds. Formative Acts. Pg. 223-240

Sidney Milkis, The President in the Vanguard: Lyndon Johnson and the Civil Rights Insurgency.” In Stephen Skowronek and Matthew Glassman, eds. Formative Acts. Pg. 269-289

October 22nd The Contemporary American Presidency


November 1st Congress and American Political Development Part I

Eric Schickler, Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the United States Congress, Chapter 1

November 3rd Congress and American Political Development Part 2

Eric Schickler, Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the United States Congress, Chapter 4

Ira Katznelson and John S. Lipinski “At the Crossroads: Congress and American Political Development.” Vol. 4 No. 2 (June 2006) Pg. 243-260

November 5th The Supreme Court: Beyond Law and Politics

Recommended:


November 8th The Supreme Court: Navigating Complex Issues Throughout Time


Recommended:


American Political Development and Political Behavior

Questions to Consider: How have electoral laws endured in American history? What does the idea of Two Reconstructions say about the American political system? Does the idea of re-alignment hold up to scrutiny? Can enduring political coalitions be built? How are various coalitions formed and how do leaders and parties serve their key constituencies? How do legal frameworks impact the formation of the electorate?

November 10th Reconstruction and American Democracy

Richard Vallely, The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement. Chapters 2 and 5

Recommended:

Richard Vallely, The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement. Chapters 1, 3, and 4

November 12th Re-Alignment, Region and the Role of Critical Elections

V.O. Key “A Theory of Critical Elections”

Walter Dean Burnham, Critical Elections and the Mainstreams of American Politics, Chapter 1

Recommended:

Walter Dean Burnham, Critical Elections and the Mainstreams of American Politics, Chapter 2

November 15th The Second Reconstruction, Voting and the Politics of Race
Richard Vallely, *The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement*, Chapters 8 and 10

Recommended Reading: Richard Vallely, *The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement*, Chapter 9

November 17th  Reconsidering Re-Alignment


Recommended Reading:

David Mayhew. *Electoral Alignments: A Critique of an American Genre*. Chapters 2, 4, and 7

November 19th  Building Coalitions and Re-Alignment


November 22nd  Building Coalitions: African Americans, Social Conservatives and Gays and Lesbians

Paul Frymer, *Uneasy Alliances: Race and Party Competition in America*, Chapter 6 and 7

**Paper 2 Due**

**Part V: The United States and the World, Foreign Policy, International Relations, and Immigration**

November 29th  Moving Beyond American Exceptionalism: The United States and the World

Martin Shefter “International Influences on American Political Development.” In Ira Katznelson and Martin Shefters, eds. *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*. Pg. 333-357

December 1st  Immigration and American Political Development

Michael Tichenor, Chapter 2 and Chapter 9. *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* Pg. 16-46 and Pg. 242-289


December 3rd  Developing American Foreign and Military Policy

Louis Fisher, “America Steps Out: 1900-1945” and “Covert Operations”
December 8th Military and Foreign Policy Intervention
Louis Fisher, “Judicial Finality or an Ongoing Colloquy” and “Military Initiatives from Ford to Clinton.”

December 10th National Security Policy and American Political Development
Daniel Wirls, Irrational Security: The Politics of Defense from Reagan to Obama. Chapter 1, Chapter 4

December 13th Terror, Defense and American Political Development

Take Home Final Distributed
All finals will be due electronically to matt.gritter@oberlin.edu by December 21st at 2pm. Students will receive an e-mail receipt indicating that I have your exam.