This is a graduate Seminar in American Government and Politics. It is designed to provide an overview of the literature and theoretical concepts associated with political science as it relates to American government and politics. There is no way to cover every topic, nor is it possible to evaluate a majority of literature within these topics. Therefore, we will examine the major issues within American politics and some of the important research findings. The intent is to provide you with a sample of the key findings in the literature, as well as help you develop critical skills for evaluating this research.

Since this is a graduate seminar, it is imperative that you attend all the classes and complete the readings and written work. There will be little lecture in this course, and the class will require critical discussion and evaluation of each week’s readings. Accordingly, readings should be completed prior to each meeting.

**Required texts for Seminar in American Government and Politics**
These should be available in the bookstore, or feel free to try to obtain them on Amazon (or any other web source).


**Additional readings will be available on reserve outside of my office or in the library. Journal articles can be obtained through JSTOR.**
Grades: Your grade will be based on a combination of your participation, discussion leadership, written work, and the examination. All written work will be reduced by 10% for each day late.

Critical Reviews (5 x 6%) 30%
Participation 15%
Leadership of class discussions (3 x 5%) 15%
Literature Review 15%
Final Examination 25%

Critical Reviews: Each student will write a critical review of the readings for five of the weeks. In this review, summaries should be kept to a minimum; instead, the purpose is for you to critically evaluate the theoretical and methodological findings of the readings for the week (you should review all the readings in a given week). Papers should be approximately 4 pages (text) in length and should be well-organized, proof-read, and scholarly in nature. Proper citation is required. These are worth 6% of your grade each, for a total of 30% of your grade. Most major political science journals have examples of these toward the end of each edition (see Journal of Politics, American Political Science Review, American Journal of Political Science, or others for examples).

Participation
You are expected to not only attend the class meetings but participate in the class discussions. Therefore, it is important (and required) that you complete the readings as assigned. Your participation grade will be based on your verbal discussions of the materials each week. This will account for 15% of your final grade. (This is separate from the leadership grade below.)

Leadership of class discussions
At the first class meeting, one or more students will be chosen to lead the class discussion for each week (I will do the first reading—week 2). Each student will lead or co-lead the discussion three times over the course of the semester. This will account for a total of 15% of your grade (5% for each time). The student or students should prepare study questions based on the material (you may want to make a list of these and hand them out at the beginning of class). It might be a good idea to coordinate with the other students leading that week; supplemental readings are listed below and may be examined to provide additional scholarship on each subject.

Literature Review
You are required to write a 7-9 page literature review of one topic or subtopic in American politics. Please be aware that a literature review is just that—a review of the literature. If you are not familiar with one, please see me. Additional information will follow. This assignment is worth 15% of your grade and is due 12/5.

Final Examination
The final exam will be given on Wednesday, December 12, 2007 from 6:15 PM – 9:00 PM (time subject to change). The exam is designed to mimic an American government
comprehensive exam and will test your theoretical and analytical understanding of the material for the course. This will be a closed book exam and will be worth 25% of your grade.

**Topic and Reading list:**

**First Meeting—Introduction**—August 22nd
**Topic 1—Democracy**—August 29th

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 2—The Mass Public**—September 5th

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 3—Public Opinion—September 12th**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 4—Civic Engagement—September 19th**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 5—Voting and Elections— September 26th**

*Required Readings:*


**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 6—Political Parties**—October 3rd

**Required Readings:**

**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 7—Organized Interests**—October 10th

**Required Readings:**

**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 8—Representation in Congress— October 17th**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 9—Congress as an Institution—October 24th**

**Required Readings:**


**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Topic 10—Presidency—October 31st**

**Required readings:**


Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:


**Topic 11—The Supreme Court**—November 7th

Required Readings:


Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:


Segal, Jeffrey A., and Harold J. Spaeth. 1996. “The Influence of Stare Decisis on the Votes of United States Supreme Court Justices.” American Journal of Political Science 40:971-1003. (See also related critiques in the same issue if you have time.)

**Topic 12—Public Policy**—November 14th

Required Readings:

Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:


**Topic 13—Bureaucracy**—November 28th

**Required Readings:**


Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:


**Topic 14—State Politics, Federalism, and Disaster Response—December 5th (Literature Review is Due)**

**Required Reading**


**Supplemental, Additional works, and classics:**


**Final Exam:** Wednesday, December 12, 2007 from 6:00 PM - 8:30 PM