

# American Political Institutions

MIT | 17.202 | Spring 2021 | Wed 9:00-11:00 AM  
<https://canvas.mit.edu/courses/6723>

## Contact Information

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## Course Description

This is the first in a two-course graduate sequence on American political institutions. Whereas the second course focuses on cutting-edge formal and quantitative studies of American institutions, this one emphasizes classic theoretical and descriptive works. The readings draw on a variety of theoretical frameworks, especially historical and rational-choice institutionalism, and a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

## Expectations and Assignments

This is a reading- and discussion-focused class. I expect students to attend each class prepared to discuss all the (admittedly heavy load of) assigned readings. If students' reading appears to flag, I may require weekly reading responses. Otherwise, the only assignments will be six short "think pieces" of about 2–3 double-spaced pages. Use these pieces to discuss interesting tensions, gaps, or puzzles in the readings assigned since the last piece was due, with an eye towards identifying interesting research questions. Your think piece may focus on a single class or take up issues that span multiple classes, but choose a focus that you can seriously explore in the small space you're given. The pieces should be uploaded to the course website by **midnight on the night before class**.

You may substitute the final think piece for a take-home assignment that will help you practice for the general exam in American Politics. This assignment will be due on the last day of class. About a week in advance of the due date, I will provide a few practice questions for you to choose

from, and I will provide detailed feedback on one essay (about 5-6 pages long). This is not an exam as such and is entirely optional; please only choose this option if it is useful to you. For the purposes of the course grade, this assignment will count as one think piece, or slightly more.

## Books

All books we will be reading parts of are listed below. I will provide PDFs for all but those in the “must buy” category, which you must either purchase or else borrow from a friend/library. Books that we are reading a large chunk of and/or belong on the shelf of any scholar of American politics I have put in the “should buy” category. Books in the “could buy” category are optional purchases, but you won’t regret owning any of them. In addition, copies can be found at MIT’s Dewey Library.

### Must Buy (no PDFs)

- Eric Schickler, *Racial Realignment: The Transformation of American Liberalism, 1932–1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016)
- Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*, rev. ed. (1993; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997)

### Should Buy

- John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011)
- Gary W. Cox and Matthew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer, eds., *Congress Reconsidered*, 11th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2017)
- John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, updated second edition, with an epilogue on health care (1984; New York: Pearson, 2011)
- Keith Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991)
- Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)
- David E. Lewis, *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008)
- David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (1974; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004)

- Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004)
- Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Ideology and Congress* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007)
- E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (1960; Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1975)

### Could Buy

- R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990)
- Charles M. Cameron, *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Daniel P. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862–1928* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)
- Alan S. Gerber and Eric Schickler, eds., *Governing in a Polarized Age: Elections, Parties and Political Representation in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016)
- Samuel P. Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (1968; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006)
- Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, rev. ed. (1960; New York: Free Press, 1990)
- Mancur Olson Jr., *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965)
- Paul E. Peterson, *City Limits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981)
- Gerald N. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008)
- Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012)
- Eric Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001)
- Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth, *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002)

- Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities, 1877–1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982)
- Tracy Sulkin, *Issue Politics in Congress* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

## Semester Overview

- 1 Theoretical Foundations (February 17)**
- 2 Collective Action and Organized Interests (February 24)**  
→ Think Piece #1 Due . . . . .
- 3 Political Parties (March 3)**
- 4 Electoral Institutions and Representation (March 10)**  
→ Think Piece #2 Due . . . . .
- 5 Congress I: Members as Individuals (March 17)**
- 6 Congress II: Rules and Organization (March 24)**
- 7 Congress III: Ideology, Pivotal Politics, and Lawmaking (March 31)**  
→ Think Piece #3 Due . . . . .
- 8 Presidency I: Development and Context (April 7)**
- 9 Presidency II: Strategic Interactions (April 14)**  
→ Think Piece #4 Due . . . . .
- 10 Bureaucracy (April 21)**
- 11 Law and Courts (April 28)**  
→ Think Piece #5 Due . . . . .
- 12 The Politics of Policymaking (May 5)**
- 13 Federalism I: State Politics (May 12)**
- 14 Federalism II: Local Political Economy (May 19)**  
→ Think Piece #6 OR Take-Home Practice General Due . . . . .

# Course Schedule

## 1 Theoretical Foundations (February 17)

*What are the broad intellectual frameworks for thinking about political institutions in our discipline? Historical institutionalism. Rational choice institutionalism.*

### Required Reading (176 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Peter A. Hall and Rosemary C. R. Taylor, “Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms,” *Political Studies* 44, no. 5 (1996): 936–957
  - Historical, rational-choice, and sociological variants of “new institutionalism”
- [PDF](#) Charles M. Cameron, *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 69–82 (chapter 3)
  - Rational choice as a framework for studying the presidency and, by extension, other political institutions
- [PDF](#) Daniel Diermeier and Keith Krehbiel, “Institutionalism as a Methodology,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 15, no. 2 (2003): 123–144
  - Rational-choice perspective on institutional theories and theories of institutions
- [PDF](#) Paul Pierson, *Politics in Time: History, Institutions, and Social Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–102 (Introduction and chapters 1–3)
  - Taking positive feedback, path dependence, and other temporal processes seriously in the analysis of politics.
- [PDF](#) Kathleen Thelen and James Conran, “Institutional Change,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Historical Institutionalism*, ed. Orfeo Fioretos, Tulia G. Falletti, and Adam Sheingate (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 60–77
  - Mechanisms of institutional change, beyond punctuated equilibrium.

### Recommended Reading

- Theda Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research,” chap. 1 in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3–37
- Kenneth A. Shepsle, “Studying Institutions: Some Lessons from the Rational Choice Approach,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 1, no. 2 (1989): 131–147

- Douglass C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
- Margaret Levi, "A Model, a Method, and a Map: Rational Choice in Comparative and Historical Analysis," in *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, ed. Mark I. Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19–41
- Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 1–32 (chapter 1)
- Kathleen Thelen, "Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 2 (1999): 369–404
- Paul Pierson, "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 2 (2000): 251–267
- Terry M. Moe, "Power and Political Institutions," *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no. 2 (2005): 215–233
- Sean Gailmard, "Game Theory and the Study of American Political Development," *Public Choice*, Special Issue on Causal Inference and American Political Development (2020)

## 2 Collective Action and Organized Interests (February 24)

What are the “meta-institutions” that structure political life? How do people organize themselves for political action—in a democracy broadly, and in America specifically? How do groups exert influence over the political process?

→ **Think Piece #1 Due**

### Required Reading (230 Pages)

- [PDF](#) E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (1960; Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1975), 1–61 (chapters 1–3)
  - The importance of how politics is organized
- [PDF](#) Mancur Olson Jr., *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 1–52 (Introduction and chapter 1)
  - Interest groups and collective-action problems. *Note: it's fine to skip over the proofs & technical details.*
- [PDF](#) Kay Lehman Schlozman, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady, *The Unheavenly Chorus: Unequal Political Voice and the Broken Promise of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 265–346 (chapters 10–11)
  - Organized interests and political voice
- [PDF](#) Dara Z. Strolovitch, “Do Interest Groups Represent the Disadvantaged? Advocacy at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Gender,” *Journal of Politics* 68, no. 4 (2006): 894–910
  - Intersectionality in interest representation
- [PDF](#) Chloe N. Thurston, “Policy Feedback in the Public–Private Welfare State: Advocacy Groups and Access to Government Homeownership Programs, 1934–1954,” *Studies in American Political Development* 29, no. 2 (2015): 250–267
  - Interest groups and the submerged state, from the perspective of those excluded from it

### Recommended Reading

- Jack L. Walker, “The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America,” *American Political Science Review* 77, no. 2 (1983): 390–406



- Theda Skocpol, Marshall Ganz, and Ziad Munson, “A Nation of Organizers: The Institutional Origins of Civic Voluntarism in the United States,” *American Political Science Review* 94, no. 3 (2000): 527–546
- John Mark Hansen, *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby, 1919–1981* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991)
- Stephen Ansolabehere, John M. de Figueiredo, and James M. Snyder Jr., “Why Is There So Little Money in U.S. Politics?,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17, no. 1 (2003): 105–130
- Dara Z. Strolovitch, *Affirmative Advocacy: Race, Class, and Gender in Interest Group Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007)

### 3 Political Parties (March 3)

*Why do parties form and how do they constrain? How does the existence of parties change institutional analysis? How do partisan realignments happen?*

#### Required Reading (293 Pages)

- [PDF](#) V. O. Key Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1984), 298–311 (chapter 14)
  - Classic discussion of politics without parties
- [PDF](#) E. E. Schattschneider, *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America* (1960; Hinsdale, IL: Dryden Press, 1975), 62–77 (chapter 4)
- [PDF](#) John H. Aldrich, *Why Parties? A Second Look* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 3–66 (chapters 1–2)
  - Parties as endogenous institutions created by ambitious politicians to solve certain persistent problems
- [PDF](#) Kathleen Bawn et al., “A Theory of Political Parties: Groups, Policy Demands and Nominations in American Politics,” *Perspectives on Politics* 10, no. 3 (2012): 571–597
  - Parties as durable coalitions of policy demanders
- [PDF](#) Walter Dean Burnham, “Party Systems and the Political Process,” in *The American Party Systems: Stages of Political Development*, ed. W. N. Chambers and Walter Dean Burnham (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 277–307
  - Partisan realignments as drivers of political development
- Eric Schickler, *Racial Realignment: The Transformation of American Liberalism, 1932–1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 1–26 (chapter 1), 45–100 (chapters 3–4), 150–175 (chapter 7)
  - Partisan realignment from below
- [PDF](#) Daniel Schlozman and Sam Rosenfeld, “The Hollow Parties,” chap. 6 in *Can America Govern Itself?*, ed. Frances E. Lee and Nolan McCarty (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 120–152
  - Contemporary American parties are simultaneously too strong and too weak.

#### Recommended Reading

- V. O. Key Jr., “A Theory of Critical Elections,” *Journal of Politics* 17, no. 1 (1955): 3–18

- Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson, *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989)
- David R. Mayhew, *Placing Parties in American Politics: Organization, Electoral Settings, and Government Activity in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986)
- David R. Mayhew, “Electoral Realignment,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1 (June 2000): 449–474
- James M. Snyder Jr. and Michael M. Ting, “Roll Calls, Party Labels, and Elections,” *Political Analysis* 11, no. 4 (2003): 419–444
- Marty Cohen et al., “Political Parties in Rough Weather,” *The Forum* 5, no. 4 (2008): 1–23, <https://doi.org/10.2202/1540-8884.1214>
- Karol David, *Party Position Change in American Politics: Coalition Management* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2009)
- Raymond J. La Raja, “Richer Parties, Better Politics? Party-Centered Campaign Finance Laws and American Democracy,” *The Forum* 11, no. 3 (2013): 313–338

## 4 Electoral Institutions and Representation (March 10)

*What is the role of elections in a democracy? How do electoral rules matter for preference aggregation? Spatial competition. Downsian convergence (and lack thereof). How should we go about looking for empirical evidence of accountability to voters?*

→ **Think Piece #2 Due**

### Required Reading (198 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 1–13 (introduction), 60–91 (chapter 4), 112–143 (chapter 6)
  - What does it mean to “re-present”?
- [PDF](#) Bernard Manin, Adam Przeworski, and Susan Carol Stokes, “Elections and Representation,” chap. 1 in *Democracy, Accountability, and Representation*, ed. Adam Przeworski, Susan Carol Stokes, and Bernard Manin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 29–55
  - What makes elections representative?
- [PDF](#) Torun Dewan and Kenneth A. Shepsle, “Political Economy Models of Elections,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (2011): 311–330
  - Summarizes major questions & models in the formal theory literature on elections
- [PDF](#) Bernard Grofman, “Downs and Two-Party Convergence,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7 (2004): 25–46
  - Summarizes the theoretical literature following from Downs’s *Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957) on electoral competition between parties
- [PDF](#) Carolyn Abbott and Asya Magazinnik, “At-Large Elections and Minority Representation in Local Government,” *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no. 3 (2020): 717–733
  - How electoral rules aggregate preferences
- [PDF](#) Brandice Canes-Wrone, David W. Brady, and John F. Cogan, “Out of Step, Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members’ Voting,” *American Political Science Review* 96, no. 1 (2002): 127–140
  - Do voters punish ideologically out-of-step members?
- [PDF](#) Anthony Fowler and Andrew B. Hall, “The Elusive Quest for Convergence,” *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 11 (2016): 131–149

- Does American political representation work as predicted by theory?

### **Suggested Reading**

- Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper, 1957)
- James Alt, Ethan Bueno de Mesquita, and Shanna Rose, “Disentangling Accountability and Competence in Elections: Evidence from U.S. Term Limits,” *Journal of Politics* 73, no. 1 (2011): 171–186
- Scott Gehlbach, *Formal Models of Domestic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapters 1, 2, and 7
- Scott Ashworth, “Electoral Accountability: Recent Theoretical and Empirical Work,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15, no. 1 (2012): 183–201

## 5 Congress I: Members as Individuals (March 17)

*The electoral connection. What MCs see and do, and the incentives they face.*

### Required Reading (214 Pages)

- [PDF](#) David R. Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (1974; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 13–77 (Part I: “The Electoral Incentive”)
  - The roots of congressional behavior and organization in electoral incentives
- [PDF](#) Richard F. Fenno Jr., “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration,” *American Political Science Review* 71, no. 3 (1977): 883–917
  - What do MCs see and do in their districts?
- [PDF](#) Tracy Sulkin, *Issue Politics in Congress* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–42 (chapters 1–2)
  - How incumbents respond to challengers’ campaigns
- [PDF](#) Richard L. Hall and Alan V. Deardorff, “Lobbying as Legislative Subsidy,” *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 1 (2006): 69–84
  - Lobbyists subsidize the legislative participation of their congressional allies.
- [PDF](#) Barbara Sinclair, “The New World of U.S. Senators,” chap. 1 in *Congress Reconsidered*, 11th ed., ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2017), 1–26
  - Evolution of the Senate since the 1950s
- [PDF](#) Gary Jacobson, “The Electoral Connection: Then and Now,” chap. 3 in *Governing in a Polarized Age: Elections, Parties and Political Representation in America*, ed. Alan S. Gerber and Eric Schickler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 35–64
  - The relevance of Mayhew’s *Electoral Connection* in a polarized age

### Recommended Reading

- Warren E. Miller and Donald E. Stokes, “Constituency Influence in Congress,” *American Political Science Review* 57, no. 1 (1963): 45–56
- Richard L. Hall and Frank W. Wayman, “Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees,” *American Political Science Review* 84, no. 3 (1990): 797–820

- Nelson W. Polsby, *How Congress Evolves: Social Bases of Institutional Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- Stephen Ansolabehere, James M. Snyder Jr., and Charles Stewart III, "Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections," *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (2001): 136–159

## 6 Congress II: Rules and Organization (March 24)

*Internal structure of Congress, including voting rules, agenda control, committees, parties, and intra-party factions. Rational choice perspectives: distributive, informational, and partisan theories. Endogenous emergence of congressional rules and how they constrain. Evolution of congressional institutions over time.*

### Required Reading (218 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Kenneth A. Shepsle and Barry R. Weingast, “Positive Theories of Congressional Institutions,” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1994): 149–179
  - An overview of distributive & informational theories of Congress
- [PDF](#) Christopher R. Berry and Anthony Fowler, “Cardinals or Clerics? Congressional Committees and the Distribution of Pork,” *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 3 (2016): 692–708
  - Empirical test of distributive theory (please also read critique below)
  - [PDF](#) Ben Hammond and Leah Rosenstiel, “Measuring the Influence of Political Actors on the Federal Budget,” *American Political Science Review* 114, no. 2 (2020): 603–608
- [PDF](#) John H. Aldrich and David W. Rohde, “Lending and Reclaiming Power: Majority Leadership in the House Since the 1950s,” chap. 2 in *Congress Reconsidered*, 11th ed., ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2017), 29–60
  - Conditional party government
- [PDF](#) Gary W. Cox and Matthew D. McCubbins, *Setting the Agenda: Responsible Party Government in the U.S. House of Representatives* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1–49 (chapters 1–3) and 201–30 (chapters 10–11)
  - Theory of party government in Congress, emphasizing (unconditional) negative agenda control
- [PDF](#) Frances Lee, “Legislative Parties in an Era of Alternating Majorities,” chap. 6 in *Governing in a Polarized Age: Elections, Parties and Political Representation in America*, ed. Alan S. Gerber and Eric Schickler (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 115–142
  - How the combination of partisan polarization and insecure majorities affects the incentives of congressional parties



- [PDF](#) Ruth Bloch Rubin, “Organizing for Insurgency: Intraparty Organization and the Development of the House Insurgency, 1908–1910,” *Studies in American Political Development* 27, no. 2 (2013): 86–110
  - Organization of intra-party factions

### Recommended Reading

- Dan Alexander, Christopher R. Berry, and William G. Howell, “Distributive Politics and Legislator Ideology,” *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 1 (2016): 214–231
- Justin Grimmer and Eleanor Neff Powell, “Congressmen in Exile: The Politics and Consequences of Involuntary Committee Removal,” *Journal of Politics* 75, no. 4 (2013): 907–920
- Richard F. Fenno Jr., “The House Appropriations Committee as a Political System: The Problem of Integration,” *American Political Science Review* 56, no. 2 (1962): 310–324
- Eric Schickler, *Disjointed Pluralism: Institutional Innovation and the Development of the U.S. Congress* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001)
- Richard F. Fenno Jr., *Congressmen in Committees* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), *xii–xvii* (introduction), 1–14 (chapter 1), and 81–138 (chapter 4)
- David W. Rohde, *Parties and Leaders in the Postreform House* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991)
- Keith Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991)
- Gary W. Cox and Mathew D. McCubbins, *Legislative Leviathan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993)
- David R. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005)
- David W. Rohde, “Reflections on the Practice of Theorizing: Conditional Party Government in the Twenty-First Century,” *Journal of Politics* 75, no. 4 (2013): 849–864
- Gary W. Cox, Thad Kousser, and Mathew D. McCubbins, “Party Power or Preferences? Quasi-Experimental Evidence from American State Legislatures,” *Journal of Politics* 72, no. 3 (2010): 799–811
- Keith Krehbiel, *Information and Legislative Organization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991)

## 7 Congress III: Ideology, Pivotal Politics, and Lawmaking (March 31)

*Where do legislators stand and how do we measure it? How does ideology shape the legislative process? The spatial model. Pivotal politics. How far can spatial theories take us without parties? What important determinants of the legislative process do ideological theories leave out? How dysfunctional is Congress, all things considered?*

→ **Think Piece #3 Due**

### Required Reading (266 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Keith Krehbiel, *Pivotal Politics: A Theory of U.S. Lawmaking* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 3–75 (chapters 1–3)
  - Congressional lawmaking in terms of ideological locations of the pivotal voters
- [PDF](#) Keith T. Poole and Howard Rosenthal, *Ideology and Congress* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2007), 1–31 (chapters 1–2) and 78–113 (chapter 4)
  - Introducing and using the spatial model of roll-call voting
- [PDF](#) Joshua D. Clinton, “Using Roll Call Estimates to Test Models of Politics,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 15, no. 1 (2012): 79–99
  - “Testing a model using a model of a model”
- [PDF](#) Richard L. Hall, *Participation in Congress* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 1–48 (Introduction and chapter 1)
  - All roll calls are not created equal
- [PDF](#) Sarah Binder, “Legislating in Polarized Times,” chap. 8 in *Congress Reconsidered*, 11th ed., ed. Lawrence C. Dodd and Bruce I. Oppenheimer (Thousand Oaks, CA: CQ Press, 2017), 189–206
  - Is Congress dysfunctional? Kinda.
- [PDF](#) James M. Curry and Frances E. Lee, “Congress at Work: Legislative Capacity and Entrepreneurship in the Contemporary Congress,” chap. 8 in *Can America Govern Itself?*, ed. Frances E. Lee and Nolan McCarty (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 181–219
  - Congress today is not so much dysfunctional as adapting to new conditions.

## Recommended Reading

- Frances E. Lee, *Beyond Ideology: Politics, Principles and Partisanship in the U.S. Senate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009)
- Joshua Clinton, Simon Jackman, and Douglas Rivers, “The Statistical Analysis of Roll Call Data,” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (2004): 355–370
- Sarah Binder, “The Dysfunctional Congress,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 18, no. 1 (2015): 85–101
- David R. Mayhew, *Divided We Govern*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005)
- David R. Mayhew, *Partisan Balance: Why Political Parties Don’t Kill the U.S. Constitutional System* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011)
- R. Douglas Arnold, *The Logic of Congressional Action* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990)
- Gregory J. Wawro and Eric Schickler, *Filibuster: Obstruction and Lawmaking in the U.S. Senate* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006)
- Thomas J. Mann and Norman J. Ornstein, *It’s Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided With the New Politics of Extremism* (New York: Basic Books, 2012)
- Fang-Yi Chiou and Lawrence Rothenberg, “When Pivotal Politics Meet Partisan Politics,” *American Journal of Political Science* 47, no. 3 (2003): 503–522
- Barbara Sinclair, “Partisan Polarization and Congressional Policy Making,” in *Congress and Policy Making in the 21st Century*, ed. Jeffery A. Jenkins and Eric M. Patashnik (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 48–72

## 8 Presidency I: Development and Context (April 7)

*Unique powers and constraints of the office. Situating the president in historical time.*

### Required Reading (208 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Juan J. Linz, “The Perils of Presidentialism,” *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 1 (1990): 51–69
  - Presidents are bad news.
- [PDF](#) Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, rev. ed. (1960; New York: Free Press, 1990), 29–72 (chapters 3–4)
  - Presidential power is the power to persuade.
- [PDF](#) Aaron Wildavsky, “The Two Presidencies,” *Trans-Action* 4 (December 1966): 7–14, Reprinted in *Society*, 35 (2): 23–31, 1998
  - Domestic vs. foreign policy
- [PDF](#) Brandice Canes-Wrone, William G. Howell, and David Lewis, “Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power: A Reevaluation of the Two Presidencies Thesis,” *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 1 (2008): 1–16
  - An empirical test of the two presidencies thesis
- [PDF](#) Matthew A. Baum and Samuel Kernell, “Has Cable Ended the Golden Age of Presidential Television?,” *American Political Science Review* 93, no. 1 (1999): 99–114
  - Presidents and the media
- [PDF](#) Sidney M. Milkis, “The Presidency and Political Parties,” in *The Presidency and the Political System*, ed. Michael Nelson (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2014), 304–348
  - Tensions between modern presidents and the parties that nominate them
- Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton*, rev. ed. (1993; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1–58 (chapters 1–3)
  - Presidents are constrained by their place in secular and political time.

### Recommended Reading

- Robert A. Dahl, “Myth of the Presidential Mandate,” *Political Science Quarterly* 105, no. 3 (1990): 355–372

- Samuel Kernell, *Going Public: New Strategies of Presidential Leadership* (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 1997)
- Lyn Ragsdale and John J. Theis III, "The Institutionalization of the American Presidency, 1924–92," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 4 (1997): 1280–1318

## 9 Presidency II: Strategic Interactions (April 14)

*Separation of powers. Interbranch bargaining. Unilateral action. Public opinion. Control of the bureaucracy.*

→ **Think Piece #4 Due**

### Required Reading (263 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Rui J. P. de Figueiredo Jr., Tonja Jacobi, and Barry R. Weingast, “The New Separation-of-Powers Approach to American Politics,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, ed. Barry R. Weingast and Donald A. Wittman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 199–222
  - Strategic interactions among U.S. political institutions
- [PDF](#) Charles Cameron and Nolan McCarty, “Models of Vetoes and Veto Bargaining,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7, no. 1 (2004): 409–435
  - Overview by two leading scholars of the subject
- [PDF](#) Terry M. Moe and William G. Howell, “Unilateral Action and Presidential Power: A Theory,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (1999): 850–873
  - Unilateral action as source of presidential advantage
- [PDF](#) Kenneth Lowande and Jon C. Rogowski, “Presidential Unilateral Power,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 24, no. 1 (2021): 1–23
  - What insights has the unilateral power literature produced?
- [PDF](#) Brandice Canes-Wrone, *Who Leads Whom? Presidents, Policy, and the Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1–50, 103–29, 157–83
  - Presidents and the public
- [PDF](#) David E. Lewis, *The Politics of Presidential Appointments: Political Control and Bureaucratic Performance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1–10, 51–102
  - Presidents and the bureaucracy

### Recommended Reading

- William G. Howell, *Power Without Persuasion: The Politics of Direct Presidential Action* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2003).
- Charles M. Cameron, *Veto Bargaining: Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

- Tim Groseclose and Nolan McCarty, “The Politics of Blame: Bargaining before an Audience,” *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (2001): 100–119
- Sharece Thrower, “Presidential Action and the Supreme Court: The Case of Signing Statements,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 31, no. 4 (2019): 677–698
- Alexander Bolton and Sharece Thrower, “Legislative Capacity and Executive Unilateralism,” *American Journal of Political Science* 60, no. 3 (2016): 649–663
- William G. Howell, “Presidential Power in War,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 14, no. 1 (2011): 89–105
- Christopher R. Berry, Barry C. Burden, and William G. Howell, “The President and the Distribution of Federal Spending,” *American Political Science Review* 104, no. 4 (2010): 783–799
- Christina M. Kinane, “Control without Confirmation: The Politics of Vacancies in Presidential Appointments” (Forthcoming in the *American Political Science Review*, 2021), <https://www.christinakinane.com/control-without-confirmation>
- Andrew Rudalevige, *Managing the President’s Program: Presidential Leadership and Legislative Policy Formulation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002)
- Charles M. Cameron and Jonathan P. Kastellec, “Are Supreme Court Nominations a Move-the-Median Game?,” *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 4 (2016): 778–797
- Brandice Canes-Wrone and Kenneth W. Shotts, “The Conditional Nature of Presidential Responsiveness to Public Opinion,” *American Journal of Political Science* 48, no. 4 (2004): 690–706

## 10 Bureaucracy (April 21)

*Discretion and democratic dilemmas. Principal-agent perspective. Trade-offs between discretion and expertise. Bureaucratic autonomy and political conflict.*

### Required Reading (291 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the Individual in Public Services*, 30th anniversary expanded edition (1980; New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2010), xi–xx (preface) and 3–26 (chapters 1–2)
  - The policymaking discretion of “street-level” government employees and their routinized strategies for coping with limited resources and other challenges
- [PDF](#) Martha S. Feldman, *Order Without Design: Information Production and Policy Making* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989)
  - How organizational structure influences the production and flow of information in the bureaucracy
- [PDF](#) Mathew D. McCubbins, Roger G. Noll, and Barry R. Weingast, “Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control,” *Journal of Law, Economics & Organization* 3, no. 2 (1987): 243–277
  - Principal-agent perspective on administrative procedures as *ex ante* mechanisms of congressional control of the bureaucracy
- [PDF](#) Kathleen Bawn, “Political Control Versus Expertise: Congressional Choices about Administrative Procedures,” *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 1 (1995): 62–73
  - Administrative structures may entail a trade-off between political control and bureaucratic expertise.
- [PDF](#) Terry M. Moe, “The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure,” in *Can the Government Govern*, ed. John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1989), 267–329
  - Bureaucratic structure as a product of political conflict and compromise

### Recommended Reading

- Sean Gailmard and John W. Patty, “Slackers and Zealots: Civil Service, Policy Discretion, and Bureaucratic Expertise,” *American Journal of Political Science* 51, no. 4 (2007): 873–889



- Daniel P. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862–1928* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)
- Rachel Augustine Potter, “Slow-Rolling, Fast-Tracking, and the Pace of Bureaucratic Decisions in Rulemaking,” *The Journal of Politics* 79, no. 3 (2017): 841–855
- Daniel P. Carpenter, “State Building through Reputation Building: Coalitions of Esteem and Program Innovation in the National Postal System, 1883–1913,” *Studies in American Political Development* 14, no. Fall (2000): 121–155
- Graham T. Allison, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *American Political Science Review* 63, no. 3 (1969): 689–718
- Mathew D. McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz, “Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols versus Fire Alarms,” *American Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 1 (1984): 165–179
- David Epstein and Sharyn O’Halloran, *Delegating Powers: A Transaction Cost Politics Approach to Policy Making under Separate Powers* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1999)
- John D. Huber and Charles R. Shipan, *Deliberate Discretion?: The Institutional Foundations of Bureaucratic Autonomy* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2002)
- Jonathan Bendor and Adam Meirowitz, “Spatial Models of Delegation,” 98 (2 2004): 293–310
- Sean Gailmard and John W. Patty, *Learning while Governing: Expertise and Accountability in the Executive Branch* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 1–136 (chapters 1–4)
- Daniel Carpenter, *Reputation and Power: Organizational Image and Pharmaceutical Regulation at the FDA* (Princeton University Press, 2014)
- Sarah F. Anzia and Terry M. Moe, “Do Politicians Use Policy to Make Politics? The Case of Public-Sector Labor Laws,” *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 4 (December 2016): 763–777

## 11 Law and Courts (April 28)

*Legal and attitudinal models. Judicial preferences. Separation of powers. Judicial policymaking.*

→ **Think Piece #5 Due**

### Required Reading (281 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Mila Versteeg and Emily Zackin, “Constitutions Unentrenched: Toward an Alternative Theory of Constitutional Design,” *American Political Science Review* 110, no. 4 (2016): 1–18
  - What functions to constitutions serve?
- [PDF](#) Keith E. Whittington, “‘Interpose Your Friendly Hand’: Political Supports for the Exercise of Judicial Review by the United States Supreme Court,” *American Political Science Review* 99, no. 4 (2005): 583–596
  - Why do the elected branches tolerate judicial review?
- [PDF](#) Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth, *The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model Revisited* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 1–114 (chapters 1–3)
  - Judges are motivated by policy, not the law.
- [PDF](#) Howard Gillman, “What’s Law Got to Do with It? Judicial Behaviorists Test the ‘Legal Model’ of Judicial Decision Making,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 26 (2001): 465–504
  - Critical response to Segal and Spaeth
- [PDF](#) Lee Epstein and Jack Knight, “Reconsidering Judicial Preferences,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 16, no. 1 (2013): 11–31
  - Revised strategic account that accommodates motivations other than policy
- [PDF](#) Robert A. Kagan, “Adversarial Legalism and American Government,” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 10, no. 3 (1991): 369–406
  - The implications of judicialized regulation
- [PDF](#) Gerald N. Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?*, 2nd edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 1–36 (introduction and chapter 1)
  - The limitations of judicial policymaking

## Recommended Reading

- Emily Zackin, *Looking for Rights in All the Wrong Places: Why State Constitutions Contain America's Positive Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013)
- Robert A. Dahl, "Decision-Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as a National Policy-Maker," *Journal of Public Law* 6, no. 2 (1957): 279–295
- Mark A. Graber, "The Nonmajoritarian Difficulty: Legislative Deference to the Judiciary," *Studies in American Political Development* 7, no. Spring (1993): 35–73
- Sean Farhang, *The Litigation State: Public Regulation and Private Lawsuits in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010)

## 12 The Politics of Policymaking (May 5)

*How are policy agendas formed, achieved, and sustained?*

### Required Readings (288 pages)

- [PDF](#) Deborah A. Stone, “Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas,” *Political Science Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (1989): 281–300
  - The definition of problems—and thus the creation of policies to address them—requires the elaboration causal stories attributing responsibility and blame.
- [PDF](#) John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, updated second edition, with an epilogue on health care (1984; New York: Pearson, 2011), 1–20, 71–247
  - Policymaking as the confluence of the streams of policy, politics, and problems.
- [PDF](#) Frank R. Baumgartner and Bryan D. Jones, *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*, 2nd ed. (1993; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 3–38 (chapters 1–2)
  - Punctuated equilibria in policy regimes
- [PDF](#) Jacob S. Hacker, “Privatizing Risk without Privatizing the Welfare State: The Hidden Politics of Social Policy Retrenchment in the United States,” *American Political Science Review* 98, no. 2 (2004): 243–260
  - Patterns of institutional change and persistence, as applied to policymaking
- [PDF](#) Eric M. Patashnik and Julian E. Zelizer, “The Struggle to Remake Politics: Liberal Reform and the Limits of Policy Feedback in the Contemporary American State,” *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 4 (2013): 1071–1087
  - Policy entrenchment is not inevitable.

### Recommended Readings

- Bryan D. Jones, Tracy Sulkin, and Heather A. Larsen, “Policy Punctuations in American Political Institutions,” *American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 151–169
- Theodore Lowi, “American Business, Public Policy, Case-Studies, and Political Theory,” *World Politics* 16, no. 4 (1964): 677–715
- Paul Pierson, “When Effect Becomes Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change,” *World Politics* 45, no. 4 (1993): 595–628

### 13 Federalism I: State Politics (May 12)

*What are the advantages and disadvantages of America's system of decentralized governance? States as innovators and states as obstacles to reform. Political consequences of devolution. Interest group influence on state policy.*

#### Required Reading (227 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Sarah M. Morehouse and Malcolm E. Jewell, “States as Laboratories: A Reprise,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 7, no. 1 (2004): 177–203
- [PDF](#) Robert W. Mickey, “The Beginning of the End for Authoritarian Rule in America: *Smith v. Allwright* and the Abolition of the White Primary in the Deep South, 1944–1948,” *Studies in American Political Development* 22, no. 2 (2008): 143–182
  - Subnational authoritarianism and democratization in the United States
- [PDF](#) Margaret Weir, “States, Race, and the Decline of New Deal Liberalism,” *Studies in American Political Development* 19, no. 2 (2005): 157–172
  - Retreat of states from the vanguard of progressive reform
- [PDF](#) Jamila Michener, *Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid, Federalism, and Unequal Politics* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2018), 1–59 (chapters 1–3) and 162–69 (chapter 8)
  - Political consequences of policy devolution
- [PDF](#) Alex Hertel-Fernandez, *State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States—and the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 1–77 (Introduction–chapter 2)
  - Interest group influence on the states

#### Recommended Reading

- Paul E. Peterson, *The Price of Federalism* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1995)
- James M. Buchanan, “Federalism as an Ideal Political Order and an Objective for Constitutional Reform,” *Publius* 25, no. 2 (1995): 19–27
- Robert S. Erikson, Gerald C. Wright, and John P. McIver, *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
- Jeffrey R. Lax and Justin H. Phillips, “The Democratic Deficit in the States,” *American Journal of Political Science* 56, no. 1 (2012): 148–166

- Elizabeth R. Gerber, “Legislative Response to the Threat of Popular Initiatives,” *American Journal of Political Science* 40, no. 1 (1996): 99–128
- Daniel Béland, Philip Rocco, and Alex Waddan, *Obamacare Wars: Federalism, State Politics, and the Affordable Care Act* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016)
- Matt Grossmann, *Red State Blues: How the Conservative Revolution Stalled in the States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

## 14 Federalism II: Local Political Economy (May 19)

*What are the unique powers and constraints for cities in a federalist structure? What do city governments do? Political participation, representation, and accountability at the local level. Data challenges and empirical advances.*

→ **Think Piece #6 OR Take-Home Practice General Due**

### Required Reading (289 Pages)

- [PDF](#) Paul E. Peterson, *City Limits* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 1–92 (Chapters 1–4)
  - Cities are not small nation-states; they operate within a federalist structure
- [PDF](#) Christopher R. Berry, *Imperfect Union: Representation and Taxation in Multilevel Governments* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1–88 (chapters 1–3)
  - The problem of multiple independent, overlapping jurisdictions
- [PDF](#) Christopher Warshaw, “Local Elections and Representation in the United States,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 22, no. 1 (2019): 461–479
  - The state of the literature on local representation: questions, data advances, challenges
- [PDF](#) Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David H. Tabb, *Protest Is Not Enough: The Struggle of Blacks and Hispanics for Equality in Urban Politics* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984), 1–45 (introduction–chapter 1)
  - Classic text on entrenched legacies of urban political inequality & how they have been redressed
- [PDF](#) Jessica Trounstine, *Segregation by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1–45 (chapters 1–2)
  - How segregation interacts with local government’s role of public goods provision

### Recommended Reading

- Patricia A. Kirkland, “Business Owners and Executives as Politicians: The Effect on Public Policy,” *Journal of Politics* Forthcoming (2020)
- Rebecca Goldstein and Hye Young You, “Cities as Lobbyists,” *American Journal of Political Science* 61, no. 4 (2017): 864–876

- Chris Tausanovitch and Christopher Warshaw, “Measuring Constituent Policy Preferences in Congress, State Legislatures, and Cities,” *Journal of Politics* 75, no. 2 (2013): 330–342
- Sarah F. Anzia, *Timing and Turnout: How Off-Cycle Elections Favor Organized Groups* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014)
- Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?*, 2nd ed. (1961; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005)



This syllabus is based heavily on Devin Caughey's for the same course. It was last modified on February 16, 2021.

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- Alexander, Dan, Christopher R. Berry, and William G. Howell. "Distributive Politics and Legislator Ideology." *The Journal of Politics* 78, no. 1 (2016): 214–231.
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- Canes-Wrone, Brandice, William G. Howell, and David Lewis. "Toward a Broader Understanding of Presidential Power: A Reevaluation of the Two Presidencies Thesis." *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 1 (2008): 1–16.
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