

## **American Political Development: How Ideas, History, and Institutions Shape American Politics**

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**Course Description:** The American polity and its corresponding history are unique compared to other political systems. The United States came into being without the formal establishment of political parties and with a weak state in which traditional governing responsibilities of the central government were left to the auspices and discretion of the individual States. Soon after the constitution's ratification, political parties emerged and began to dominate 19<sup>th</sup> century American politics, yet the state remained weak. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the power of political parties was well into its downward spiral spawning the uniquely fragmented interest group system of the contemporary American polity. Meanwhile the powers of the American state were emboldened yet remained comparably weak next to other advanced societies. Practitioners of American Political Development have attempted to study such developments through tracing American politics over time. This is done through a focus on the manner in which historical contexts, political ideology, and political institutions (not only formal governmental structures—such as legislatures, the executive, and the judiciary—but also political parties and interest groups) combined to shape the evolution of public policy and political conflict. In a class setting designed for class discussion, students will review a selection of the literature from this subfield of American Politics through a focus on political conflict and institutional development in the US. The class will benefit those interested in taking a historical, ideational approach to assessing institutional development and political conflict in the United States.

**Readings:** All readings will be made available either via Blackboard or via email.

**Course Requirements:** In order to attain a passing grade for the class, all students must attend class regularly participate in class discussion and make a 5-10 minute presentation during the course of the semester

**Attendance:** All students are permitted 2 unexcused absences. Unexcused absences in excess of the two allotted will result in failure of the course. The course is a seminar course and thus will focus around class discussion. Attendance subsequently is crucial to the functioning of the class.

**Class Participation:** Students are expected to come to class prepared and ready to discuss the assigned readings. Students will not be docked for their lack of participation but will be rewarded for their thoughtful and active contributions to class discussion. Class participation will make up 25% of your grade.

**Presentation:** All students are expected to make a presentation of 5-10 minutes during the course of the semester. Details concerning requirements for the presentation will be forthcoming.

**Course Schedule:**

## **Week 1- What is American Political Development?**

**Wednesday, August 26 –**

Introduction

## **Friday, August 28 - Definition and Methodological Foundations of American Political Development**

Karen Orren and Steven Skowronek, *The Search for American Political Development* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 1-33

## **Week 2- Monday, August 31 – Definition and Methodological Foundations (continued)**

Rogan Kersh, “Rethinking Periodization? APD and Macro History of the United States,” *Polity* 37 (4) (October 2005): 513-522

Pierson, Paul. “Not Just What But When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes”. *Studies in American Political Development*, Vol. 14, No. 2, (April 2000): 72-92.

**Wednesday, September 2 and Friday September 4 – class cancelled**

**Monday, September 7 – class suspended (Labor Day)**

## **Wednesday, September 9 – Definition and Methodological Foundations (continued)**

Pierson, Paul. “Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of American Politics,” *American Political Science Review*, vol. 94, no. 2, (2000)

Lieberman, Robert C. “Ideas, Institutions, and Political Order: Explaining Political Change.” *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 96, No. 4, (December 2002)

## **Week 3- Theorists of American Political Ideology**

**Friday, September 11 –**

Louis Hartz- *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955, 1991), chapter 1 “The Concept of a Liberal Society”, 3-32

## **Week 4 - Liberalism in early American Political Development**

**Monday, September 14 (Class Suspended– Rosh Hashanah)**

**Wednesday, September 16 –**

Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” *American Political Science Review* 87 (3) (September 1993): 549-566

**Friday, September 18 and Monday, September 21 –**

The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse Author(s): James T. Kloppenberg Source: *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 74, No. 1 (Jun., 1987), pp. 9-33

**Week 5 - Religion and American Political Development**

**Monday, September 21 –**

James Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History*, pp. 1-33

**Wednesday, September 23 – Classes Suspended (Yom Kippur)**

**Friday, September 25 –**

James Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History*, pp. 1-33 (continued)

**Week 6 - The Development of the US Constitution and its influence on American Political Development**

**Monday, September 28; Wednesday, September 30; and Friday October 2**

Russell Hardin, “Why a Constitution?” in Grofman and Wittman, eds., *The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism* (New York: Agathon Press), 100-120.

Michael Vorenberg “Bringing the Constitution Back In: Amendment, Innovation, and Popular Democracy during the Civil War Era” in Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zeilizer, eds., *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 120-145-

**Monday, October 5**

Peter F. Nudulli, “The Constitution and American Politics: An Institutional Perspective, pp. 3-31.

**Week 7 - The role of the President in American Political Development**

**Wednesday, October 7 and Friday, October 9 –**

Milkis, Sydney *The Rhetorical and Administrative Presidencies* *Critical Review*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 379-401, April 2007.

**Monday, October 12 –**

Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make*, pp. 1-33 (Chapters 1-3)

## **Week 8 Congress and American Political Development**

**Wednesday October 14, and Friday, October 16 –**

Brady, David W., Joseph Cooper, and Patricia A. Hurley. "The Decline of Party in the U.S. House of Representatives, 1887-1968," *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, Vol. IV, No. 3, (August 1979): 381-407.

Ira Katznelson and John Lapinski. "At the Crossroads: Congress and American Political Development" *Perspectives on Politics* 2006, vol. 4, no. 2

## **Week 9 April 28 The Development of the American State**

**Monday, October 19; Wednesday, October 21; and Friday, October 23 –**

Stephen Skowronek, *Building A New American State: The Expansion of National Administrative Capacities 1877-1920* p.3-19; 39-47; 165-177

Daniel P. Carpenter, *The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy: Reputations, Networks, and Policy Innovation in Executive Agencies, 1862- 1928* pp. 1-37; 94-144

## **Week 10 May 5 The Beginnings of the American Economic power**

**Monday, October 26; Wednesday, October 28; and Friday, October 30; and Monday, November 2; –**

Richard Franklin Bense, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization* p. 1-19; 20-100

## **Week 11 May 12 Interests and Policy Regimes**

**Wednesday, November 4; and Friday, November 6**

Daniel J. Tichenor and Richard A. Harris "Organized Interest and American Political Development" *Political Science Quarterly* Winter 2002/2003, Vol 117 Issue 4 p. 587-

Patrick McGuinn, "Swing Issues and the Policy Regimes: Federal Education Policy and the Politics of Policy Change"

## **Week 12 May 19 Race and American Political Development**

**Monday, November 9 and Wednesday, November 11**

Skowronek, Stephen. "The Reassociation of Ideas and Purposes: Racism, Liberalism, and the American Political Tradition" *American Political Science Review* Vol. 100, No. 3 August 2006.

**Friday, November 13; Monday, November 16; and Wednesday, November 18**

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

Richard M. Vallely The Two Reconstructions: The Struggle for Black Enfranchisement  
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) Chapters 1 and 10

**Week 13 May 26- Exogenous Shocks and American political development**

**Friday, November 20 –**

Edwin Aments and Yvonne Zylan, “It Happened Here: Political Opportunity, the New Institutionalism, and the Townsend Movement”, American Sociological Review, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Apr., 1991), pp. 250-265.

**Monday November 30 and Wednesday, December 2**

David R. Mayhew, “Wars and American Politics,” Perspectives on Politics 3 (September 2005): 473- 493.

**Week 14 June 2 So What is American Political Development?**

**Monday, December 5 and Wednesday, December 7**

Karen Orren and Steven Skowronek, The Search for American Political Development  
(Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), Conclusion

**Wednesday, December 9**

Wrap up