POSC 261: American Political Institutions
Wednesday 9:00AM-11:50AM
Watkins Hall, Room 2145
Fall 2023

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Office location: Watkins Hall Room 2209
Office hours: Monday 12:30PM-1:30 PM (in-person), 7:00PM-8:00PM (virtual) (reserve via Calendly)

Cours Description

American institutions, once regarded as perfect, unshakeable guardrails for a democratic system, have become the subject of swirling questions and controversies in recent years, both from those who seek to undermine those institutions and those who question whether those institutions best serve the American public in modern day. In order to participate in these contemporary debates and conduct research that might contribute to popular discourse, it is critical to understand how American institutions are structured, how these institutions function in light of internal and external pressures, and how they interact with one another. In this course, we will read and critique a selection of recent publications concerning a range of American institutions and develop the beginnings of our own research projects related to American institutions. In doing so, we will not only broaden our knowledge of American institutions, but also hone our social scientific analytical skills and advance our own independent research activity.

Course Goals

Students who complete this course successfully will be able to:
- Understand the general structure of key American institutions and how they interact with each other
- Read and critique high-quality contemporary publications on American institutions
- Develop an original, independent research design related to American institutions
- Cultivate general social scientific analytical skills that will enable you to better execute your own research and participate in key research-related activities in the discipline

Required Texts, Materials, or Equipment

There are no required texts, materials, or equipment for this class. All readings will be available through the UCR Library or posted on Canvas.

Assignments and Grading

Course grades will be determined by students' performance on the following assignments and tasks:

- Research paper (60%): As a capstone to the class, students are expected to complete a research paper that could serve as the basis of a journal article with further work and revision. This research paper can take one of the following forms:

  - If a student is currently working on a research project related to American political institutions, that student may continue to work on that paper to fulfill the class requirement. The student must meet with the instructor early in the quarter and share a copy of the last written iteration of this project. The student and the instructor will reach an agreement on what additional work is expected by the end of the semester on the project to satisfactorily complete this requirement.

  - If a student is not currently working on a research project related to American political institutions, that student may complete an original research design. This research design should resemble a combination of the "front half" of a journal article (introduction, theory, hypotheses) and a pre-analysis plan (detailed description of data will be collected, coded, and used to evaluate hypotheses). Students are advised to consult with the instructor early in the quarter to make sure their ideas are suitable for the class.

- Discussion leads (15%): Each student will be responsible for leading discussion for one class (depending on enrollment, some students may do so with a partner). On the week for which the student is responsible for leading discussion, the student should provide an overview of the material for the week. This overview should identify and describe key theories (especially those from canonical works cited in the week's readings) and discuss linkages across readings (theoretical, methodological, or substantive). The student should also prepare a list of questions that will motivate discussion for the class period.

- Journal reviews (5%): During the quarter, we will read several papers that are not yet "in print" at a journal. Once during the quarter, each student must assume the role of a reviewer for that paper and write a mock journal review. Students may select any of the articles denoted "n.d." or "Forthcoming" for this exercise.

- Short research designs (20%): At the conclusion of each multi-week unit (January 24, February 7, February 28), each student must prepare a short research design (3-5 pages) that builds off of one or more of the readings we completed for that unit. This short research design should consist of a ~1-2 page overview of the extant research that motivates the idea and theoretical argument for a new or alternative expectation and a ~2-3 page description of how to execute a research design to evaluate that expectation.

Final grades will be assigned according to the following cutoffs:

Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade	Score	Grade
≥ 94	A	≥ 83	B	≥ 73	C	≥ 60	D
≥ 90	A-	≥ 80	B-	≥ 70	C-	< 60	F
≥ 87	B+	≥ 77	C+	≥ 65	D+		

Course Policies

- A link to the current version of the course syllabus will be posted on the course's Canvas page. Please refer to the most current version of the syllabus for information about the course schedule, course policies, etc.
- All other course readings will be made available through either the course syllabus, the UCR Library, and/or the course Canvas page at least one week in advance of the class for which they are expected to be completed.
- All readings and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day specified on the course syllabus and/or by the instructor in class. Late assignments will be accepted, but will be assessed a 10% penalty for each 24 hour period the assignment is late.
- *Communication Outside of Class*
    - I encourage you to contact me to discuss topics we are covering in class, concerns about the course, or other related issues outside of class. The primary mode of communication outside of class will be email. When you email me, please include the course code in the subject line. I will do my best to reply to emails within 24 hours, and I will *not* respond to emails about assignments or exams sent less than 24 hours before they are due.
    - Office hours scheduling will take place via Calendly. If you would like to come to office hours, please visit my Calendly schedule and reserve an available time for us to meet. Drop-in visits are permitted during in-person office hours (if the slot is not already booked), but virtual office hours must be reserved at least 6 hours in advance. If there are no available appointments or if you are not able to see me during office hours, please contact me so that we can find an alternative time to meet.
- *Technology*
    - Phone/laptop computer/tablet use is permitted only for the purposes of taking notes and retrieving materials/resources relevant to the course. Please be mindful that when you use your devices.
    - If any students would like to record lectures, please speak with me in advance to obtain permission.
- *Academic Integrity*: Here at UCR we are committed to upholding and promoting the values of the Tartan Soul: Integrity, Accountability, Excellence, and Respect. As a student in this class, it is your responsibility to act in accordance with these values by completing all assignments in the manner described, and by informing the instructor of

suspected acts of academic misconduct by your peers. By so doing, you will not only affirm your own integrity, but also the integrity of the intellectual work of this University, and the degree which it represents. Should you choose to commit academic misconduct in this class, you will be held accountable according to the policies set forth by the University, and will incur appropriate consequences both in this class and from Student Conduct and Academic Integrity Programs. For more information regarding University policy and its enforcement, please visit: conduct.ucr.edu.

- *Generative AI*: Generative AI (such as Google Bard or ChatGPT) can be a potentially useful and powerful information source and thought partner which can enhance productivity and learning. However, over-reliance or dependence on generative AI can undermine your education, limit opportunities for intellectual growth, and impact your performance in venues like job interviews, meetings, and presentations. Therefore, this course has been designed to emphasize authentic learning and utilizes assessment methods that reduce the potential usefulness of generative AI in your work. Furthermore, all work submitted in this course must be your own. Although generative AI may be used like any other source of information that supports your work – such as a book, article, video, interview, etc. – it must be properly quoted and cited each time it is used. Failure to properly cite the use of AI in your work will be viewed as a potential academic integrity violation.

Disclaimer

I reserve the right to make modifications to this information throughout the semester. In the event of a conflict between syllabus versions, the most recent version will always supersede previous versions.

Preliminary Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments[1]

January 10—Introduction
- "How to Be a Better Reviewer (JAWS Event Recap)"
- "Asking the Right Questions"
- "A Decent Proposal"
- "Research is a Craft"

January 17—Executive Branch Personnel
- Bolton, Alexander, and Joshua McCrain. 2023. "A Foot Out the Door: What Drives Bureaucratic Exit into Lobbying Careers?" *Political Science Research and Methods*.

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[1] All readings should be completed before the first class of the unit. All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified.

- Kinane, Christina M. 2021. "Control Without Confirmation: The Politics of Vacancies in Presidential Appointments." *American Political Science Review*, 115(2): 599-614.
- Potter, Rachel Augustine. n.d. "Privatizing Personnel: Bureaucratic Outsourcing & the Administrative Presidency."
- Potter, Rachel Augustine, and Craig Volden. 2021. "A Female Policy Premium? Agency Context and Women's Leadership in the US Federal Bureaucracy." *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 31(1): 91-107.

January 24—Executive Branch Policymaking (GUEST: NICO NAPOLIO)
- Chiou, Fang-Yi, and Jonathan Klingler. 2023. "Rule Significance and Interbranch Competition in Rulemaking Processes." *American Political Science Review*.
- Goldstein, Adam, Charlie Eaton, Amber Villalobos, Parijat Chakrabarti, Jeremy Cohen, and Katie Donnelly. 2023. "Administrative Burden in Federal Student Loan Repayment, and Socially Stratified Access to Income-Driven Repayment Plans." *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, 9(4): 86-111.
- Napolio, Nicholas G. 2023. "Executive Coalition Building." *Journal of Public Policy*.
- Moore, Ryan T., Katherine N. Gan, Karissa Minnich, and David Yokum. 2022. "Anchor Management: A Field Experiment to Encourage Families to Meet Critical Programme Deadlines." *Journal of Public Policy*, 42(4): 615-636.
- **SHORT RESEARCH DESIGN DUE**

January 31—Presidential Power
- Djourelova, Milena, and Ruben Durante. 2022. "Media Attention and Strategic Timing in Politics: Evidence from US Presidential Executive Orders." *American Journal of Political Science*, 66(4): 813-834.
- Guenther, Scott M., and Samuel Kernell. 2021. "Veto Threat Bargaining with a Bicameral Congress." *Political Research Quarterly*, 74(3): 628-644.
- Kaufman, Aaron R., and Jon C. Rogowski. 2023. "Divided Government, Strategic Substitution, and Presidential Unilateralism." *American Journal of Political Science*
- Rottinghaus, Brandon, and Isaiah Johnson. 2021. "Presidential 'Pitches' and White House Pressure: Interpersonal Presidential Persuasion in a Shared Lawmaking Environment." *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 51(4): 839-859.

February 7—The President and the Public (GUEST: BENJAMIN NOBLE)
- Christenson, Dino P., and Douglas L. Kriner. 2017. "Mobilizing the Public Against the President: Congress and the Political Costs of Unilateral Action." *American Journal of Political Science*, 61(4): 769-785.
- Goehring, Benjamin and Kenneth Lowande. n.d. "Behavioral Foundations of Presidential Accountability."
- Noble, Benjamin S. n.d. "Fighting Words: How Presidents Go Public in War and Peace."

- Reeves, Andrew, and Jon C. Rogowski. 2018. "The Public Cost of Unilateral Action." *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(2): 424-440.
- **SHORT RESEARCH DESIGN DUE**

February 14—Organized Interests—Institutional Maintenance
- [Furnas, Alexander C. and Timothy M. LaPira. n.d. "The People Think What I Think: False Consensus and Unelected Elite Misperception of Public Opinion."](#)
- Li, Zhao. 2018. "How Internal Constraints Shape Interest Group Activities: Evidence from Access-Seeking PACs." *American Political Science Review*, 112(4): 792-808.
- Meli, Amy D. n.d. "Take Action Now! How Group Type Influences Member Mobilization Strategies."
- Moses, Laura M. 2023. "The Online Affiliations of Interest Groups." *Interest Groups & Advocacy*.
- Schlozman, Kay Lehman, Philip Edward Jones, Hye Young You, Traci Burch, Sidney Verba, and Henry E. Brady. 2015. "Organizations and the Democratic Representation of Interests: What Does It Mean When Those Organizations Have No Members?" *Perspectives on Politics*, 13(4): 1017-1029.

February 21—Organized Interests—Inside Lobbying
- Dwidar, Maraam A. 2022. "Coalitional Lobbying and Intersectional Representation in American Rulemaking." *American Political Science Review*, 116(1): 301-321.
- Grier, Kevin, Robin Grier, and Gor Mkrtchian. 2023. "Campaign Contributions and Roll-Call Voting in the US House of Representatives: The Case of the Sugar Industry." *American Political Science Review*, 117(1): 340-346.
- Grose, Christian R., Pamela Lopez, Sara Sadhwani, and Antoine Yoshinaka. 2022. "Social Lobbying." *Journal of Politics*, 84(1): 367-382.
- Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. 2016. "Campaign Contributions Facilitate Access to Congressional Officials: A Randomized Field Experiment." *American Journal of Political Science*, 60(3): 545-558.
- Kroeger, Mary, and Maria Silfa. 2023. "Motivated Corporate Political Action: Evidence from an SEC Experiment." *Journal of Politics*, 85(3).

February 28—Organized Interests—Outside Lobbying
- Bergan, Daniel E. 2009. "Does Grassroots Lobbying Work? A Field Experiment Measuring the Effects of an E-mail Lobbying Campaign on Legislative Behavior." *American Politics Research*, 37(2): 327-352.
- Hall, Richard L., and Molly E. Reynolds. 2012. "Targeted Issue Advertising and Legislative Strategy: The Inside Ends of Outside Lobbying." *Journal of Politics*, 74(3): 888-902.

- Kalla, Joshua L., and David E. Broockman. 2022. "'Outside Lobbying' Over the Airwaves: A Randomized Field Experiment on Televised Issue Ads." *American Political Science Review*, 116(3): 1126-1132.
- Jungherr, Andreas, Alexander Wuttke, Matthias Mader, and Harald Schoen. "A Source Like Any Other? Field and Survey Experiment Evidence on How Interest Groups Shape Public Opinion." *Journal of Communication*, 71(2): 276-304.
- Junk, Wiebke Marie, and Anne Rasmussen. 2023. "Are Citizens Responsive to Interest Groups? A Field Experiment on Lobbying and Intended Citizen Behaviour." *West European Politics*.
- **SHORT RESEARCH DESIGN DUE**

March 6—Congress & Courts Potpourri
- Ban, Pamela, Ju Yeon Park, and Hye Young You. 2023. "How are Politicians Informed? Witnesses and Information Provision in Congress." *American Political Science Review*, 117(1): 122-139.
- Copus, Ryan, Ryan Hübert, and Paige Pellaton. n.d. "Trading Diversity? Judicial Diversity and Case Outcomes in Federal Courts."
- Gibson, James L. Forthcoming. "Do the Effects of Unpopular Supreme Court Rulings Last? The Dobbs Decision Rescinding Abortion Rights." *American Journal of Political Science*.
- Kaslovsky, Jaclyn. 2022. "Senators at Home: Local Attentiveness and Policy Representation in Congress." *American Political Science Review*, 116(2): 645-661.

March 13—Class Presentations

March 21—RESEARCH DESIGN DUE AT 11:59 PM PT