American Political Development (APD) is a subfield dedicated to studying and explaining changes in American political system. As a subfield of American politics, it is concerned with identifying macro-level factors that have transformed fundamental characteristics of American politics, including the party system, regional voting patterns, Congress and the federal bureaucracy, the labor movement, and interest groups. Among other contributions, APD scholarship has highlighted the importance of taking into account the historical contingency of research findings in American politics.

Rather than covering only a limited canon written by self-identified APD scholars, this course covers a range of topics bound by a unifying theme: the importance of long-term historical change in American political institutions and its consequences for our study of both institutions and behavior. Most weeks, we'll be reading one major book and a set of shorter works in the same literature. In Part I of the course, we’ll be examining the transformation of the United States from a “state of courts and parties” to one with powerful nonparty interest groups and strong, professionally staffed federal bureaucracies. In the course of studying institutional development, we will find that institutional changes are only sometimes explicable using functionalist arguments. In Part II, we will shift our attention to two major studies on the origins and development of American social policy and its “feedback effects” on politics. For Part III, we will shift our attention to two research topics selected for their contemporary relevance and recent scholarship, including the development of the national security state and the shifting norms in the measurement of public opinion.

Prerequisites

This course is intended for graduate students and select undergraduates. Completion of the graduate intro courses in institutions and behavior is recommended but not required. Advanced undergraduates with previous experience in historical and social science research are welcome to enroll in the class after consulting with the instructor.

Learning Goals

The goal of this course is to equip graduate students to study long-term changes in the American political system, to provide an opportunity for reading-intensive study of the major themes in the APD field, and to provide them with the tools to enrich their research drawing upon themes and methods developed in the APD literature. Students will come away from the course with a
clearer understanding of how their research relates to, and is contingent on, American political history. Students planning to take the American field exam or considering writing a dissertation exploring historical themes will find the course particularly valuable.

Requirements and Grading

The final course grade will be based on three components:
30% Quality of Class Participation
30% Three Response Papers (each worth 10% of grade)
40% Final Paper (Posted to site Dropbox by 5:00 p.m., June 10th.)

During the first week of the course, students will sign up to write three response papers of approximately 500-700 words each. These response papers should be posted to the class email list no later than 8 p.m. the day before our class meeting, and all students should read and be prepared to discuss their classmates’ contributions the following afternoon. These papers will be graded on the customary check/plus/minus scale.

Students will also be expected to write a 20-25 pp. research paper, due June 10 at 5 p.m. This paper should engage with one of the themes covered in the course. I encourage students to use this paper to develop their personal research agenda. The paper need not emulate the methods of historical comparative research and narrative commonly adopted in APD scholarship, but should deal with some topic related to institutional changes in American politics from 1865 to the present. A one-page prospectus outlining the research question and proposed sources of evidence is due at the beginning of class on May 1.

Thirty percent of the grade comes from class participation. Weekly attendance and informed participation is critical.

Students with Documented Disabilities

Students who may need an academic accommodation based on the impact of a disability must initiate the request with the Student Disability Resource Center (SDRC) located within the Office of Accessible Education (OAE). SDRC staff will evaluate the request with required documentation, recommend reasonable accommodations, and prepare an Accommodation Letter for faculty dated in the current quarter in which the request is being made. Students should contact the SDRC as soon as possible since timely notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. The OAE is located at 563 Salvatierra Walk (phone: 723-1066).

Required Books

These readings will be made available at the Campus Bookstore and at the Green Library reserve desk. Several of these books are widely available on the used-book market at a substantial discount from the cover price.


Course Schedule

Unless otherwise indicated, assigned books should be read in their entirety. This schedule may be modified during the course period, but the assignments listed below represent an upper bound on the volume of assigned readings.

PART I. Evolution of the American Political System

Week 1 (April 3) What is American Political Development?

Orren and Skowronek, Chapter 1. [Coursework]
Skocpol, “Bringing the State Back In”, in Skocpol and Rueschemeyer, eds. [Coursework]


Pierson, Politics in Time, Ch. 1, 2, 4.


**Week 2 (April 10) State-Building**

Richard Bensel, Yankee Leviathan, Ch. 1-2, 4. [Coursework]

Skowronek, Building a New American State Ch. 1-3. [Coursework]

Carpenter, The Forging of Bureaucratic Autonomy, Ch. 2-4. [Coursework]

James, Presidents, Parties, and the State Ch. 1-2. [Coursework]


**Week 3 (April 17) Congress**

Schickler, Disjointed Pluralism.

Mayhew, America’s Congress. Ch. 1-3 [Coursework]

Pierson, Politics in Time, Ch. 5. Reread/skim Ch. 4.

**Week 4 (April 24) Realignments and the Party System**


Mayhew, Electoral Realignments.


**Week 5 (May 1) Race and Reconstruction**

*Paper prospectus due at beginning of class.*


Rogers Smith and Desmond King, “Racial Orders and American Political Development.” *American Political Science Review.* [Coursework]


**Week 6 (May 8) Labor Unions and Interest Groups**

Clemens, *The People’s Lobby.*


Hattam, *Labor Visions and State Power: The Origins of Business Unionism in the United States.* Ch. 1, 2. [Coursework]

Katznelson, *City Trenches,* Ch. 1-3. [Coursework]

Frymer, *Black and Blue,* Ch. 1-3

**II. Social Policy**

**Week 7 (May 15) The Origins of American Social Policy**

Skocpol, *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers.* [Required Book]

Daniel Rodgers. *Atlantic Crossings,* Ch. 2, 6, 10. [Coursework]

Mettler, *Dividing Citizens,* Ch. 1-2, 5-6. [Required Book]

**Week 8 (May 22) Path Dependency and Policy Feedback**

III. Contemporary Topics in APD

Week 9 (May 29) American Imperialism and the National Security State

Skowronek, Building a New American State. Ch. 4.


Coffman, The Regulars. Ch. 1-3, 5, 8, 10. [Required Book]


Week 10 (June 5) The Changing Concept of “Public Opinion”

Susan Herbst, Numbered Voices.

Carpenter, Working Paper on Petitions [Coursework]


Taeku Lee, Mobilizing Public Opinion, Ch. 2-3. [Coursework]