

POLISCI 26N
American Transportation Politics
Autumn 2011
Syllabus

Meeting Times: T/Th, 11-12:15, Building 160 (Wallenberg Hall, Main Quad),
Room 322

Instructor: Clayton Nall

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| Syllabus Last Updated: | September 30, 2011 |

Course Overview:

Politics has been defined as “who gets what, when, and how.” In the process of resolving this question, the political process also decides who goes where, and how. Transportation policies govern where we live, work, and travel, with a range of consequences for society, politics, and the environment. This course will draw upon debates over the building of transportation projects to guide an exploration of major research themes in American politics. We’ll examine how transportation controversies from the 19th century canal era to the 21st century era of expressways, air travel, and high speed rail have cast into relief the major problems that shape decision making in a representative democracy.

Learning Objectives

In the context of a research project using historical archival data, students will learn how political scientists form hypotheses and test them using quantitative and non-quantitative data. Students will also learn how to approach contentious political debates with the goal of linking particular cases to broader phenomena that can be explored through the scientific method. In the process, students will learn to distinguish normative debates—those that center on what *ought* to be done—from debates over *why* certain decisions are made by

politicians and bureaucrats. Students should come away from the course with a general understanding of how political science research applies to real-world policy debates.

Grading:

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| Quality of Class Participation | 35% |
| Response Papers | 20% (5% each) |
| First Paper (Individual) (Due Nov. 8) | 20% |
| Second Paper (Due Dec. 6) | 25% |

Response Papers: Each student will write four short papers in response to the readings, each not to exceed 1.5 double-spaced pages. They are not intended to be a book report or summary of the assigned readings, but are an opportunity to contribute critical thinking on some aspect of the material. For example, you may choose to address how the different assigned readings speak to or contradict one another. You may want to identify weaknesses and strengths in the arguments and evidence presented. Finally, a response paper may identify questions that you felt were relevant to the week’s theme but that the assigned readings did not address. A different group of students will write response papers each week. (A signup sheet will be circulated on the second day of class.) The papers should be uploaded to the course website no later than 8 p.m. the night before we begin discussing a topic, and students will be asked to read their classmates’ papers ahead of time. These papers will be graded using the check system: ✓+ (4 pts. out of 4), ✓ (3.5 pts. of 4), or ✓- (3 pts. of 4). A signup sheet will be circulated on the second day of class.

Quality of Class Participation: We will spend two-and-a-half hours each week discussing the assigned readings. Therefore, 35% of the course grade will be based on quality of contributions to class discussion. Students not assigned to write a response paper in a particular week are expected to read their classmates’ response papers before class. Attendance is essential. Please let me know beforehand if you need to miss a class.

Short Research Papers: Students will use historical archives to systematically examine what motivated the construction of Interstate highways, and how the highways changed the social and economic geography of metropolitan areas. The first research paper, due in class November 15, will require individuals to write three or four pages outlining hypotheses about the construction of Interstate highways that could be tested using data generated from historical newspapers, and to describe how they would assemble the necessary data using the archival materials at their disposal. For the second paper (8-10 pp), due before

the beginning of class on December 6, students will work in groups of two or three students to compare two cases of urban freeway construction projects, using primary source data to test causal hypotheses related to themes discussed in the course. Each group will present its findings in a ten to fifteen minute presentation during the last week of class. More details on these projects and grading criteria will be provided in class in early to mid-October.

Prerequisites: The course has no prerequisites. Familiarity with American politics and current events will be helpful.

Late Work Policy: Research papers will be penalized by one-half grade for each day (or portion of a day) that they are late. Late response papers will be subject to the same half-grade penalty but will receive zero credit if submitted after the start of class.

Open Door Policy: My office door is usually open, and I'm often available for short conversations. I'm happy to talk about anything related to the course, the political science major, or other personal or academic concerns that come up during your first quarter at Stanford.

Writing Tutorial: I strongly encourage *all* students to use the resources available at the Hume Writing Center. You can set up an appointment online at http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/cgi-bin/drupal_pwr/hwc_appointments.

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 (650) 723-1066.

Readings: The following books are available for purchase at the Stanford Bookstore. Two copies of each volume will also be kept on reserve at Green Library.

Altshuler, Alan and David Luberoff. 2003. *Mega-Projects: The Changing Politics of Urban Public Investment*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings. ISBN: 0-8157-0129-2

Caro, Robert A. 1975. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. New

York: Vintage. ISBN: 978-0394720241

Dellinger, Matt. 2010. *Interstate 69: The Unfinished History of the Last Great American Highway*. New York: Scribner. ISBN: 978-1-4165-4249-0

Larson, John Lauritz. 2001. *Internal Improvement: National Public Works and the Promise of Popular Government in the Early United States*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. ISBN: 0-8078-4911-1

White, Richard. 2011. *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America*. New York: W.W. Norton. ISBN: 978-0-393-06126-0.

Other listed readings will be posted to the course website. In addition to the assigned course readings, I encourage students to read a major newspaper such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, or *Financial Times*. For those with a particularly keen interest in contemporary policy implications of our course discussions, I also recommend reading one of the major blogs on contemporary transportation politics and policy:

- <http://transportation.nationaljournal.com>. Offers brief commentary from policy scholars and lobbyists on pending transportation policy issues.
- <http://www.transportationissuesdaily.com>. Provides a useful digest of news and events in transportation.
- <http://www.infrastructurist.org>. A left-leaning discussion of contemporary transportation issues.
- Think tanks on the left and right, including Brookings, the Cato Institute, the Reason Foundation, and the Heritage Foundation, publish reports and papers on transportation issues.

Class Schedule

September 27

Introductions and introductory lecture. No readings.

September 29 & October 4: A Survey of American Transportation Challenges

Altshuler and Luberoff, pp. 8-18, 21-44. [Coursework]

Barnes, Fred. 2001. "The Way We Drive Now," *Weekly Standard*, 7 March. Online. http://www.weeklystandard.com/articles/way-we-drive-now_552546.html

Watch "American Experience: The World that Moses Built Parts 1 thru 5 (up to 7:00). [Coursework]

Caro, Ch. 36, pp. 837-849.

Lochhead, Carolyn. 2011. "Prospects Dim for Billions in High-Speed Rail Funding," *California Watch*, 24 July.
<http://bit.ly/naGfWs>

October 6: How the Constitution Impedes Big National Projects

Larson, Internal Improvement, Intro, Chapters 1-3 (pp. 9-108). [99 pp.]

October 11 *In-class library visit. Introduction to research using historical sources. Finalize research groups. Introduction to the research projects and research methods.*

October 13 & 18: Funding Public Works

Congressional Budget Office, "Spending and Funding for Highways" [Coursework]

Dellinger, pp. 185-219, 237-246.

Patashnik, Eric. 2000. *Putting Trust in the US Budget*, pp. 3-41 and pp. 115-137 [Library]

"Toll Roads and Free Roads" report (5 pp excerpt) [Coursework]

October 20: Policy Coalitions

Stein, Robert and Kenneth Bickers. 1995. *Perpetuating the Pork Barrel*. Chapters 1 & 4. [Coursework]

Caro, Ch. 33.

October 25 & 27: Distributive Politics

Evans, Diana. 1994. "Policy and Pork: The Use of Pork Barrel Projects to Build Policy Coalitions in the House of Representatives." *American Journal of Political Science* 38:4, 894-917 [Coursework]

Stein, Robert, and Kenneth Bickers. 1994. "Congressional Elections and the Pork Barrel," *Journal of Politics* 56:2, 377-399. [Coursework]

Hauk, Jr., William R. and Romain Wacziarg. 2007. "Small States, Big Pork." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 2:95-106. [Coursework]

Doyle, Michael. "House Highway Bill Leaves California Earmarks at the Curb," *Miami Herald*, 7 July. [Coursework]

"For a Senate Foe of Pork Barrel Spending, Two Bridges Too Far," *Washington Post*, 21 October 2005. [Coursework]

November 1 & 3 Delegation

Epstein, David and Sharyn O'Halloran. 1999. *Delegating Powers*, pp. 1-52. [Coursework]

Caro, Introduction(pp. 1-21), Chapters 8-10 (pp. 136-177), Ch. 28 (pp. 615-636)

November 8: Professional Expertise and Reputation

First research paper due.

Carpenter, Daniel P. "State Building through Reputation Building: Coalitions of Esteem and Program Innovation in the National Postal System, 1883-1913," *Studies in American Political Development* 14 (Fall 2000): 121-155. [Coursework]

Rose, Mark and Bruce Seely. 1990. "Getting the Interstate System Built: Road Engineers and the Implementation of Public Policy, 1955-1985," *Journal of Policy History* 2:1, 23-43. [Coursework]

November 10: Central Planning in American Transportation

Scott, James. 1999. *Seeing Like a State*, pp. 53-63, 103-117. [Coursework]

Mohl, Raymond. 2002. "The Interstates and the Cities: Highways, Housing, and the Freeway Revolt," PRRAC Research Report. [Coursework]

November 15 & 17: Local Responses to Central Planning

Caro, Chapters 37-38, pp. 850-894.

Dellinger, pp. 67-82.

Kagan, Robert. 2001. *Adversarial Legalism: The American Way of Law*, Chapters 1-2, 10 (pp 3-33, 207-228). [Coursework]

Aldrich, Daniel. 2005. *Site Fights: Divisive Facilities and Civil Society in Japan and the West*, Ch. 1, pp. 26-49. [Coursework]

November 22 & November 24 No class. Happy Thanksgiving!

November 29 & December 1: The Social, Economic, and Political Consequences of Transportation

Nall, Clayton. 2011. "Creating Republican Suburbs." Working Paper. [Coursework]

White, Chapters 4 & 11 (pp. 140-178, 455-493).

December 6 & 8: Do Transportation Decisions Bind Future Policy Makers?

Second research paper due Dec. 6. Class presentations December 6 and 8. December 8 is last day of class.

Caro, Ch. 40, "Point of No Return," pp. 920-958.

Exchange of Letters Between John Bragdon and Bertram Tallamy, 1959. [Coursework]

Mohl, Raymond. 2008. "The Interstates and the Cities: The U.S. Department of Transportation and the Freeway Revolt, 1966-1973," *Journal of Policy History* 20:2, pp. 193-226. [Coursework]

Pierson, Paul. 2000. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94:2, 251-267. [Coursework]