

PPD 699:  
New Directions in Political Institutions and Political Economy

Fall 2019  
Thursdays, 2 pm  
RGL 304

Professor Jeffery A. Jenkins  
Email: [jjenkins@usc.edu](mailto:jjenkins@usc.edu)  
Office: RGL 201A  
Phone: (213) 821-4717

Office hours: Thursday 1-2 pm or by appointment

This seminar provides a survey of recent research in the fields of American Political Institutions and Political Economy. *Political institutions* usually refer to systems of politics and government, or structures of voluntary cooperation that resolve collective action problems in society. *Political economy* most commonly refers to interdisciplinary studies that draw upon economics, political science, and law to explain how political institutions, the political environment, and the economic system influence each other.

We will combine the two fields in the following way: we will take a “political economy” approach to the study of American Political Institutions. That is, we will follow the definition and description provided by Wittman and Weingast (2006): “political economy is the methodology of economics applied to the analysis of political behavior and institutions. As such, it is not a single, unified approach, but a family of approaches. Because institutions are no longer ignored, but instead are often the subject matter of the investigation, this approach incorporates many of the issues of concern to political sociologists. Because political behavior and institutions are themselves a subject of study, politics also becomes the subject of political economy. All of this is tied together by a set of methodologies, typically associated with economics, but now part and parcel of political science itself. The unit of analysis is typically the individual. The individual is motivated to achieve goals (usually preference maximization), the theory is based in mathematics (often game theoretic), and the empirics either use sophisticated statistical techniques or involve experiments.”<sup>1</sup>

A political-economic approach is often also called “rational choice.” And when applied specifically to the study of institutions, it is sometimes called “the new institutionalism.”

Finally, the political-economic research we focus on will involve a strong policy component, or be applied to important policy problems. In a number of readings, we will also analyze political-economic decision-making and outcomes historically. A strong sense of history is important for understanding the development of institutions and policies, given the path-dependent nature of such phenomena.

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<sup>1</sup> Weingast, Barry R., and Donald A. Wittman. 2006. “The Reach of Political Economy.” In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Economy*, eds., Barry R. Weingast and Donald A. Wittman. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pages 3-4.

## Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites for this class, although it is intended as a useful follow-up to PPD 715 – and thus would be ideal for second-year PhD students. First-year students who are currently enrolled in a statistics (econometrics) course should be able to follow the reading and contribute to class discussion. The readings themselves will involve applications of common research designs and econometric methods in the political science and economics literatures.

## Course Requirements

There are several requirements for this class:

(1) You must come to class prepared, which means that you have done *all* of the week's readings in advance. You are also expected to participate in class discussion. Participation is what makes a seminar a useful learning experience – you learn as much from the in-class discussion as you do from the readings themselves. Moreover, given that this is your chosen vocation, you should take an active role in fostering your own professional development.

(2) My role each week will be that of a moderator, providing background context and steering the discussion in various directions. I won't identify weekly "discussion leaders." Rather, each student must contribute to in-class discussion and should expect to be called on for input.

(3) The course grade will be a function of three short essays (30%), class participation (20%), and a final paper (50%). The goal of the short essays will be to analyze and critique a given week's readings individually or collectively. The critique should involve thoughts on the series of decisions made by the author(s) with regard to the research in question: theory, hypotheses, empirical research design, data, and estimation. Each essay will be due *before* the class meets to discuss that particular week's readings. Finally, the timing and specifics for the final paper option will be discussed in class. The ideal final paper will be one that could be – with some revisions – sent out for publication consideration to a journal. However, given the particular topic area, more narrow papers are possible; for example, ones that focus on a novel and creative research design (where the data has not yet been collected).

## Learning Objectives

The goal of this course is to cover the state-of-the-art readings in political institutions and political economy (PIPE). For students interested in academic careers, the objective is to analyze recent top-level publications in PIPE and assess the decisions the author(s) made in a number of topic areas: theory, hypotheses, empirical research design, data, and estimation. Understanding how research is put together – from start to finish – is a crucial learning objective for any would-be academic. In the course of these assessments, students will learn that a range of decisions (by the researcher) have to be made along the way, based on a range of assumptions, all of which can be critiqued. In pursuing such an assessment, students will learn – among other things – that no research is perfect or immune to criticism, even those studies done by the very best scholars. This realization should offer students encouragement and (hopefully) make it easier for them to do their own research.

## Course Materials

Most weeks, we will read one book and one journal article. A student should be able to complete these readings in a single workday. Most of the journal articles are available electronically, usually at JSTOR or the journal's webpage (for more recent publications). For those articles that are not available electronically, I will provide electronic copies, which will be sent to you roughly a week before such readings are covered in class.

We will be reading the following 14 books:

- Bateman, David A., Ira Katznelson, and John S. Lapinski. 2018. *Southern Nation: Congress and White Supremacy after Reconstruction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Burbank, Stephen B., and Sean Farhang. 2017. *Rights and Retrenchment: The Counterrevolution against Federal Legislation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, Tom S. 2019. *The Supreme Court: An Analytic History of Constitutional Decision Making*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hertel-Fernandez, Alexander. 2019. *State Capture: How Conservative Activists, Big Businesses, and Wealthy Donors Reshaped the American States – and the Nation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hopkins, Daniel J. 2018. *The Increasingly United States: Why American Political Behavior Nationalized*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Howell, William G., and Terry M. Moe. 2016. *Relic: How Our Constitution Undermines Effective Government – and Why We Need a More Powerful President*. New York: Basic Books.
- McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2013. *Political Bubbles: Financial Crises and the Failure of American Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Miller, Gary J., and Andrew B. Whitford. 2016. *Above Politics: Bureaucratic Discretion and Credible Commitment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Ogorzalek, Thomas K. 2018. *The Cities on the Hill: How Urban Institutions Transformed National Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Potter, Rachel Augustine. 2019. *Bending the Rules: Procedural Politicking in the Bureaucracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Teele, Dawn Langdon. 2018. *Forging the Franchise: The Political Origins of the Women's Vote*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Thurston, Chloe. 2018. *At the Boundaries of Homeownership: Credit, Discrimination, and the American State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Troesken, Werner. 2015. *The Pox of Liberty: How the Constitution Left Americans Rich, Free, and Prone to Infection*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trounstine, Jessica. 2018. *Segregation by Design: Local Politics and Inequality in American Cities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In addition, the following book is recommended for a basic introduction to rational choice and the new institutionalism:

Shepsle, Kenneth. 2010. *Analyzing Politics: Rationality, Behavior, and Institutions*, Second Edition. New York: Norton.

Below is a week-by-week list of required reading assignments:

Week 1 (August 28): Course Overview and Discussion of the Syllabus

Week 2 (September 4): American Political Development I

David A. Bateman, Ira Katznelson, and John S. Lapinski. 2018. *Southern Nation*. All.

Daniel B. Jones, Werner Troesken, and Randall Walsh. 2017. "Political Participation in a Violent Society: The Impact of Lynching on Voter Turnout in the Post-Reconstruction South." *Journal of Development Economics* 129: 29-46.

Avidit Acharya, Matthew Blackwell, and Maya Sen. 2016. "The Political Legacy of American Slavery." *Journal of Politics* 78: 621-41.

Week 3 (September 11): American Political Development II

Dawn Langdon Teele. 2018. *Forging the Franchise*. All.

John R. Lott, Jr. and Lawrence W. Kenny. 1999. "Did Women's Suffrage Change the Size and Scope of Government?" *Journal of Political Economy* 107: 1163-98.

Week 4 (September 18): The Courts I

Tom S. Clark. 2019. *The Supreme Court*. All.

Howard Gillman. 2002. "How Political Parties Can Use the Courts to Advance Their Agendas: Federal Courts in the United States, 1875-1891." *American Political Science Review* 96: 511-24.

Week 5 (September 25): The Courts II

Stephen B. Burbank and Sean Farhang. 2017. *Rights and Retrenchment*. All.

Jeb Barnes. 2017. "The Politics of Litigation." Working paper.  
[https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3037991](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3037991)

Week 6 (October 2): The Bureaucracy I

Rachel Augustine Potter. 2019. *Bending the Rules*. All.

Jennifer Nou. 2015. "Intra-Agency Coordination." *Harvard Law Review* 129: 421-90.

Week 7 (October 9): The Bureaucracy II

Gary J. Miller and Andrew B. Whitford. 2016. *Above Politics*. All.

Alex Acs. 2019. "Congress and Administrative Policymaking: Identifying Congressional Veto Power." *American Journal of Political Science* 69: 513-29.

Week 8 (October 16): Business and Politics I

Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2013. *Political Bubbles*. All.

Adam Bonica, Nolan McCarty, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2013. "Why Hasn't Democracy Slowed Rising Inequality?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 27: 103-24.

Week 9 (October 23): Business and Politics II

Alexander Hertel-Fernandez. 2019. *State Capture*. All.

Sarah F. Anzia and Terry M. Moe. 2016. "Do Politicians Use Policy to Make Politics? The Case of Public-Sector Labor Laws." *American Political Science Review* 110: 763-77.

Week 10 (October 30): The Nationalization of Politics I

Daniel J. Hopkins. 2018. *The Increasingly United States*. All.

Gregory J. Martin and Joshua McCrain. 2019. "Local News and National Politics." *American Political Science Review* 113: 372-84.

Week 11 (November 6): The Nationalization of Politics II

Thomas K. Ogorzalek. 2018. *The Cities on the Hill*. All.

Clayton Nall. 2010. "The Political Consequences of Spatial Policies: How Interstate Highways Caused Greater Geographic Polarization." *Journal of Politics* 77: 394-406.

Week 12 (November 13): Inequality I

Jessica Trounstine. 2018. *Segregation by Design*. All

Werner Troesken and Randall Walsh. 2019. "Collective Action, White Flight, and the Origins of Formal Segregation Laws." *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 35: 289-318.

Week 13 (November 20): Inequality II

Chloe Thurston. 2018. *At the Boundaries of Homeownership*. All.

William Marble and Clayton Nall. 2019. "Where Self-Interest Trumps Ideology: Liberal Homeowners and Local Opposition to Housing Development." Working paper. [https://www.dropbox.com/s/0cpefxjmqhrgkqg/interest\\_3\\_5.pdf?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/0cpefxjmqhrgkqg/interest_3_5.pdf?dl=0)

Week 14 (November 27): Thanksgiving

No Class

Week 15 (December 4): The Constitution

Werner Troesken. 2015. *The Pox of Liberty*. All.

William Howell and Terry Moe. 2016. *Relic*. All