POLITICAL SCIENCE 275:  
SEMINAR IN AMERICAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS  

Political Parties and American Institutional Development, 1789-1860

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Course Overview

I envision this course to be primarily a research seminar. Although you will be exposed to a little theory and some analytics, I assume that you come to this class already equipped with a good background in political science and American politics. My intention is to provide you an environment in which you can put what you know to work, by exposing you broadly to some of the “raw” history, research questions, and data analytic approaches of in a particular field of inquiry (in this case, the period of American politics prior to the Civil War (“ante-bellum”). The centerpiece of the course is a set of readings on the formation and development of antebellum political parties as electoral and governing organizations. But I have tried to cast the readings widely, to include such topics as third parties, House and Senate institutional development (the committee system, legislative rules of procedure, elite careerism and political ambition) and political culture.

The main objective is to move you toward the identification of a research question, one which will allow you to craft an original and professional piece of scholarly writing. In seminar, the emphasis will be on the creative task of identifying research questions, linking these questions to “live” debates in political science, and sorting out how one might get at these questions — the kinds of evidence and the kinds of techniques required to get at these questions in an effective manner. Classroom participation will account for 40% of your final grade. The other 60% is attached to your research project. Specifically, you will be asked to a paper, approximately 20-25 pages in length, which identifies a significant research question, frames an appropriate debate, identifies an appropriate method and set of empirical materials, and develops (at a minimum) a preliminary line of analysis. As a part of the exercise, you will also identify a specific journal in which you would like to see your paper published, following all of the guidelines required for submissions. By the end of the quarter, (or the end of summer, if you prefer), I hope you will at least be part of the way to writing one of your field papers. And at best, you may have something you would like to submit somewhere for publication.

Week 1: Introduction

No readings assigned.

Week 2: A Little Theory and Some Analytics


Martin Shefter, Political Parties and the State, pp. 3-60.


**Week 3: Elites, Ambition, and Political Careerism in the Nineteenth Century**


**Week 4: Anti-Partyism, Political Culture, and the Idea of Political Parties**


**Week 5: Jeffersonian Party Formation**


John F. Hoadley, “The Emergence of Political Parties in Congress, 1789-1803.” *The American

**Week 6: Issues of Governance in the First Party System**

Jeffery A. Jenkins and Charles Stewart III. “Order from Chaos: The Transformation of the Committee System in the House, 1810-1822” (ms.)


**Week 7: Democratic Party Formation and Development**


Robert Remini, *The Election of Andrew Jackson*


**Week 8: The Whig Party and Antebellum Third Parties**


**Week 9: Issues of Governance in the Second Party System**


David Canon and Charles Stewart III, “The Development of the Senate Committee System, 1789-1879” (ms.)
Douglas Dion, *Turning the Legislative Thumbscrew*, chapter on Jacksonian House rules.

Silbey, Joel H., *The Shrine of Party; Congressional Voting Behavior, 1841-1852*, (one or two chs.)

**Week 10: Republican Party Formation**


One of the following three books (to be determined by availability):

- William Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856*
- Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s*
- Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men*