POLI 223: Judicial Politics  
(Spring 2015)

Course Description:

This course provides a PhD-level overview of the scientific study of political representation and its connection to elections and electoral institutions. Though technically categorized as an “institutions” course, this seminar will consider both individual and aggregate-level perspectives on representation and thus contains a significant “behavior” component.

Intended Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs):

At the end of this course, students should:

1. Have a thorough understanding of empirical theories of political representation and efforts to test these theories (corresponds with PLO 1/2)  
2. Demonstrate the ability to use social scientific tools to conduct research on political representation (corresponds with PLOs 3, 4, and 5)

General Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for the Political Science Ph.D. Program:

1. A comprehensive graduate-level understanding of processes, theories, and empirical regularities in the student’s major area of emphasis (Political Institutions and Political Economy or Political Cognition and Behavior).  
2. A graduate-level understanding of processes, theories, and empirical regularities in the student’s minor area of emphasis (Political Institutions and Political Economy or Political Cognition and Behavior).  
3. Competency with contemporary social science methods used to conduct rigorous research on political phenomena.  
4. Effective scientific communication skills, especially the ability to convey complex concepts and information in a clear and concise manner.  
5. The ability to initiate and conduct independent research that makes an original contribution to political science knowledge of a quality that can be published in a peer reviewed outlet.

Requirements:

(1) Prior to class, you must read all of the required readings for the week. You are then expected to discuss your insights, criticisms, and questions with the rest of the group when we meet. This course does not follow a lecture format! The success of the seminar depends upon your participation. The quantity and quality of your weekly participation will constitute 40% of your grade for the course.

(2) Each week, you are to formulate one question, one criticism, and one hypothesis based on the readings. I only expect a few sentences here, but please make them thoughtful. Please email these to me at least 12 hours before we are scheduled to meet. 10% of your grade will be based on the quality of these weekly emails.
You will write an original research paper in which you identify an interesting research question, review the relevant literature, provide your theoretical answer to the question you pose, and test your theoretical expectations by utilizing an appropriate research design and suitable data. Your paper should be article length (i.e., 15-20 pages) and should be of sufficient quality that it could be presented at a political science conference and, perhaps after revisions, published in a peer-reviewed journal. If you like, you may collaborate (i.e., coauthor) with another student when researching and writing this paper. I require that you meet with me to talk with me about your paper topic by the fourth week of the semester. Your paper will represent 40% of your course grade.

Students will present their papers at the end of the semester. We will emulate a conference setting, which means that each of you will get approximately 10 minutes to present your paper. I will act as the discussant and other faculty may be present to ask questions. Your presentation will be worth 10% of your course grade.

Class Schedule:

1/22: Staffing the Courts

Required:


Recommended:


1/29: **Judicial Agendas**

*Required:*


Recommended:


2/5: Deciding Cases - Preferences and Case Facts

Required:


**Recommended:**


**2/12: Deciding Cases - Legal Influences**

**Required:**


Recommended:


2/19: Making Law – Bargaining and Strategy

Required:


Recommended:


2/26: Making Law – Creation and Evolution of Legal Doctrine

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


3/5:  The Institutional Development of the Judiciary

Required:


Recommended:


3/19:  Organized Interests and the Court

Required:


Recommended:


4/2: **Does the Court Follow Public Opinion?**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


4/9: **Public Perceptions of Courts and Court Decisions**

*Required:*


**Recommended:**


**4/16: A Separation of Powers?**

*Required:*


Recommended:


**4/23: The Judicial Hierarchy**

**Required:**


Recommended:


4/30: Implementation and Impact of Court Decisions

Required:


**Recommended:**


5/7: Presentations

Additional Topics

**Issue/Case Salience**


**Law Clerks**


Oral Argument and Reargument


Media Coverage of Court Decisions

Slotnick, Elliot E., and Jennifer A. Segal. 1998. Television News and the Supreme Court: All the News that’s Fit to Air? New York: Cambridge University Press.


Litigants and Lawyers


**Race, Gender, and Judicial Decision Making**

