This course provides a general introduction to the field of American Politics. It is structured as a “survey” course, providing an overview of the classic works and the more important contemporary pieces in the major subfields of American Politics. Thus, given finite time and vast literatures, emphasis will be placed on breadth over depth, so that once the course is completed, students will have a basic working knowledge of all aspects of the field.

Students are expected to come to class each week prepared to discuss all of the assigned readings. Four short essays will be required, which will summarize, analyze, and critique a given week’s readings both individually and collectively. Each essay will be due before the class meets to discuss that particular week’s readings. Finally, a take-home final exam will be handed out on Wednesday, April 24, which will be due at 5 p.m. the following week, Wednesday, May 1. Exams may be given to me directly or placed in my mailbox (303 South Kedzie Hall).

The course grade will be determined as follows: short essays (40%), class participation (30%), and final exam (30%).

**January 8: Course Introduction**

**January 15: Political Participation**


January 22: Ideology, Political Knowledge, and Public Opinion


January 29: No Class
February 5: Voting Behavior: Seminal Works


V.O. Key, Jr., *The Responsible Electorate* (1966), Chapters 1-2.


February 12: Voting Behavior: Long-Term Factors

Party ID


Incumbency


Economics


**February 19: Voting Behavior: Immediate Factors**

**Issues**


**The Media**


**Campaign Effects and Candidate Evaluations**


**February 26: Congress: Representation & The Electoral Connection**


**March 5: No Class (Spring Break)**

**March 12: Congress: Legislative Organization**


March 19: Political Parties


March 26: Critical Elections and Partisan Realignment


April 2: The Presidency


April 9: The Bureaucracy

William Niskanen, *Bureaucracy and Representative Government* (1971), Chapters


April 16: Interest Groups
Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action (1965), Sections I and II.


April 23: The Supreme Court and Policymaking


Jeffrey A. Segal and Harold J. Spaeth, The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model (1993), Chapters


Lee Epstein and Jack Knight, The Choices Justices Make (1998), Chapters