

Guidelines for Comprehensive Exams in American Politics
Department of Political Science
The Pennsylvania State University
September 2003

The American Politics comprehensive exam consists of two parts. All students sit for the first part, which is based on the core reading list provided below. Students majoring in American politics also sit for the second part of the exam (minors take only the first part). In the second part of the exam, majors select 3 topic areas on which to be examined from the list below. At least one of the topics must be from institutions and one from behavior. Students should inform the subfield examiners of their specialized topics at the beginning of the semester before they take their exams. That is, if a student is taking the exam in May, subfield examiners should be notified of the specialized topic areas in January.

The reading list for the specialized topics consists of the syllabus for the graduate seminar on that topic taught in the Department most recently before the student takes the exam. (That is, if a student takes an exam in January when a course is being offered, he/she need not complete that syllabus, but rather the previous one.) Our list of fields is therefore constrained by the list of topics on which advanced courses have been taught in recent years. As of Fall 2003, this list is as follows.

List of specialized topics for the major exam:

Institutions:

Political Parties
Interest Groups
Congress
State and Local Politics
Agenda-Setting

Behavior:

Public Opinion
Voting and Elections

The list below constitutes the core for all students. Readings have been chosen to include, where possible, works that provide comprehensive or especially helpful reviews of the literature, especially classic works, and these classic works have not always been assigned on their own. As in studying for any comprehensive exam, students should make an effort to develop an understanding of the chronology of development of the literature. While the list below represents a core, the best answers are likely to include reference to classics that go beyond what is apparent from secondary treatments of them as well as reference to the most important recent works on the topic that may have been published in the past year and therefore not reflected in the reading list or syllabi. Students may also find it helpful, in developing a feel for the development over time of the literature to consult references edited works such as Finifter's *State of the Discipline*, Crotty's *Political Science: Looking to the Future*, or other similar handbooks encyclopedias, and sources of critical literature reviews.

American Politics

Core Reading List

Note: the readings below represent a set of core readings across many areas of American politics. Any student sitting for an exam in American politics should be familiar with these readings, at a minimum. The best exams will go beyond these readings in discussing classics not included here (but clear from the literature reviews that are included here) as well as the most recent research in any particular area. The list is divided, for convenience, into fields which are by necessity somewhat arbitrary at their margins. No work is listed in more than one field in the list below.

Fundamentals:

1. The *Constitution* of the United States, with amendments. Any edition.
2. Hamilton, Alexander, et al., *The Federalist Papers*. Any edition.
3. Dahl, Robert A. 1956. *A Preface to Democratic Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
4. Storing, Herbert J., and Murray Dry. 1981. *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Elections and Behavior:

5. Niemi, Richard, and Herbert Weisberg. 1993. *Classics in American Voting Behavior*. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.
6. Brady, Henry E., Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation. *American Political Science Review* 89 (June): 271–94.
7. Miller, Warren E. and J. Merrill Shanks. 1996. *The New American Voter*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
8. Niemi, Richard, and Herbert Weisberg. 2001. *Controversies in American Voting Behavior*. 4th ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press. Previous editions also acceptable.
9. McDonald, Michael P. and Samuel Popkin. 2001. The Myth of the Vanishing Voter. *American Political Science Review* 95 (December): 963–74.
10. Erikson, Robert S., Michael B. MacKuen, and James A. Stimson. 2002. *The Macro Polity*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Public Opinion:

11. Converse, Philip E. 1964. The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics. In David E. Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: Free Press.
12. Inglehart, Ronald. 1985. Aggregate Stability and Individual-Level Flux in Mass Belief Systems: The Level of Analysis Paradox. *American Political Science Review* 79 (March): 97–116.
13. Carmines, Edward G. and James A. Stimson. 1989. *Issue Evolution: Race and the Transformation of American Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

14. Popkin, Samuel L. 1991. *The Reasoning Voter*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
15. Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Y. Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in American's Policy Preferences*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
16. Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
17. Huckfeldt, Robert, and John Sprague. 1995. *Citizens, Politics and Social Communication*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
18. Alvarez, R. Michael, and John Brehm. 2002. *Hard Choices, Easy Answers: Values, Information, and American Public Opinion*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Parties:

19. APSA Committee on Political Parties. 1950. *Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System*. New York: Rinehart. [Also published in *American Political Science Review*.]
20. Key, V.O. Jr., 1955. A Theory of Critical Elections. *Journal of Politics* 17 (1): 3–18.
21. Sundquist, James L. 1983. *Dynamics of the Party System: Alignment and Realignment of Political Parties in the United States*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings.
22. Aldrich, John H. 1995. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Interest Groups:

23. Olson, Mancur. 1965. *The Logic of Collective Action*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
24. Hecl, Hugh. 1978. Issue Networks and the Executive Branch. In Anthony King, ed., *The New American Political System*. Washington: American Enterprise Institute.
25. Hall, Richard L., and Frank W. Wayman. 1990. Buying Time: Moneyed Interests and the Mobilization of Bias in Congressional Committees. *American Political Science Review* 84: 797–820.
26. Salisbury, Robert H., John P. Heinz, Edward O. Laumann, and Robert L. Nelson. 1987. Who Works With Whom? Interest Group Alliances and Opposition. *American Political Science Review* 81: 1211–34.
27. Hansen, John Mark. 1991. *Gaining Access: Congress and the Farm Lobby, 1919–1981*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
28. Baumgartner, Frank R. and Beth L. Leech. 1998. *Basic Interests: The Importance of Groups in Politics and in Political Science*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Courts:

29. Segal, Jeffrey A. and Harold J. Spaeth. 1994. Symposium: The Supreme Court and the Attitudinal Model. *Law and Courts* 4: 3–12.
30. Mishler, William and Reginald S. Sheehan. 1993. The Supreme Court as a Countermajoritarian Institution? The Impact of Public Opinion on Supreme Court Decisions. *American Political Science Review* 87: 87–101.
31. Baum, Lawrence. 1997. *The Puzzle of Judicial Behavior*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Presidency:

32. Neustadt, Richard E. 1991. *Presidential Power*. New York: Free Press. (any edition is acceptable).
33. Edwards, George C., John H. Kessel, and Bert A. Rockman (eds). 1993. *Researching the Presidency: Vital Questions, New Approaches*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
34. Skowronek, Steven. 2000. Presidential Leadership in Political Time. In Michael Nelson, ed., *The Presidency and the Political System*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Bureaucracy:

35. Moe, Terry. 1985. "Control and Feedback in Economic Regulation: The Case of the NLRB" *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 79, No. 4. (December), pp. 1094-1116.
36. McCubbins, Matthew, Roger Noll, and Barry Weingast. 1987. Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 3 (Fall): 243–77.
37. Moe, Terry and William Howell. 1999. The Presidential Power of Unilateral Action. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 15 (1): 132–79.
38. Carpenter, Daniel P. 2002. Groups, the Media, Agency Waiting Costs, and FDA Drug Approval. *American Journal of Political Science*. 46: 490–505.

Agenda-Setting:

39. Schattschneider, E. E. 1960. *The Semi-Sovereign People*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
40. Bachrach, Peter and Morton Baratz. 1962. The Two Faces of Power. *American Political Science Review* 56: 947–52.
41. Baumgartner, Frank R., and Bryan D. Jones. 1993. *Agendas and Instability in American Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
42. Kingdon, John W. 1995. *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*. 2d. ed. New York: HarperCollins.

Congress:

43. Fenno, Richard. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in their Districts*. Boston: Little, Brown.
44. Kingdon, John W. 1981. *Congressmen's Voting Decisions*, 2nd edition. New York: Harper and Row.
45. Krehbiel, Keith. 1991. *Information and Legislative Organization*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
46. Mayhew, David R. 1991. *Divided We Govern*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
47. Hall, Richard L. 1996. *Participation in Congress*. New Haven, Conn. Yale University Press.
48. Krehbiel, Keith. 1998. *Pivotal Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
49. Jacobson, Gary C. 2000. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. 5th ed. New York: Addison-Wesley.

State, Local, and Urban Politics:

50. Walker, Jack L., Jr. 1966. The Diffusion of Innovations among the American States. *American Political Science Review* 63 (3): 880–99.
51. Peterson, Paul. 1981. *City Limits*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
52. Katznelson, Ira. 1982. *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
53. Stone, Clarence. 1989. *Regime Politics: Governing Atlanta*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
54. Berry, William D., and Frances Stokes Berry. 1990. State Lottery Adoptions as Policy Innovations: An Event History Analysis. *American Political Science Review* 84 (2): 397–415.
55. Erikson, Robert S, Gerald C. Wright and John P. McIver. 1993. *Statehouse Democracy: Public Opinion and Policy in the American States*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
56. Berry, Jeffrey M., Kent E. Portney, and Ken Thomson. 1993. *The Rebirth of Urban Democracy*. Washington, DC: Brookings.
57. Gray, Virginia and David Lowery. 2001. *The Population Ecology of Interest Representation: Lobbying Communities in the American States*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press

Race:

58. Barker, Lucius J. 1994. Limits of Political Strategy: A Systemic View of the African American Experience. *American Political Science Review* 88 (March): 1–13.
59. Welch, Susan. 1990. The Impact of At-Large Elections on the Representation of Blacks and Hispanics. *Journal of Politics*. 52(4): 1050–76.
60. Canon, David T. 1999. *Race, Redistricting, and Representation: The Unintended Consequences of Black Majority Districts*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
61. Schram, Sanford F., Joe Soss, and Richard Fording, eds. 2003. *Race and the Politics of Welfare Reform*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Gender:

62. Thomas, Sue. 1994. *How Women Legislate*. New York: Oxford University Press.
63. Manza, Jeff and Clem Brooks. 1995. The Gender Gap in U.S. Presidential Elections: When? Why? Implications? *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (Mar.): 1235–66.
64. Wolbrecht, Christina. 2000. *The Politics of Women's Rights: Parties, Positions, and Change*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
65. Swers, Michelle. 2002. *The Difference Women Make: The Policy Impact of Women in Congress*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.