This course is designed to introduce graduate students to the basic research literature in American National Institutions. We will read widely about the design and functioning of the institutions of politics: Congress, the Courts, the Executive, Interest Groups and Parties, as well as on other topics. Readings will be extensive, and will include both classics and current research monographs. Assignments will focus on writing critical reviews and reactions during the term and on a major term paper addressing a specific element of the research literature at the end of the term. Class participation will be an essential part of the course--students will be expected to come to class with questions about the readings and with answers to the questions that others pose. I will distribute questions each week concerning the readings for the following week, and each student will write a short paper every other week based on one of these questions. In addition, these questions will serve as the agenda for our discussions. Given this format, it is essential that you read with these questions in mind and that you come to class prepared to explore the readings in detail.

The course will introduce students not only to many of the classic and current readings across a broad range of national political institutions, but it should serve the purpose of honing your critical and methodological skills as well. Discussions will focus on questions of research methodology, how another author could improve on the state of the art in the area, and on exploring the relative merits of alternative research approaches. Students should leave the course with an introduction to a range of topics of research in American institutions as well as with a reaction to a variety of research designs. Students should be able to design an appropriate research project addressing a recognizable gap in the literature in their term papers.

Course Requirements:

?? Seven (7) short papers (five pages double-spaced maximum). These papers are due on Tuesdays at noon, the day before the class during which we discuss the readings in question. The papers should respond to one or more of the questions distributed in class during the previous week. These papers and the questions on which they are based will also serve as the agenda for class discussion. Together, these 7 papers will make up 40% of your grade. Late papers are not accepted.

?? One term paper, due on May 1, 2000 at noon. This should be an article-length treatment (25-35 pages, double spaced). The paper should address a major gap in the literature, evaluate the research strategies that have been used, and improve on them either with a proposal or an empirical project. You should start early on your paper
and discuss the topic with me several times throughout the semester. The term paper counts for 40% of your grade.

?? Class participation and discussion. This is an important part of any graduate seminar. It will count for 20% of your grade. Note that you cannot get an A in this class with a poor grade in participation.

Books for purchase:


Weekly Assignments

   ?? APSA Style Manual. (Read this any time and use it in all your courses.)
   ?? Federalist Papers # 1, 6, 10, 23, 30, 39, 46, 47, 48, 51

2. January 19. Pluralism and a dispute

3. January 26. Agenda-setting, randomness, leadership, and control

4. February 2. Approaches to research on the Presidency

5. February 9. Parties in Government

6. February 16. Congressional organization and the committee system


7. **February 23. Party government in Congress**


8. **March 1. Congressional activity, not just voting**


**Spring Break, March 6-10**

9. **March 15. Fundamentals about the bureaucracy and budgeting**


10. **March 22. The role of the courts**


11. **March 29. Studying the states**

?? Key, V.O. 1949. *Southern Politics in State and Nation*. Read Chs. 1 and 14; skim one or two states.


12. April 5. Analyzing the literature on groups

13. April 12. Current research on lobbying
?? NSF Proposal and other materials to be distributed.

14. April 19 Last day of class. (Midwest Political Science Association meetings next week)
?? Discussion and presentation of term paper projects

Term papers due in my box, May 1, 2000 noon.