

Government 98hk

The Early Development of American Political Institutions and Organizations: Constitutions, Legislatures, Elections and Movements, 1650-1860

Harvard University Junior Seminar
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All Seminar Meetings: Tuesday, 2-4PM, CGIS S-040

Office hours (Thursdays 10:00AM-noon) and all student meetings:
Center for American Political Studies Conference Room, Knafel Building

Course Description: A theoretically informed review of the development of political institutions and political organizations from colonial North America to the coming of the Civil War. The forging of the Constitution, the emergence of the two-party system, the rise of congressional committees, the emergence of a national postal system and the patronage regime, abolitionism and new social movements, and the creation of new statutory rights to vote will be studied using three theoretical approaches -- rational choice, historical institutionalism, and cultural theory.

Institutions are the formal and informal structures that shape our policy and our political experience. This course surveys the historical evolution of several forms of American political institutions and organizations – associations and the party system, Congress, and the bureaucratic state. We will cover the period from the colonial period of North America to the Civil War, or 1650-1860, roughly speaking. Throughout the semester we will attempt to answer several core questions concerning American political institutions. What are institutions and how do they shape our political life? How did we get the institutions we have today -- the two party system, the congressional seniority system, interest groups, the welfare state, the regulatory state? How can we account for institutional change? And how can attention to the history of American political institutions help us to understand the dilemmas now facing the American political system?

To address these questions we will study closely important facets of the three institutions listed above. Among other things, we will ask how changing party structures led to voting realignments, we will trace the rise of the committee structures in Congress, and we will gauge the implications of patronage for the operation of the federal bureaucracy. In other words, we will study "institutions within institutions."

In discussion, we will also consider three approaches to the study of American political institutions and their evolution. The first, the *rational-choice* or *transactions-cost approach*, argues that institutions develop and change in response to changing preferences and patterns of transactions in American society at any given time, and that institutional change is driven by efficiency considerations. The second approach, the *historical institutionalist approach*, points to the fundamental impact of historical sequence and timing as a driving force in the emergence of new institutions and institutional forms. The final approach we will consider is a *critical-theoretical approach* which asks whether American political institutions can be seen as subordinating schemes which divide and repress people along lines of class, race and gender. In this vein, we will consider feminist, Marxist and race-centered analyses of the institutions of American politics. An important part of the course will be our cooperative assessment of the strengths and limitations of these approaches in light of the historical development of American institutions. We will also consider “hybrid” approaches that mix the three types just mentioned.

Format:

After one week in which we conduct a cursory historical overview of institutional development and consider some alternative approaches to the study of institutions and institutional change, we launch into the study of developments in various political institutions and organizations over four time periods – the period from Native-European contact to the American Revolution, the period from the Founding to the 1800 election, 1800 to the election of Andrew Jackson (the “First Party System”) and the so-called Second Party System (1828-1860). We do not separate the periods entirely, but it is safe to say that for each period, we will spend a week or two each on the party system or electoral institutions, Congress, and the bureaucratic state. We will then consider the importance of transformations in these institutions for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and beyond.

In addition to numerous secondary readings, we will also be reading a good bit of “primary source” material, primarily from the Davis and Mintz reader. These readings are also required and it is expected that you will be prepared to discuss them in class sessions.

Requirements: *Students should read all scheduled materials and be prepared to discuss them in class.* For the following writing requirements, all students should be familiar with *The Elements of Style*, by William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White. This small book will function as the standard for proper grammar and style for writing assignments in this course. Flawless grammar and correct spelling are minimum requirements for acceptable papers.

(1) Participation and Discussion Papers: Students are expected to maintain pace with class readings and to participate actively in class discussion. Each week during the semester students will submit an e-mail of 250 to 500 words, in which they will (1) advance several questions from the readings that they would like to see discussed, and (2) either (2a) assess the class readings in light of the three approaches to institutional development, or (2b) ask how contemporary American politics has been influenced by the developments studied. Participation and the papers will account for 50 percent of your grade.

(2) Final Paper: Students will write a final research paper involving independent work on a topic of their choice in American institutional development. Your performance on this effort will account for 50 percent of your grade.

Research Paper: If you are interested in government regulation of business, you may wish to study the growth of the early state railroad laws. If you were intrigued by the candidacies of Ralph Nader, Ross Perot, Pat Buchanan or Jesse Ventura, you may wish to study the third-party movements among the Know-Nothings, Free Soilers and Liberty partisans of the 1840s and 1850s. If you were outraged by the Senate's treatment of Anita Hill in 1991, you may want to study the effect of party structure, electoral laws and legislative organization in excluding women from Congress and from the vote altogether. The choice is yours. The paper (minimum 25 pages, excluding bibliography and notes) is due exam week and will comprise 50 percent of your grade.

Readings

The course is designed so that you will read one or two book chapters or articles for each class lecture. The following books will comprise the principal texts used during the quarter.

Aldrich, John. *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Political Parties in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Davis, David Brion, and Steven Mintz. *The Boisterous Sea of Liberty: A Documentary History of America from Discovery through the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press). Useful as a general guide to developments during the period studied.

Douglass, Frederick. *Selected Speeches and Writings*.

Hamilton, Alexander, Madison, James and Jay, John. *The Federalist Papers*, various versions. [You may also choose to access this entirely via the Web, but I believe that your bookshelf should include at least one hard copy of this classic.]

John, Richard. *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press).

Pierson, Paul. 2004. *Politics in Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Wood, Gordon. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*.

White, Richard. 1991. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1660-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Course Schedule

Legend for Symbols:

J = Available in J-STOR

P = Available in packet or will be provided

O = Optional reading

September 8th: Introduction: Puzzles and Transactions-Cost Institutionalism

- P North, Douglass C. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Chs 1, 2, and 10 (skim others).
- J Pierson, Paul. "Increasing Returns, Path Dependence and the Study of Politics," *American Political Science Review* 94 (2): 251-268.
- O Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "Introduction," in DiMaggio and Powell, eds., *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).
- O Tim Buthe, "Taking Temporality Seriously: Modeling History and the Use of Narratives as Evidence," *American Political Science Review* 96 (3) (September 2002) 481-494.
- O Ann Swidler "Culture in Action," *American Sociological Review* (April 1986), pp. 273-86 [JSTOR].

September 15th: Colonial North America I: European-Native Contact and Servitude

Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, Book 1

White, *The Middle Ground*, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2. [If you are interested in the economic history of the period, read chapter 3 on the North American fur trade.]

My assigning these two books obviously does something far short of justice to what you might call "the colonial period." I assign them less as comprehensive treatments and more as models of highly imaginative and transformative scholarship (this is particularly true, in my view, of Richard White's book). There are also all sorts of questions here for political historians and political scientists do conduct more research, both secondary and primary. That's one reason for assigning the whole of these two books. For other treatments, see James Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (2002), and Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (2001).

September 22nd Colonial North America II: Imperial Governance and Slavery

Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, Book 4

White, *The Middle Ground*, Chapters 7 and 8.

Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 43-84

September 29th: Colonial North America III: Republicanism and the American Revolution

Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*.

- Chapter 1, Sections 1,2, 4, 5 (pp. 3-18, 28-43).
- Chapter 2, Sections 1-5 & 7 (pp. 46-75 & 83-91).
- Chapter 4, Sections 1-4 (pp. 127-161)
- Chapter 5, Section 1 (pp. 162-173)
- Chapter 6, Sections 1 & 2 (pp. 197-206)

Reading of selected Revolution-Era political pamphlets and broadsides; reading of Massachusetts Constitution of 1780; Harvard Library e-resources.

White, *The Middle Ground*, Chapter 9. [Pay most attention to sections on “Indian hating.”]

Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 139-86

October 6th: The Constitution and its Ratification:

The Federalist

Week 1: Numbers 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 23.

Week 2: Numbers 30, 33, 35, 36, 39, 45, 51, 63, 69, 70, 78, 84, 85.

Anti-Federalist Selections:

(1) Address of the Pennsylvania Minority

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/pennmi00.htm>

(2) 2nd letter of the Federal Farmer:

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/fedfar02.htm>

(3) 5th Letter of the Federal Farmer

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/fedfar05.htm>

(4) Brutus #15

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus15.htm>

(5) Brutus #16

<http://www.constitution.org/afp/brutus16.htm>

Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*.

- Chapter 8, Sections 1 & 2 (pp. 306-19)
- Chapter 9, Sections 1-3 (pp. 344-372)
- Chapter 10, Sections 1-4 (pp. 393-413)

Week 2:

- Chapters 11-13, passim.

Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 226-252

John Adams, *Thoughts on Government* [pamphlet]

Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776 [from Avalon Project web page at Yale Law School]

Massachusetts Constitution of 1780 [from Avalon Project web page at Yale Law School]

P Russell Hardin, "Why a Constitution?" in Grofman and Wittman, eds., *The Federalist Papers and the New Institutionalism* (New York: Agathon Press).

O White, *The Middle Ground*, Chapters 10 and 11.

October 13th: The Postal System and American Political Development

Richard John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), Chapters 1-4.

October 20th: Politics and Institutional Conflict in Jacksonian America

A. The Bank of the United States:

1. Chapter 13 ("The Assault on the Federal Bank") of Bray Hammond's *Banks and Politics in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957): 369-404 [36 pp.]

2. President Jackson's Bank veto message, available at <http://millercenter.org/scripps/archive/speeches/detail/3636>

B: The Nullification Crisis

3. Keith Whittington, "The Political Constitution of Federalism in Antebellum America: The Nullification Debate as an Illustration of Informal Mechanisms of Constitutional Change," *Publius* 26, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 1-24 [24 pp.][Available on JSTOR]

4. Daniel Webster's Second Reply to Robert Hayne, available at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~dwebster/speeches/hayne-speech.html>

C. Indian Removal

5. Mary E. Young, "Indian Removal and Land Allotment: The Civilized Tribes and Jacksonian Justice," *American Historical Review* 64, no. 1 (October 1958): 31-45 [15 pp.][Available on JSTOR]

6. Transcript of President Jackson's Message to Congress on Indian Removal (1830), available at <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=25&page=transcript>

October 27th: The First and Second Party Systems, and the Creation of the Mass Party

Aldrich, *Why Parties?*

John, *Spreading the News*, Chapter 6, "The Wellspring of Democracy."

Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 259-64, 271-75, 285-87, 344-54, 358-380

November 3rd: Voting in the New Age of Mass Democracy

Bensel, *The American Ballot Box*, selections

November 10th: Transformations in Congress: Committees and Leadership

P Selection from Davidson and Oleszek, *Congress and Its Members*

E Charles Stewart III, "Architect or Tactician? Henry Clay and the Institutional Development of the U.S. House of Representatives," MIT Working Paper, available at <http://web.mit.edu/cstewart/www/clay.pdf>

J Nelson Polsby, "The Institutionalization of the House of Representatives," *American Political Science Review* 62 (1) (1968) 144-168.

P Carpenter Notes on Antebellum Congressional Organization [handout].

November 17th: Abolition and Reform Movements

Douglass, *Selected Writings and Speeches*, selections, including letters to Garrison, speeches in London and Rochester, "The Rights of Women," and "The Meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro."

Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 381-404

John, *Spreading the News*, Chapter 7, "The Interdiction of Dissent."

Review of antislavery petitions from National Archives and from Massachusetts State Archives; provided from Professor Carpenter's ongoing research and teaching

- project.** Combine with skim of Daniel Carpenter, “Recruitment by Petition: The Abolitionists’ Congressional Campaign,” Harvard working paper.
- O James Brewer Stuart, *Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery*, (New York: Hill and Wang).

November 24th: No Class [give thanks]

December 1st and Make-Up Session: The Creation of the Republican Party and the Coming of the Civil War

- Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 409-489.
- O Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press).
 - O William Gienapp, *The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856* (New York: Oxford University Press).