

WRITING-INTENSIVE COURSE – PROPOSAL FORM

INSTRUCTOR Joel Lefkowitz, Glenn McNitt, Nancy Kassop

COURSE TITLE AND NUMBER 77401 Seminar in American Government and Politics

SINGLE SECTION COURSE ONE SECTION OF MULTI-SECTION COURSE ALL SECTIONS

DEPARTMENT Political Science and International Relations

SCHOOL OR DIVISION Liberal Arts

CATALOG DESCRIPTION Study of major issues in American government and politics.

Students will present a major research paper to the seminar by the end of the course.

WRITING REQUIREMENTS Production of a 15-20 page research paper. Periodic

reports on the various stages and the level of progress, presentation to class of second draft

and final draft.

Please attach a brief narrative (not to exceed one page) describing how your course fits the criteria.

(Attach Revised Syllabus.)

In-depth Narrative Justifying Recommendation by Department

1. *Course description:* This class is an advanced seminar for students who have completed the introductory course in American politics, Scope and Methods of Political Science, and junior level classes in American politics. The course will consider a variety of approaches to continuity and change in American politics. Some of these approaches draw on insights from other disciplines, such as economics, sociology, psychology, and history. Others emphasize political institutions, actors, and ideas. Still others focus on class, race, and gender in American politics.

The goals of the course are (1) to further the development of the critical reading, research, writing, and speaking skills of the students; (2) to teach students a variety of *theoretical approaches* to understanding politics; and (3) to teach students to *empirically test* competing theories in the context of specific cases of special interest to them.

Representative texts used in the course are *The Dynamics of American Politics: Approaches and Interpretations* (Westview Press, 1994) and *New Perspectives on American Politics* (CQ Press, 1994) both edited by Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson. Among the authors of these essays are such leading scholars of American politics as Walter Dean Burnham, Theda Skocpol, John Aldrich, Stephen Skowronek, Jane Mansbridge, and David Mayhew. Additional readings will be assigned to students based on their particular interests.

Writing assignments and oral presentations: Students will be expected to produce a major research paper of at least 15 pages. Preparation of the paper will proceed through six stages: (1) Written proposal for a paper, discussed with the instructor. (2) Presentation of the research proposal to the seminar. (3) A progress report on the writing of the paper. (4) A first draft of the paper, discussed with the instructor. (5) A second draft of the paper, presented orally to the seminar. (6) A final draft of the paper. In addition, twice during the semester students will lead discussion of seminar readings. Students will also make at least one presentation to the seminar on the additional reading they are doing for their research.

Examinations: Students will complete two essay exams. A midterm exam will require critical evaluation of the competing approaches to political science in the seminar readings. A final exam will require a critical analysis of several of the papers presented in the seminar in light of the course readings and research.

Evaluations: Grades for the seminar will be based on class participation (including both formal presentations and contributions to discussions), the midterm exam, the final exam, early drafts of the seminar paper, and the final draft of the seminar paper.

2. This course is part of a major change in the Political Science major requirement. After an extensive analysis of writing requirements in all our Political Science courses, the Department established a requirement that all Political Science students complete a four-hundred-level writing intensive course as part of the major. We did this for a number of reasons: First, we were unhappy with the quality of student writing in many of our courses. Second, we did not have a consistent policy on writing requirements according to course level. It was felt that students should be writing major research papers at the 400 level and shorter papers at the 200 and 300 level. Third, we wished to make the Political Science major congruent with the International Relations major which does require a senior seminar. Finally, we wanted to be sure that no student graduated from our program who had not written at least one major research paper in the discipline.

After further discussion, we have determined that we should have senior seminars in all five of the sub-fields taught by the Department: American government, comparative politics, political theory and law (in addition to the International Relations Seminar which is already in the catalog). This proposal is therefore part of a packet of four course proposals we are submitting for approval.

State University of New York at New Paltz
Department of Political Science and International Relations

Sample Syllabus

PLS 77493: Seminar in American Politics

Spring 2000

Course Description: This seminar will explore competing perspectives on continuity and change in American politics. Students are to read assignments with great care before coming to class, and participate in a thorough discussion of the readings in class. At each class session a student will be responsible for leading discussion of the assigned reading. Using several of the approaches discussed in seminar readings and in class, and additional reading relevant to their particular interests, students will write a research paper explaining a particular institutional change in American politics. Students will report to the class on the additional literature they read and progress on their seminar papers. Strict adherence to the timetable for preparing the research papers will be required.

Course Topics: We will consider approaches to explanations of politics that draw from such other disciplines as economics, sociology, psychology, and history. We will also examine approaches that emphasize political institutions, political actors, and political ideas, as well as those that focus on class, race, and gender.

Course Materials: *The Dynamics of American Politics: Approaches and Interpretations* (Westview Press, 1994) and *New Perspectives on American Politics* (CQ Press, 1994) both edited by Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson are available at Ariel's Booksellers.

Grading: Five components of this class, weighed equally in calculating the grade for the course, are: (1) class participation, (2) a midterm exam, (3) a final exam, (4) early drafts of the seminar paper, and (5) a final draft of the seminar paper.

Attendance Policy: Attendance is necessary but not sufficient to ensure a satisfactory class participation grade. The class participation grade will be lowered by 1/3 of a grade for each absence after the second one.

Academic Integrity: Cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. If you cheat or plagiarize, you will receive a zero for the assignment, and may be failed for the course, and subject to further disciplinary action.

Timetable for Reading and Writing Assignments

Week 1: Introduction

Theodore Lowi, "Foreword" in *Dynamics*

Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson, "Conversations on the Study of American Politics" in *Dynamics*

Nelson W. Polsby, "Foreword: On Political Change in Modern America" in *New Perspectives*

Lawrence C. Dodd and Calvin Jillson, "Reassessing American Politics: An Introduction" in *New Perspectives*

Week 2: Historical Approaches

Calvin Jillson, "Patterns and Periodicity in American National Politics" in *Dynamics*

Walter Dean Burnham, "Pattern Recognition and 'Doing' Political History" in *Dynamics*

Elaine K. Swift and David W. Brady, "Common Ground: History and Theories of American Politics" in *Dynamics*

Week 3: Macroanalysis: Culture and Institutions

Sven H. Steinmo, "American Exceptionalism Reconsidered: Culture or Institutions?" in *Dynamics*

Russell L. Hanson, "Liberalism and the Course of American Social Welfare Policy" in *Dynamics*

Typed preliminary proposal for the research paper due.

Week 4: Macroanalysis: Economy and Polity

Edward Greenberg, "Macroeconomic Change and Political Transformation in the United States" in *Dynamics*

Theda Skocpol, "The Origins of Social Policy in the United States: A Polity-Centered Analysis" in *Dynamics*

Week 5: The Politics of Social Conflict

John F. Manley, "The Significance of Class in American History and Politics" in *New Perspectives*

Rodney Hero, "Two-Tiered Pluralism: Race and Ethnicity in American Politics" in *New Perspectives*

Eileen L. McDonagh, "Gender Politics and Political Change" in *New Perspectives*

Oral presentation of proposal to the seminar required.

Week 6: Microanalysis

John Aldrich, "Rational Choice Theory and the Study of American Politics" in *Dynamics*

Murray Edelman, "The Social Psychology of Politics" in *Dynamics*

Jane Mansbridge, "Politics as Persuasion" in *Dynamics*

Midterm exam.

Week 7: Voters and Groups

Robert Huckfeldt and Paul Allen Beck, "Contexts, Intermediaries, and Political Behavior" in *Dynamics*

Clarence N. Stone, "Group Politics Reexamined: From Pluralism to Political Economy" in *Dynamics*

Oral and typed progress report on research paper due.

Week 8: Issues, Candidates, and Elections

Edward Carmines, "Political Issues, Party Alignments, and the Post-New Deal Party System" in *New Perspectives*

Walter J. Stone, "Asymmetries in the Electoral Bases of Representation, Nomination Politics, and Partisan Change" in *New Perspectives*

Thomas Ferguson, "'Organized Capitalism,' Fiscal Policy and the 1992 Democratic Campaign" in *New Perspectives*

Week 9: Institutional Politics and Political Change

Bert A. Rockman, "The New Institutionalism and the Old Institutions" in *New Perspectives*

Sean Q. Kelly, "Punctuated Change and the Era of Divided Government" in *New Perspectives*

Paul J. Quirk and Bruce Nesmith, "Explaining Deadlock: Domestic Policymaking in the Bush Presidency" in *New Perspectives*

Typed first draft of research paper due.

Week 10: Ideas, Agendas, and Public Policy

John W. Kingdon, "Agendas, Ideas, and Policy Change" in *New Perspectives*

Virginia Gray, "Competition, Emulation, and Policy Innovation" in *New Perspectives*

John P. McIver, Robert S. Erikson, and Gerald C. Wright, "Public Opinion and Public Policy: A View from the States" in *New Perspectives*

Week 11: Disorder or Development

Karen Orren and Stephen Skowronek, "Beyond the Iconography of Order: Notes for a 'New Institutionalism'" in *Dynamics*

Lawrence C. Dodd, "Political Learning and Political Change: Understanding Development Across Time" in *Dynamics*

Oral presentation of revised draft required.

Week 12: American Politics in Comparative Perspective

Martin Shefter, "International Influences on American Politics" in *New Perspectives*

David R. Mayhew, "U.S. Policy Waves in Comparative Context" in *New Perspectives*

Week 13: Conclusion

Linda L. Fowler, "Political Entrepreneurs, Governing Processes, and Political Change" in *New Perspectives*

Hugh Heclo, "Ideas, Interests, and Institutions" in *Dynamics*

Typed final draft of research paper due.

Final Exam.