This course introduces doctoral students to some of the major themes in American political institutions. It is designed to prepare students for the Institutions portion of the comprehensive exam in the field of American Politics.

**Course Requirements**

The most important requirement of the course is to read the assignments for each week carefully and critically before class. They will form the focus of our discussions in class. Be aware that some of your reading of some items will affect your reading of other items in the current week or a future week; we will discuss these links.

1. **Class Participation/Weekly Memos (50%)**: To facilitate discussion, each week each student will write a short memo (no more than 400 words) based on the assigned readings. This memo should address one or more of the following questions: (i) What is the most important take-away from the readings? (ii) What issues do the readings raise but not adequately address? That is, what do the readings suggest about promising directions for future research?

   You will be responsible for completing and circulating your memo to the class each week. *Each weekly memo will be due by Monday 9:00am, before each Tuesday class*, to ensure that everyone has time to read each other’s memos before class. We will circulate memos through a class email list.

   In addition: Each week, a pair of students will be responsible for starting the discussion. The pair will prepare a short, 20 minute summary of the readings, together with a few of their own thoughts along the lines of the memos. We will determine the schedule for this during the first class.
2. **Final Paper (50%)**: There is much in the American institutions literature that is not represented here. Your final paper for this course will be an analytical literature review and in-class presentation on some aspect of the institutions literature that we did not cover – or did not cover as deep as your own interest – in class. You are encouraged to choose a topic that is related to your own research interests.

A few guidelines: Do not merely restate or summarize what has been done; put an analytical frame on the literature, and use that analytical approach to identify what is known and not known on the given subject. Your paper should be approximately 20 pages in length. This is a good opportunity to start exploring an area of research in which you are interested in working.

**Schedule**

The readings under each date are to be completed for that class meeting (and are the readings for the weekly memo due the day before that class).

**October 2 – Introduction; Institutional Foundations**

*The Federalist Papers*, Nos. 10, 51, 52.

Wilson, Woodrow. 1885. *Congressional Government*[^1]

**October 9 – Congress: Electoral Foundation**


[^1]: Available at: [https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35861/35861-h/35861-h.htm](https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35861/35861-h/35861-h.htm)
October 16 – Congress: Organizational Structure


October 23 – Political Parties


\(^2\)Available through UCSD at: [http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft809nb53m/](http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft809nb53m/)

\(^3\)Available through UCSD at: [https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.8850](https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.8850)
October 30 – The Presidency


November 6 – The Bureaucracy


November 13 – Executive-Congressional Relations


Available through UCSD at: https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/veto-bargaining/F174085E5D19AFFF678FDAD2F58129341


November 20 – Courts


November 27 – Interest Groups and Lobbying


**December 4 – Literature Reviews Due; Student Presentations**