George Mason University Course Approval Form
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Department: Public and International Affairs          Course Abbrev/Number__GOVT 815

Prepared by: Julianne Mahler, Dept. Public & International Affairs       Ext: 3-1414

Full Course Title: Advanced Seminar in Political Behavior
(This example: Advanced Seminar in Political Behavior: Political Parties, Voting, and Elections)

Abbreviated Course Title (Inventory will only accommodate 24 characters):
Adv Sem Pol Behavior

Term First (new courses): F 2006       Course Level: GA
UL=Undergrad lower
UU=Undergrad upper
GF=Grad lower (500-600)
GA=Grad upper (700+)

Credit Hours: (Fixed) __3__ (Var.)_____       Catalog Format : (3:3:0)

Previous Course ID :_________________ Last Term Course will be Offered:______________
Repeatable for Credit: T, 9
D=Yes, but not within same term (indicate max hrs) Up to:
T=Yes, within same term (indicate max hrs) (Maximum hours)
N=Cannot be repeated for credit

Activity Code 1: Sem
Activity Code 2: LEC=Lecture
                     RCT=Recitation
                     SEM=Seminar
                     STU=Studio
                     INT=Internship
                     IND=Independent Study

Prereq: GOVT 510

Approval:
Department or Program:__________________________ Date:_____________

College Council:__________________________ Date:_____________

Graduate Council:*__________________________ Date:_____________

(Signature)
(Signature - if applicable)

*All courses numbered 500 or above must be forwarded to Graduate Council once approved at
the departmental or college level. OtR 11/99
GOVT 815
Advanced Seminar in Political Behavior
(Political Parties, Voting, and Elections)

Fall 2006

Dr. Timothy Conlan
Office Hours:
Robinson A209
Mon 3:30-4:20 pm
Phone: 993-1427
Wed 1:30-3:30; 7:00-7:30
email: tconlan@gmu.edu and by appointment

Course Description: This course is designed to provide advanced graduate level understanding of the theory and practice of contemporary American political behavior. Govt 815 is an advanced topics course, and the emphasis of this particular seminar will be on political parties, voting behavior, and elections. In particular, the course will place the U.S. party and electoral system in comparative and historical perspective; examine the similarities and differences between presidential, congressional, and state/local elections; examine the influences of the party and electoral systems on government policy making and institutional behavior; and survey several contemporary issues and controversies concerning electoral behavior, including trends in voter turnout, the impact of redistricting on congressional elections, and the future of independent and third parties in American politics. In addition, students will be exposed to a mix of both classic and contemporary literature in the field.

Course Structure: The course will be conducted in a seminar format. The quality of class discussions will be critical to the seminar's success. This requires active and informed participation by everyone in the class. All students will be expected to have read and thoughtfully considered each week's reading assignments. In addition, there will be an opportunity for oral research presentations.

Course Requirements: There will be three required writing assignments in this course. The first will be a 3-5 page synopsis and critical evaluation of the first week’s readings.

Each seminar participant will also prepare a longer, 20-25 page research paper which critically tests or applies the theoretical framework presented in one or more of the course readings to the politics of a contemporary political issue.

Finally, each student in the class will be responsible for a brief paper and oral presentation that summarizes and analyzes important themes or arguments in one week’s readings.

Course Evaluation: The final grade for this course will be calculated as follows: general class participation (15%), first synopsis of readings (15%); weekly evaluation of readings and oral presentation (20%) and the critical research paper (50%).
Required Readings: The following books are available for purchase at the campus bookstore. They will be supplemented by several journal articles available through JSTOR, a library research database, and by a few xeroxed articles and handouts which can be purchased from the instructor.


Paul Herrnson, Congressional Elections (CQ, 2004).

Larry Sabato and Bruce Larson, The Party’s Just Begun (Longman, 2002).

James Sundquist, Dynamics of the Party System (Brookings, 1982).


Class Schedule:

(week 1) Course Introduction and Overview:

(week 2) The US Party System in Comparative Perspective


Alan Ware, “The party systems of the established liberal democracies in the 1990s: is this a decade of transformation?” Government and Opposition 30 (1995).

(week 3) The U.S. Party System in Historical Perspective

Sundquist, Dynamics of the Party System, entire.

First Paper Due.
CONTEMPORARY PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

(week 4)  Contemporary Parties and the Electorate

Flanigan and Zingale, Political Behavior and the American Electorate (entire)

Recommended:

Campbell, et. Al., The American Voter

Sidney Verba and Norman Nie, The Changing American Voter

(week 5)  Presidential Elections

Stephen Wayne, The Road to the White House, (entire).

Research Paper Proposals Due

(week 6)  Congressional Elections

Herrnson, Congressional Elections (entire)

Recommended


(week 7)  Contemporary Party Organizations

Larry Sabato and Bruce Larson, The Party’s Just Begun

Recommended

David Broder, The Party’s Over

Sandy Maisel, ed. The Parties Respond

(week 8)  Party Change at the State and Local Levels


(week 9) **Party in Government**


(week 10) **CURRENT CONTROVERSIES**

(week 10) **Disappearing Voters?**

Teixeira, *Disappearing American Voters* (entire)


(week 11) **Redistricting**


(Week 12) **Public Opinion and Political Participation**


(week 13-14) **Research Paper Presentations**