

The American Political System and Contemporary American Politics

Autumn-Winter 2025
PhD Course
Seminar

Dr. Eric Beckett Weaver

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to enable students to explore aspects of the American political system and current American politics that are of relevance to the students' doctoral research topics. During the course the instructor will initially introduce topics for discussion. Doctoral candidates will lead discussions and give presentations related to their own research interests, to which other students and the instructor are expected to respond in a manner conducive of encouraging further research, and critically suggesting aspects that may need further exploration. The instructor will work closely with the students, and will make every effort to point out literature or ideas that can be of help in the development of their thesis plans. In return, students are expected to take active part in discussion of others' research plans, and to make constructive comments.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance

Participation in discussion

Presentation: All students will present on some aspect of contemporary American politics that are of interest to them personally. Readings and other materials (films, sound recordings) will be assigned based the students' own interests. All students will be asked to read something on each other student's topic. For the presentations, students will do further research on their own.

ASSESSMENT:

Grades will be based on the student's own presentation, participation in classes, and a final exam.

SCHEDULE:

Week 1 *Introduction to the course, and presentation of some basic factors in American politics.*

Week 2 *Basics in American foreign policy, and its effects on domestic politics in general terms.*

Week 3 *American state and national elections, and referenda.*

Week 4 and on – *Student presentations.*

Essential reading:

The Constitution of the United States.

Recommended readings:

John Callaghan, Brendan O'Connor, Mark Pythian, *Ideologies of American Foreign Policy* (2019)

Louis Fischer, *The War Power: Original and contemporary* (2009)

Thom Hartmann, *The Hidden History of American Democracy* (2023)

James F. Hoge, Jr. and Fareed Zakaria, *The American Encounter: The United States and the Making of the Modern World* (1997).

Stephen W. Hook and John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*. 18th edn (2010)

Kyle L. Kreider and Thomas J. Baldino (eds), *Minority Voting in the United States*, 2 vols. (2015)

Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: A new edition for our perilous times* (2002)

Nick Seabrook, *One Person One Vote: A surprising history of gerrymandering in America* (2022)

Jack Weatherford, *Tribes on the Hill: The US Congress - Rituals and Realities* (1985)