Judicial Politics

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Office Hours: Thursday 10:00-11:30

Purposes. This seminar has two basic purposes: to introduce graduate students to the literature in judicial process and behavior and to explore a series of particular topics, with emphasis on the major controversies within the broader subfield of law, courts, and judicial processes.

Readings. Most readings come from political science journals. I have ordered several optional books. If you are interested in building a library of books on judicial politics, these would be reasonable additions. The last book is a good resource for people interested in quantitative analysis of American politics.


Grades. I will base your grade on seminar participation (10%), two short critical essays (10% each), and a research paper (70%).

Since the success of any seminar depends on the participation of its members, your attendance and involvement in the class is essential. Part of your involvement will be to facilitate one class session during the semester. This means, more specifically, that you will prepare discussion questions for that class session. These questions should be given to me no later than 12:00 noon on the day of the class.

You will also be required to write two one-to-two page essays critically assessing a specific area of the literature. These essays should address issues like the contribution of one or more readings to the literature, the theoretical development of the reading, whether the methodology employed is appropriate to answering the question addressed in the
reading. You may focus on one or more of the readings. You may wish to utilize other articles to evaluate some facet of the required material. These essays must be received in class on the day that we discuss the readings in question.

Finally, you will write a research paper on a judicial politics topic of your choice. I believe that it is important for graduate students, especially doctoral students, to be able to conduct original research. This paper assignment is required in order to allow you to further develop your experience in research. As such, I expect you to write a paper that could be presented at a professional conference. We will discuss this assignment in more detail later this semester. However, there are a few deadlines that you should keep in mind: A paper proposal, describing your question, the basic hypotheses, and the evidence that you intend to use, is due on October 8; the paper will be due on December 10 (one week after the last class).

Course Outline/Readings. I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus as the semester progresses.

Theories of Decision Making (September 10)


Preferences (September 17)


*Measuring Preferences* (September 24)


*Judicial Selection* (October 1)


**Agenda-Setting** (October 8)


**The Law** (October 15)


Leadership (October 22)


The Collegial Game (October 29)


The Separation of Powers Game (November 5)


**Public Opinion** (November 12)


**Interest Groups, Lawyers, & Parties** (November 19)


**Implementation** (November 26)


**Last Class** (December 3)

In-class presentation and discussion of research projects