Tentative syllabus

Fall 2011
Gary Miller
Political Science 5260

Executive Branch Politics:
Bureaucracy and the President

Article II of the Constitution says that the executive power will be vested in the president. While the study of the presidency has been regarded as a theoretical backwater in comparison with the literature on Congress and courts, in recent years a new literature has put the study of the executive branch on firmer ground. The literature on the presidency, like the literature on bureaucracy, is grounded in models of information asymmetry, agency, delegation, and separation of powers. This course will examine some of the most important concepts and models, as well as examining the empirical literature on the historical development of the executive branch, its relations with other branches of government, and the internal politics of staffing and structure.

Course goals and requirements
I understand that different people are taking this course for quite different reasons. Some may hope to do research in the area. For others, there might be tools that can be borrowed for research on courts, comparative politics, or IPE. Others may wish for general literacy in an area that is not particularly close to their research interests. Hopefully, the seminar can be flexible enough to help people with a variety of goals.

In the past, it has been extremely helpful in a seminar setting to ask students to submit a 2-page memo, an hour or two before class starts, on any aspect of the course reading. These memos do not have to recreate or summarize the entire argument of a book or article; they can consist simply of your initial reaction to some part of the readings, as you go into the seminar. I would like to have the memos turned in to me (either hard-copy or email) by 11:30 a.m. the day of class. For example, you may turn in a memo on the idea of an ultimatum game and whether that concept is actually helpful in understanding Cameron’s models of veto bargaining. Of course that is a huge topic that could support a much longer paper; the idea, however, is to give your first, brief, initial reaction. I will be able to look over the memos to get a sense of what the seminar participants are seeing in the readings. This will help me organize the afternoon seminar. I will probably call on you during the seminar to present your thoughts on the subject you choose. I would like eight such memos during the course of the semester—you pick the weeks. In order to encourage creativity and risk-taking, I will not grade the memos—just keep track of the number turned in.

To make the course accommodative of diverse interests, you don’t have to limit yourself to items on the required or recommended reading list. You may choose a reading that gives a comparative or IPE spin to a week’s topic, or one that uses an empirical methodology or formal model that you are interested in. Other participation opportunities will include classroom and take-home exercises which I may occasionally assign.
Overall, I expect that everyone who turns in their memos and participates fully will get full credit for this part of the course, which counts toward 20% of the grade.

A second form of participation that I would like is a five-to-fifteen minute oral presentation, preferably in groups of 2 or 3, but individual presentations work fine, too. I would like for everyone to make 2 such presentations. I would like one such presentation by the end of September. I would like a second such presentation on material related to the presidency: the book by Cameron or that by Howell, or a related reading. These presentations don’t have to exhaust the reading, but they should cover some slice of the reading more carefully than in the short memos. Please let me know when you know what topic you would like to cover, with which partners, on which date. This is also worth 20% of your grade.

I would like to ask for a short paper (6-12 pp.) due on Monday, October 31 at 5:00 p.m. Depending on your interests, this can be a problem statement for a possible research project, a literature review and commentary on some aspect of the course that you find particularly interesting, or a rigorous analysis of some aspect of the course that you think overlaps with your interest in comparative politics, judicial politics, methods, formal theory, or political theory. It can overlap with one of your oral presentations if you like. This paper will constitute 20% of your grade.

The final paper should be longer (10-20 pp.) and will be due 12/16. This paper can either build on your previous short paper, or take on a fresh topic. This will constitute 40% of your grade.

**Contact Information**

I will have office hours on Thursdays from 2-3, and will be happy to arrange times for other meetings by email.

Readings: In order to accommodate the variety of interests that I usually find in the executive politics seminar, the readings are diverse and lead in a lot of different directions. So don’t expect the readings to constitute a careful, logical construction of ideas and concepts. There should be something in the readings, most weeks, that is a little off-beat and surprises you.

**Books.** (available in the bookstore.)

Cameron, 2000. *Veto Bargaining; Presidents and the Politics of Negative Power.*


SECTION I.
AGENCIES AND DELEGATION

9/2 A CASE STUDY OF BUREAUCRATIC DEFIANCE
Miller and Whitford. “Bureaucratic Defiance”

9/9 INFORMATION ASYMMETRIES AND PRINCIPAL-AGENCY THEORY

Read:
Watson. Strategy Ch. 25.
Recommended:

9/16 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT
Recommended:

Recommended:

9/23 THE PRINCIPAL'S OTHER PROBLEM:
POLITICAL MORAL HAZARD AND CREDIBLE COMMITMENT

Read:

Recommended:

9/30 (5) MORAL HAZARD OF BUDGET-BREAKING

Read:

Recommended:

SECTION II.
MULTIPLE PRINCIPALS:
CONGRESS, PRESIDENT, AND COURTS

10/7 SEPARATION OF POWERS AND VETO-BARGAINING.

Read:
Executive Orders 12866 and 13422
Recommended:

10/14 CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Read:
Cameron. Veto Bargaining. Finish
Recommended:

10/21 THE UNITARY EXECUTIVE
Read:
Berry et al. 2010. “President and the Distribution of Federal Spending.APSR 104:766/
Recommended:
SECTION III
CONSTRAINING PROFESSIONAL AGENCIES

11/4 (10) INCENTIVES AND THE CONTROL PARADOX

Read:

Recommended:
Meier et al. 2000, "Bureaucracy and Organizational Performance: Causality Arguments about School Choice". AJPS 44:590-602
82:1065-1089.

11/11 (11) PATRONAGE AND MERIT SYSTEMS
Read:
Recommended:
http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/ussc_c_r_0295_0602_zo.html
Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press.
Geddes *Politician’s Dilemma*.

11/18 (12) PROFESSIONALISM AND BUREAUCRATIC DISCRETION
Read:
Mosher. 1982. *Democracy and the Public Service*. Ch. 5 "The Professional State"

Recommended:

12/02 (13) RULE OF LAW
Read:

Recommended:
12/09 (14)  FINANCIAL REGULATORS AND CRISIS

Read:


Recommended:


Maxwell, Sylvia. *Gatekeepers of Growth*.

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SECTION I.
AGENCIES AND DELEGATION

9/2 A CASE STUDY OF BUREAUCRATIC DEFIANCE
Miller and Whitford. Ch. 1

9/9 INFORMATION ASYMMETRIES AND PRINCIPAL-AGENCY THEORY
Read:

9/16 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES AND THE COURTS
Read:

9/23 THE PRINCIPAL'S OTHER PROBLEM:
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9/30 ( MORAL HAZARD OF BUDGET-BREAKING
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SECTION II.
MULTIPLE PRINCIPALS:
CONGRESS, PRESIDENT, AND COURTS

10-7 (6) SEPARATION OF POWERS AND VETO-BARGAINING.
Cameron. Veto Bargaining.

10/14 CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Cameron. Veto Bargaining. Finish

10/21 (8) THE UNITARY EXECUTIVE

10/28 ( SHARED OVERSIGHT

SECTION III
CONSTRAINING PROFESSIONAL AGENCIES

11/4 (10) INCENTIVES AND THE CONTROL PARADOX
11/11 (11) PATRONAGE AND MERIT SYSTEMS
   Read:

11/18 (12) PROFESSIONALISM AND BUREAUCRATIC DISCRETION
   Read:

12/02 (13) RULE OF LAW
   Read:
      A Comparison of Presidential and Parliamentary Systems.”

12/09 (14) FINANCIAL CRISIS