Government 94hk

The Early Development of
American Political Institutions and Organizations:
Constitutions, Legislatures, Elections and Movements, 1650-1860

Harvard University Junior Seminar
Fall 2018

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All Seminar Meetings: Tuesday, noon to 2:45PM, Sever Hall 303

Office hours (regular slot Monday, 3pm-5pm, others to be announced) and all student meetings: Center for American Political Studies Conference Room, Knafel Building 430

Course Description: A theoretically informed review of the development of political institutions and political organizations from colonial North America to the coming of the Civil War. The forging of the Constitution, the emergence of the two-party system, the rise of congressional committees, the emergence of a national postal system and the patronage regime, abolitionism and new social movements, and the creation of new statutory rights to vote will be studied using three theoretical approaches -- rational choice, historical institutionalism, and cultural theory.

Institutions are the formal and informal structures that shape our policy and our political experience. This course surveys the historical evolution of several forms of American political institutions and organizations -- associations and the party system, Congress, and the bureaucratic state. We will cover the period from the colonial period of North America to the Civil War, or 1650-1860, roughly speaking. Throughout the semester we will attempt to answer several core questions concerning American political institutions. What are institutions and how do they shape our political life? How did we get the institutions we have today -- the two party system, the congressional seniority system, interest groups, the welfare state, the regulatory state? How can we account for institutional change? And how can attention to the history of American political institutions help us to understand the dilemmas now facing the American political system?

To address these questions we will study closely important facets of the three institutions listed above. Among other things, we will ask how changing party structures led to voting realignments, we will trace the rise of the committee structures in Congress, and we will gauge the implications of patronage for the operation of the federal bureaucracy. In other words, we will study "institutions within institutions."
In discussion, we will also consider three approaches to the study of American political institutions and their evolution. The first, the rational-choice or transactions-cost approach, argues that institutions develop and change in response to changing preferences and patterns of transactions in American society at any given time, and that institutional change is driven by efficiency considerations. The second approach, the historical institutionalist approach, points to the fundamental impact of historical sequence and timing as a driving force in the emergence of new institutions and institutional forms. The final approach we will consider is a critical-theoretical approach which asks whether American political institutions can be seen as subordinating schemes which divide and repress people along lines of class, race and gender.

In this vein, we will consider feminist, Marxist and race-centered analyses of the institutions of American politics. An important part of the course will be our cooperative assessment of the strengths and limitations of these approaches in light of the historical development of American institutions. We will also consider “hybrid” approaches that mix the three types just mentioned.

Format:

After one week in which we conduct a cursory historical overview of institutional development and consider some alternative approaches to the study of institutions and institutional change, we launch into the study of developments in various political institutions and organizations over four time periods – the period from Native-European contact to the American Revolution, the period from the Founding to the 1800 election, 1800 to the election of Andrew Jackson (the “First Party System”) and the so-called Second Party System (1828-1860). We do not separate the periods entirely, but it is safe to say that for each period, we will spend a week or two each on the party system or electoral institutions, Congress, and the bureaucratic state. We will then consider the importance of transformations in these institutions for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and beyond.

In addition to numerous secondary readings, we will also be reading a good bit of “primary source” material, primarily from the Davis and Mintz reader. These readings are also required and it is expected that you will be prepared to discuss them in class sessions.

Requirements: Students should read all scheduled materials and be prepared to discuss them in class. For the following writing requirements, all students should be familiar with The Elements of Style, by William Strunk, Jr., and E.B. White. This small book will function as the standard for proper grammar and style for writing assignments in this course. Flawless grammar and correct spelling are minimum requirements for acceptable papers.

(1) Participation and Discussion Papers: Students are expected to maintain pace with class readings and to participate actively in class discussion. Each week during the semester students will submit an e-mail of 250 to 500 words, in which they will (1) advance several questions from the readings that they would like to see discussed, and (2) either (2a) assess the class readings in light of the three approaches to institutional development, or (2b) ask how contemporary American politics has been influenced by the developments studied. Participation and the papers will account for 50 percent of your grade.
(2) Short Assignment Papers (substitute for discussion Papers) – At two select points in the semester you will not but instead prepare a very short note based upon a small amount of work that I assign. These will also figure as part of your grade.

(3) Final Paper: Students will write a final research paper involving independent work on a topic of their choice in American institutional development. Your performance on this dimension will account for 50 percent of your grade.

Research Paper: If you are interested in government regulation of business, you may wish to study the growth of the early state railroad laws. If you are interested in international relations and how diplomacy is negotiated across different cultures, you may want to study relations between Native American populations and French or British settlers in the colonial period. If you are interested in race relations or slavery, you may wish to examine the state-level and federal-level institutions that supported chattel slavery in North America for over two centuries. If you are intrigued by the candidacies of Gary Johnson, Ron Paul or the Green Party, you may wish to study the third-party movements among the Know-Nothings, Free Soilers and Liberty partisans of the 1840s and 1850s. If you find city politics fascinating, you may wish to investigate the origins of urban machines in New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore. The choice is yours. The paper (minimum 25 pages, excluding bibliography and notes) is due exam week and will comprise 50 percent of your grade.

Readings

The course is designed so that you will read one or two book chapters or articles for each class lecture. The following books will comprise the principal texts used during the quarter.


Douglass, Frederick. *Selected Speeches and Writings*.


Hamilton, Alexander, Madison, James and Jay, John. *The Federalist Papers*, various versions. [You may also choose to access this entirely via the Web, but I believe that your bookshelf should include at least one hard copy of this volume.]


Morgan, Edmund. *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York: Norton, revised version, 2003). [Note that this book may have mistakenly left off of
the Harvard Co-op order; I apologize for the inconvenience. You can purchase it – and rather cheaply – at the Co-op directly, at Harvard bookstore, or online.]


**Policy for Fall 2018: No Electronics, No Laptops, No Tablets in Class.** While we all use laptops and tablets for our work and our daily routines, I aim to create a space where our attention can be focused upon the lecture, the readings, the themes with which we are engaged, and the ensuing discussions. I will lecture using some slides and use electronic visuals, but my own Internet connections will be off on all such devices. (I will also make slides available before class so that you can print them if you wish for better note taking.) You should bring copies of the course texts with you to class.

**Course Schedule**

**Legend for Symbols:**
- J = Available in J-STOR
- P = Available in packet or will be provided
- O = Optional reading

**September 4*nd*: Introduction: Puzzles and Transactions-Cost Institutionalism**

P North, Douglass C. *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Chs 1, 2, and 10 (skim others).


September 11th and 18th: Colonial North America I: European-Native Contact and Servitude

Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, Book 1

White, *The Middle Ground*, Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2. [If you are interested in the economic history of the period, read chapter 3 on the North American fur trade.]

My assigning these two books obviously does something far short of justice to what you might call “the colonial period.” I assign them less as comprehensive treatments and more as models of highly imaginative and transformative scholarship (this is particularly true, in my view, of Richard White’s book). There are also all sorts of questions here for political historians and political scientists do conduct more research, both secondary and primary. That’s one reason for assigning the whole of these two books. For other treatments, see James Brooks, *Captives & Cousins: Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (2002), and Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (2001).

An important source for White’s work, as well as that of others on New France and the Great Lakes region, is the *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. Originally written in French by Jesuits to the crown (and to the wealthy French families who were underwriting the missionary work), Les Relations des Jesuites de la Nouvelle-France run from 1610 to 1791 and contain an astonishing wealth of material. Creighton University has re-published all of these in English (and a number in French and Latin) on its website: [http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/](http://puffin.creighton.edu/jesuit/relations/).

These sources must be read and interpreted carefully, in part because the English translations are not always on the mark, in part because their audience is the crown and wealthier French readers, and in part because they represent the views of missionaries about the people they term *les Sauvages*, whose souls they were trying to win for Christ, and whose loyalties they were trying to win for France.

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September 25th: Colonial North America II: Imperial Governance and Slavery toward the Revolution

Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom*, Book 4

White, *The Middle Ground*, Chapters 7 and 8.

Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 43-84
First Short Assignment (2 pages), due September 26th (by email): Based upon a visit to Peabody Museum in which historical artifacts are viewed (to be accompanied, at your choice, by a reading of the Jesuit Relations), describe a pattern practices of diplomacy or “international” relations between European settlers and Native American populations. Describe how this pattern might qualify as an institution, how it may have been cemented in practice (an “equilibrium” of sorts, using either North or Pierson),

October 2nd: Colonial North America III: Republicanism and the American Revolution

A critical source for reading about, and understanding the American Revolution is found in the very materials used by Wood: pamphlets. Through Hollis, you can access the Early American Imprints, Series I and II (Evans), which contain the material used by Wood as well as hundreds upon hundreds of other print materials now available electronically.

Pennsylvania Constitution of 1776; available at Yale Law School’s Avalon Project [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/pa08.asp]


Wood, The Creation of the American Republic.

- Chapter 1, Sections 1,2, 4, 5 (pp. 3-18, 28-43).
- Chapter 2, Sections 1-5 & 7 (pp. 46-75 & 83-91).
- Chapter 4, Sections 1-4 (pp. 127-161)
- Chapter 5, Section 1 (pp. 162-173)
- Chapter 6, Sections 1 & 2 (pp. 197-206)

White, The Middle Ground, Chapter 9. [Pay most attention to sections on “Indian hating.”]

Davis and Mintz, Boisterous Sea of Liberty, 139-86

October 9th and October 16th: The Constitution and its Ratification:

The Federalist, Numbers 1, 2, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 23, 30, 33, 35, 36, 39, 45, 51, 63, 69, 70, 78, 84, 85.

Anti-Federalist Selections:

(1) Address of the Pennsylvania Minority
http://www.constitution.org/afp/pennmi00.htm
- Chapter 8, Sections 1 & 2 (pp. 306-19)
- Chapter 9, Sections 1-3 (pp. 344-372)
- Chapter 10, Sections 1-4 (pp. 393-413)

Week 2:
- Chapters 11-13, passim.

Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty,* 226-252

John Adams, *Thoughts on Government* [pamphlet]


White, *The Middle Ground,* Chapters 10 and 11.

**October 23rd: The Postal System and American Political Development**


**October 30th: Political Society in the Early Republic towards Jacksonian Democracy**


James Madison, Note to his Speech on the Right of Suffrage, 1821;
Thomas W. Dorr, “An Address to the People of Rhode Island,” 1834
•  http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=387

David Walker, David Walker's Appeal (Boston, 1830), excerpt;

The Workingman's Committee of Philadelphia on the state of public instruction in Pennsylvania, 1830

Selected petitions (digitized) from the Digital Archive of Massachusetts Anti-Slavery and Anti-Segregation Petitions – anti-slavery and anti-segregation, or petitions related to the Bank of the United States.

November 6th: Politics and Institutional Conflict in Jacksonian America

A. The Bank of the United States:

B: The Nullification Crisis

C. Indian Removal

Second Short Assignment (2-3 pages, due November 7th by e-mail): Using either a selection of two readings from the above list, or a consultation of some of the petitions from the
Harvard Petitions Project, discuss how your selection illustrates either (a) the changing nature of political organization in the antebellum period or (b) the changing nature of political ideology during the antebellum period.

**November 13th: The First and Second Party Systems, and the Creation of the Mass Party**


The Boston Mechanics' and Laborers' Mutual Benefit Association on the formation of its cooperative society, 1845


**November 20th: Transformations in Congress: Committees and Leadership**


P Carpenter Notes on Antebellum Congressional Organization [handout].

**November 27th: Abolition and Reform Movements**


Davis and Mintz, *Boisterous Sea of Liberty*, 381-404


Review of antislavery petitions from National Archives and from Massachusetts State Archives; provided from Professor Carpenter’s ongoing research and teaching project.


December 4th: The Creation of the Republican Party and the Coming of the Civil War

Davis and Mintz, Boisterous Sea of Liberty, 409-489.
