This is a graduate readings and discussion course considering some key texts and major debates in American political and policy history, with a particular focus on new directions in the field and multidisciplinary methodological approaches that fall under the broader umbrella of American Political Development (APD). Topics include: race, gender, and class in the construction of the state; grassroots activism; sociocultural politics; the role of religious and charitable organizations; market-government relations; federalism and regionalism; political communication; political biography; formal politics and the evolution of the two major political parties; and American state-building in comparative perspective.

**READINGS**

All in paperback and available for purchase at the University Bookstore:

Michael McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928*
Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (1955)

Required articles for this course can be found via the class website. For every week’s subfield, I have listed recommended books that are considered important contributions to the historiography. You are not required to read these books for class but may use the list as a starting point in preparation of
The requirements are:

- completion of readings, and collegial and productive participation in discussion are weighed heavily.

- The assignments in this course are intended to support your professional education and are designed so that they may be repurposed at a later date in your training or your career. Naturally, participation, completion of readings, and collegial and productive participation in discussion are weighed heavily. The requirements are:

1. To assist in close reading of the text and provide some framing questions for class discussion (as well as give you a written summary of each book for future use), every student will be responsible for posting a 400-500 word entry of notes and questions on the week’s assigned reading on GoPost the night before class every week (including the first week). Notes should include a succinct restatement of each reading’s main argument; your assessment of whether the author makes the argument successfully; and at least two meaty questions raised by this reading that you would like to see discussed in class. Keep archived copies of your GoPost entries so that you can consult them during exam preparation, etc.

2. At least once during the quarter, each student will serve as a discussion leader and co-teacher. Responsibilities of the discussion leader are to read and synthesize the major questions posed by colleague’s GoPost entries that week, to map out a discussion facilitation plan in email consultation with the professor the morning of class, and to join the professor in leading discussion. You will sign up for discussion leadership on the first day of class.

3. Write a 4-page book review of one of the texts listed as additional reading on this syllabus, to be posted on GoPost. These reviews are designed to expose the group to a wider historiography as well as provide you with the opportunity to do additional reading in an area of particular interest. The reviews should be similar in length and content to those found in a refereed scholarly journal like the American Historical Review. You will sign up for a book review the first week of class. This can be submitted at any time during the quarter, and no later than the last class meeting.

4. Political historians often appear on the op-ed pages of local and national newspapers and media outlets, providing a balanced and historical perspective often lacking from most political punditry. Your assignment is to write an 800-1000 word op-ed article that places a current political debate in historical perspective. This can be submitted at any time during the quarter, and no later than the last class meeting.

5. The end-of-term assignment is a historiographic review essay of about 3000 words focusing on one particular theme or subject area in political and policy history. You are encouraged to choose a topic that is relevant to your graduate training and to your future work; students from disciplines other than history can engage the scholarship in their field as well as relevant historiography. However, use this as an opportunity to stretch beyond your comfort zone and engage a field that is slightly outside of your main area of focus. I also encourage you to meet with me about your topic so that we can make sure your subject is neither too broad nor too narrow. As a linked component of this assignment, you should draw up a 1-2 page bibliography on your chosen thematic focus, and refer to these works in your review. Books on this list can
include those assigned in the course. The essay should be emailed to me by 5PM on the Friday of exam week.

Assignments are weighed as follows: engaged, rigorous, verbal class participation and GoPost 35%; discussion leadership 15%; book review 10%; op-ed 10%; final essay 30%.

***Please note that most due dates are flexible so that you can accommodate other teaching and research demands. However, I strongly encourage you to manage your time wisely and not wait until the end of the quarter to submit all this work. Also be advised that I do not allow incompleted takes outside of truly extraordinary circumstances.***

**SCHEDULE**

**10/1** Defining political and policy history


“Special Issue: New Directions in Policy History,” *Journal of Policy History* 17:1, pp. iii-154

**10/8** Political histories of early America


Rosemarie Zagarri, “Women and Party Conflict in the Early Republic,” in *Beyond the Founders*

**10/15** The American State in the Nineteenth Century


**10/22** Populists and partisans


Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (1955)

**10/29** The South


11/5  **Progressive state-building**


11/12 **Welfare states**


11/19 **Capitalism and corporations**


11/26 **Citizenship**


12/3 **Suburban politics and state policy**


12/13 FINAL ESSAY SHOULD BE EMAILED TO INSTRUCTOR BY 5:00 P.M.

Additional readings in American political and policy history

Sven Beckert, The Monied Metropolis, New York City and the Consolidation of the American Bourgeoisie, 1850-1896 (2001)
Margaret Weir, Politics and Jobs: The Boundaries of Employment Policy in the United States (1992)
Stuart Brandes, American Welfare Capitalism, 1880–1940 (1976)
Sanford Jacoby, Modern Manors: Welfare Capitalism since the New Deal (1997)
Michael Brown, Race, Money, and the American Welfare State (1999)