

PS 398 American Political Economy

Seminar Leader: Boris Vormann
Course Times: Tues & Thurs 14:00-15:30
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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

A small state, individual entrepreneurialism and free markets are often seen as the bedrocks of American exceptionalism and as the characteristic features of capitalism during the long American Century. This course examines the actual role of the US state in creating and shaping markets at different historical moments to explore the intricate relationship between evolving political institutions and different forms of state-market arrangements. We begin our discussions in the post-bellum period of the late 19th century, when the US federal state consolidated its administrative capacities and helped give rise to national markets. Our discussions about the New Deal Order and a Fordist-Keynesian regime will focus on new compromises between businesses and labor as well as new visions of citizenship and social welfare in a changing global context. In the last section of the class, we will discuss the US-American variants of marketization and welfare state retrenchment and their implications for our present. In tracing the arguable distinctiveness of the American state, this course engages different lineages and traditions of state theory, literature on American Political Development (APD), and pivotal texts in different public policy fields.

Requirements

Reading material

- Marc Eisner, American Political Economy. 2nd Edition. Routledge, 2014. (*Make sure to get the right edition!*)
- Class Reader (available at the library)

Class preparation

In preparation for class, read the texts thoughtfully and engage with their core argument. Take notes while reading and try to identify questions in advance: Why do the authors argue as they do? How do they raise and substantiate their claims? How does their line of argumentation relate to earlier readings and discussions in class?

Attendance

Attendance at ALL classes is expected, as regular attendance is essential to the success of this course. There will be an attendance sheet for every session. Each absence beyond two (that is more than two absences from two sessions of 90 minutes without leave of absence from the seminar leader) will lead to the subtraction of 1 point from the overall final grade. Late arrival counts as an absence. If you miss more than 30 percent of the sessions you cannot pass the class.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2021: Some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic. In addition, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. Instructors should make efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assignments, Grade Breakdown and Essay Deadlines

Oral

- **Classroom Participation (2*15%)** **30%**
This seminar involves thoughtful and active participation in class discussions and working groups. This includes a persistent reflection on current events related to the course's core themes. The classroom is a protected space and you should feel free to voice your arguments and comments. Please do not hesitate to address the seminar leader if you feel that this is not the case.

Written

- **10 Response Papers (each ~500 words; 10*7%)** **70%**
Each student is required to write 10 response papers (1.5-spaced, 12 pt., Times New Roman) on sessions of their choice within the section slots (i.e., two response paper for the first section; four responses in each subsections of section II). Response papers should articulate a short argument about a given reading, seeking to embed an analysis of the primary texts' main tenets in the broader context of earlier class discussions.
 - **Response papers need to be submitted per email by the beginning of the respective session. Late submissions will not be accepted.**

Policy on Late Submission of Papers and Academic Integrity

Late submissions will be downgraded by 5 points, and by an additional 2 points per extra day. After four weeks of the deadline the essay cannot receive a grade of higher than C. A week thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Schedule

Week Beginning	Tuesday	Thursday	Assignments
I. State theory and American Exceptionalism			
1 Feb 1	Introduction: American Exceptionalism Greenspan and Woolridge, <i>Capitalism in America</i> , Intro	Origins of the State Spruyt, <i>The Sovereign State</i> , Intro Strayer, <i>Medieval Origins</i> , I	2 Response Papers
2 Feb 8	Rise of the State System Wallerstein, <i>The Rise of the States System</i>	States and Capitalism Giddens, <i>Nation-State and Violence</i> , Ch. 6	
3 Feb 15	The State as a Concept Jessop, <i>The State</i> , Ch. 2	A Theory of the Modern State Mann, <i>The Sources of Social Power</i> , Ch. 3	
4 Feb 22	American Political Development Bensel, <i>Political Economy and American Political Development</i>	Beyond State-Market Dichotomies Eisner, <i>American Political Economy</i> , Chs. 1 & 2	
II. State-Market Regimes			
Consolidation of a National Political Economy			
5 Mar 1	Revolution Mann, <i>The American Revolution and the institutionalization of confederal capitalist liberalism</i>	Early Republic Gould, <i>War by other Means: Mercantilism and Free Trade in the Age of the American Revolution</i>	4 Response Papers
6 Mar 8	Revisiting the Founders Parenti, <i>Radical Hamilton</i>	Early State-Building Katznelson, <i>Flexible Capacity: The Military and Early American State Building</i>	
7 March 15	The US-American State Bright, <i>The State in the United States During the 19th Century</i>	State Capacity Skowronek, <i>Building the New American State</i>	
8 March 22	Public Programs Clemens, <i>Lineages Rube Goldberg State</i>	Regulatory State Eisner, <i>APE</i> , Ch. 3/4	

**Spring Break
(March 29-Apr 5)**

9
Apr 5

Keynesian Welfare State
Eisner, *APE*, Chs. 5&6

Embedded Liberalism
Reich, *The Road to Supercapitalism*

Neoliberalization and State Persistence

10
April 12

State on the Retreat?
Eisner, *APE*, Chs. 7&8

State Persistence
Eisner, *APE*, Chs. 9/10/11

11
April 19

Powerlessness?
Weiss, *The Myth of the Powerless State*

Insecurity
Béland, *States of Global Insecurity*

12
April 26

Labor Markets and Welfare
Peck, *Workfare States*

Tax Policy
Mettler, *The Submerged State*

**4 Response
Papers**

13
May 3

State of Innovation
Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State*

Policy State
Skowronek and Orren, *The Policy State:
An American Predicament*

14
May 10

Global Logistics
Khalili, *Sinews of War and Trade*

Conclusions
Hacker and Pierson, *American Amnesia*