

# **Introduction to American Politics**

## **Course Syllabus**

**Instructor: Professor Lynda Dodd**  
**Office: 125 Harrison**  
**Office Hours: Mon. & Wed. 12:10-1**  
**and by app't**

**Class Location: 012 HRN**

### **I. Description and Objectives**

This course is designed to provide a broad overview of American ideals, politics and government. An emphasis will be placed on the historical development of the American state, and the extent to which current political practices conform to this country's most honored values.

The course is divided into three sections. Part I addresses the era of the creation of the United States Constitution, and we will devote special attention to the question of regime structure, as addressed in the Federalist Papers and in the writings of their most prominent critics. We will go on to examine in Part II the nature of the American electoral and party system and their relationship to the operations of interest groups and social movements. Part III addresses American political institutions. In our sessions on Congress, the Presidency, bureaucracy, and the Supreme Court, we will examine formal organizations and powers, their historical evolution, and the conflicts and tensions among them. We will be concerned with the way in which these institutions structure the policy process and shape the policy agenda.

### **II. Course Texts**

The following required textbook is available for purchase at the Shriver Center Bookstore:

- Karen O'Connor and Larry Sabato, *American Government: Continuity and Change*, 2004 edition ("O'Connor & Sabato")

- The textbook has a web site that some of you may find helpful for review, or for links to further resources.
- Assigned course readings are available on the internet (via links in the syllabus, JSTOR, or Lexis-Nexis), or will be handed out in class. Items marked “eR” are available on electronic reserve.
- There will be a Blackboard site for this class, and I will post the JSTOR and Lexis documents on that site, under “Course Documents.” The Blackboard site should be up and running by the end of the first week of class.
- For current events coverage, there are a number of wonderful resources available on-line. One of the best – especially for those of you preferring an efficient overview of the daily print media and the presidential election campaign – is the ABC News’ The Note.

### **III. Course Requirements and Grading**

- There is a midterm examination, covering both assigned readings and lectures, which is worth 30% of your course grade. The midterm examination is closed book, and includes short answer identification questions, and 1-2 essay questions. I will provide you with a study guide to help you prepare for the exam.
- You are also required to complete two 5-7 page critical response essays, worth a total of 25% of your course grade. Three essay due dates are listed on the schedule below. You are required to turn in two out of the three essay assignments. You have the option of submitting all three essays, and the two for which you receive the highest grades will count towards your final grade in the course. Please note that on the date that an essay is due, they must be turned in to me (via email attachment, in the department, or to me personally in class) before the start of the class session. Late assignments will be penalized by one-third grade per day. If, for example, on the due date for the first essay, you miss class in order to turn in your essay during the class session or after class, a grade of an A- will automatically convert to a B+.
- The closed book final examination is worth 30% of your course grade. The short identification and essay questions are designed to test primarily the assigned readings and lectures following the midterm examination. However, in your final examination, you will be expected to apply and make use of the issues and material discussed throughout the course. I will provide you with a study guide to help you prepare for the exam.
- Class participation and weekly quizzes will be worth 15% of your course grade.

## IV. Schedule of Readings and Assignments

### A. Why Study American Politics?

#### Apathy or Fury?

- O'Connor and Sabato, Ch. 1

#### Background

- E.J. Dionne, "Why Americans Hate Politics, A Reprise," Brookings Review (Winter 2000)

- Thomas Patterson, "Why Do So Many Americans Hate Politics?" History News Network (November 25, 2002) (read all five parts)

#### The Politics of "Hatred" In 2004

- Jonathan Chait, "Mad About You: The Case for Bush Hatred," The New Republic (September 29, 2003)

- John F. Dickerson and Karen Tumulty, "President Bush: Love Him, Hate Him?" Time (December 1, 2003) (Lexis-Nexis)

- Robert Samuelson, "Bush-Hatred: Fearful Loathing," Washington Post (December 30, 2003) (Lexis-Nexis)

#### Recommended

- The Campus Attitudes Towards Politics and Public Service (CAPPS) Survey, 2003, Harvard University Institute of Politics, Kennedy School of Government

- Stephen Earl Bennett, "Why Young Americans Hate Politics, and What We Should Do About It," 30 PS: POL. SCI. & POL. 47 (1997) (eR)

- \_\_\_\_\_, "Young Americans' Indifference to Media Coverage of Public Affairs," 31 PS: POL. SCI. & POL. 535 (September 1998)

- Ted Halstead, "A Politics for Generation X," The Atlantic Monthly (August 1999) & Generation Xers Respond to Halstead: A Roundtable

- Diana Schaub, "On the Character of Generation X," The Public Interest (Fall 1999)

- David Brooks, "The Organization Kid," The Atlantic Monthly (April 2001)

- \_\_\_\_\_, "War and Man at Yale: The students at Yale are still Organization Kids, but now they understand that ideas matter," *The Weekly Standard* (Oct. 29, 2001)
- American Prospect Special Report, Youth and Politics (September 12, 2003)
- Paul Rogat Loeb, *The Soul of a Citizen: Living With Conviction in a Cynical Time* (1999)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *Generation at the Crossroads: Apathy and Action on the American Campus* (1995)

## **B. *The Federalist*, Regime Structure, and the "American Creed"**

### **Creating the Constitution**

- The Constitution of the United States, in [The Founders' Constitution Online](#)
- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 2
- John Roche, "The Founding Fathers: A Reform Caucus in Action," 55 *AM. POL. SCI. REV.* 799 (1961) (JSTOR)
- Justice Thurgood Marshall, "A Bicentennial View from the Supreme Court," 101 *HARV. L. REV.* 1 (1987) (JSTOR)

### **Recommended**

- Charles Beard, *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* (1913)
- Max Farrand, *The Framing of the Constitution of the United States* (1962)
- Gordon Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (1972)
- James Q. Wilson, "Interests and Deliberation in the American Republic," 23 *PS: POL. SCI. AND POL.* 558 (1990) (eR)
- William Nelson, "Reason and Compromise in the Establishment of the Federal Constitution," 44 *WM. & MARY Q.* 458 (1987) (JSTOR)
- Calvin Jillson, "Constitution-making: Alignment and Realignment in the Federal Convention of 1787," 75 *AM. POL. SCI. REV.* 598 (1981) (JSTOR)
- Jack Rakove, *Original Meanings: Politics and Ideas in the Making of the Constitution* (1996)

### **Defending the Constitution: *The Federalist***

- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 2

From [The Founders' Constitution Online](#),

- Federalist Nos. 10, 23, and 51

- Alpheus T. Mason, "The Federalist – A Split Personality," 57 AM. HIST. REV. 625 (1952) (JSTOR)

### **Dissenters: The Anti-Federalists and their Heirs**

From [The Founders' Constitution Online](#),

- Centinel No. 1, Oct. 5, 1787

- Essays of Brutus, No. 5, Dec. 13, 1787; No. 6, Dec. 27, 1787; No. 7, Jan. 3, 1788; No. 9, Jan. 17, 1788

- Agrippa No. 4, Dec. 7, 1787

- *The Address and Reasons of Dissent of the Minority of the Convention of Pennsylvania to Their Constituents*, Dec. 18, 1787 [scroll down to "Pennsylvania Convention Minority"]

### **The Founders Today: Who Cares?**

- H.W. Brands, "[Founders Chic](#)," The Atlantic Monthly (September 2003) & [Interview with Brands](#)

- Chris Mooney, "[Losers: Bush's Ally, the Federalist Society, Resurrects the Views of the Vanquished in the Constitutional Debate -- the Anti-Federalists](#)," American Prospect (April 2001)

### **Recommended**

- Richard Hofstadter, "The Founding Fathers: An Age of Realism," in *The American Political Tradition* (1948)

- Herbert J. Storing, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For: The Political Thought of the Opponents of the Constitution* (1981)

- David F. Epstein, *The Political Theory of the Federalist* (1984)

- Isaac Kramnick, "The Discourse of Politics in 1787: The Constitution and Its Critics on Individualism, Community, and the State," in *To Form a More Perfect Union: The Critical Ideas of the Constitution* (Herman Belz et al. eds., 1992)

- Gordon S. Wood, "Impartiality in America, *James Madison: Writings*" New Republic (Dec. 6, 1999) (Lexis-Nexis)

- Joseph Ellis, *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (2000)

- \_\_\_\_\_, "History v. Alexander Hamilton," New Yorker (Oct. 29, 2001) (eR)

## **Federalism and the Continuing Debate Over Centralization**

- Federalist No. 16, 17, 39, and 46
- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 3
- Martha Derthick, "American Federalism: Half-Full or Half-Empty?"  
Brookings Review (Winter 2000)
- Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "A Question of Power," American Prospect  
(April 2001)
- Alan Brinkley, "The National Purpose," American Prospect (November  
2001)

### **Recommended**

- Samuel Beer, *To Make a Nation: The Rediscovery of American  
Federalism* (1993)
- Stephen Skowronek, *Building a New American State* (1982)
- Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (1976)
- Timothy Conlan, *From New Federalism to Devolution: Twenty-Five  
Years of Intergovernmental Reform* (1998)

## **American Culture: Distinguishing "Red" and "Blue" Americans**

- Michael Barone, "The 49 Percent Nation," National Journal (June 9,  
2001) (eR)
- Terry Teachout, "Republican Nation, Democratic Nation?" Commentary  
23-9 (January 2001); and reply by Gertrude Himmelfarb, "Two Nations or  
Two Cultures?" at 29-30. (eR)
- David Brooks, "Are We Really One Country? A Report on 'Red' and  
'Blue' America," The Atlantic Monthly (December 2001) (eR)
- Michael Barone, "Life, Liberty, and Property," National Journal  
(February 14, 2003) (eR)

### **Recommended**

- James David Hunter, *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*  
(1991)
- Todd Gitlin, *The Twilight of Common Dreams: Why America is Wracked  
By Culture Wars* (1995)
- Gertrude Himmelfarb, *One Nation, Two Cultures* (1999)
- Robert J. Blendon et al., "The 60s and the 90s: America's Political,  
Moral, and Religious Values, Then and Now," Brookings Review (Spring  
1999)

## **American Ideals: Equal Opportunity for All?**

- The Declaration of Independence
- Jennifer Hochschild, "What is the American Dream?" in *Facing up to the American Dream* (1996) (eR)
- Glenn Loury, "The Divided Society and the Democratic Idea," University Lecture, Boston University, October 7, 1996
- Noy Thrupkoew, "Daughters of the Revolution: Today's Young Women Have Profited From Feminism, But Will They Defend It?" *American Prospect* (October 1, 2003)

### **Recommended**

- Philip A. Klinker and Rogers M. Smith, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America* (1999)
- New York Times, *How Race is Lived in America: Pulling Together, Pulling Apart* (2002), a book based on a fifteen-part, 2001 Pulitzer Prize-winning series on race- relations in the United States.
- Dan Seligman, "How Race is Written in America," *Commentary* (July/August 2001) (eR)
- Glenn Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Equality* (2002)
- Deborah Rhode, *Speaking of Sex: The Denial of Gender Inequality* (1999)

### **\*\*\* Critical Response Essay #1 \*\*\***

## **C. Intermediary Institutions: Links Between Government and Citizen**

### **Public Opinion**

- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 11
- Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters* (1997) (selections) (eR)
- Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, "The Myth of the Pandering Politician," *The Public Perspective* (April/May 1997) (eR)
- John Zaller, "Monica Lewinsky's Contribution to Political Science," 31 *PS: POL. SCI. AND POL.* 182 (1998) (eR)
- Joshua Green, "The Other War Room: President Bush Doesn't Believe in Polling – Just Ask His Pollsters," *Washington Monthly* (April 2002)

### **Recommended**

- John Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (1992)

- Benjamin Page et al., "What Moves Public Opinion?" 81 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 23 (1987) (JSTOR)
- \_\_\_\_\_, *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences* (1992)
- Robert Y. Shapiro and Lawrence R. Jacobs, "Public Opinion, Public Policy, and Democracy," in *Public Opinion* (Carol Glynn et al. eds., 1999)
- Lawrence R. Jacobs and Robert Y. Shapiro, "The Politicization of Public Opinion: The Fight for the Pulpit," in *The Clinton Administration and Social Policy* (1998)

### **Media and Politics**

- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 15
- James Fallows, "Why Americans Hate the Media," *The Atlantic Monthly* (February 1996)
- Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel, "Campaign Lite: Why Reporters Won't Tell Us What We Need To Know," *Washington Monthly* (January/February 2001)

### **Recommended**

- W. Lance Bennett and Robert M. Entman eds., *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy* (2001)
- "Democracy and the Internet," *Boston Review* (Summer 2001) (New Democracy Forum: article by Cass Sunstein, "The Daily Me," with responses)
- "The Future of Media," *Boston Review* (Summer 1998) (New Democracy Forum: article by Robert W. McChesney, "Making Media Democratic," with responses)
- Timothy E. Cook, *Governing With the News: The News Media as a Political Institution* (1998)

### **Elections and Campaigns**

- O'Connor & Sabato, Chs. 13-14

### **America's Campaigning Hell**

- Anthony King, "Running Scared," *The Atlantic Monthly* (January 1997)
- David Brooks, "How to Run for President," *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 2003)
- Carl Cannon, "Uncivil Liberties," *National Journal* (September 19, 2003)



## Money & Campaigns

- Seth Gitell, "The Democratic Party Suicide Bill," The Atlantic Monthly (July 2003)
- news packet on the BCRA and the Supreme Court, available on Blackboard

## How Americans Vote

- Michael Schudson, "America's Ignorant Voters," The Wilson Quarterly (Spring 2000)

## Recommended

- Center for Voting and Democracy (electoral reform)
- Center for Responsive Politics (campaign finance reform)
- Darrell M. West, *Checkbook Democracy: How Money Corrupts Political Campaigns* (2000)
- Thomas L. Gais, *Improper Influence: Campaign Finance Law, Political Interest Groups, and the Problem of Equality* (1996)

## **Do "Special Interests" Have Too Much Power?**

- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 16
- Robert H. Salisbury, "The Paradox of Interest Groups in Washington: More Groups, Less Clout" in *The New American Political System* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Anthony King ed., 1990) (eR)
- Peter Stone, et. al., "Obstacle Course," National Journal (December 6, 2002)
- Nicholas Confessore, "Welcome to the Machine: How the GOP Disciplined K Street and Made Bush Supreme," Washington Monthly (July/August 2003)

## Recommended

- Jack Walker, "The Origins and Maintenance of Interest Groups in America," 77 AM. POL. SCI. REV. 390 (1983) (JSTOR)
- Kevin W. Hula, "Rounding Up the Usual Suspects: Forging Interest Group Connections in Washington," in *Interest Group Politics* (Allen J. Ciglar and Burdett A. Loomis eds., 1995)
- Jonathan Rauch, *Demosclerosis* (1995)
- Susanne Lohmann, "An Information Rationale for the Power of Special Interests," 92 AM. POL. SCI. REV 809 (December 1998) (JSTOR)
- John B. Judis, *The Paradox of American Democracy: Elites, Special Interests, and the Betrayal of Public Trust* (2001)

## **Civic Participation: Who Participates, What Do They Do, and Why Does it Matter?**

- Robert D. Putnam, "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," American Prospect (December 1996)
- William A. Galston and Peter Levine, "America's Civic Condition: A Glance at the Evidence," Brookings Review (Fall 1997)

### **Recommended**

- Sidney Verba et al., "The Big Tilt: Participatory Inequality in America," American Prospect (May/June 1997)
- Theda Skocpol, "The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement in American Democracy," 21 SOC. SCI. HIST. 455 (1997) (eR)
- W. Lance Bennett, "The UnCivic Culture: Communication, Identity, and the Rise of Lifestyle Politics," 31 PS: POL. SCI. & POL. 740 (1998) (JSTOR)
- Steven E. Scheier, *By Invitation Only: The Rise of Exclusive Politics in the United States* (2000)

## **The Party System: Does the U.S. Need "Stronger Parties"? More Parties?**

- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 12
- James W. Ceaser, "Political Parties – Declining, Stabilizing, or Resurging?" in *The New American Political System* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Anthony King ed., 1990) (eR)
- Richard M. Valelly, "Who Needs Parties?" American Prospect (August 2000)

### **Recommended**

- John Aldrich, *Why Parties? The Origin and Transformation of Party Politics in America* (1995)
- APSA, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party Government System: A Report of the Committee on Political Parties," 44 AM. POL. SCI. REV. (1950) Supplement
- Retrospective on the 1950 APSA Report, "Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System," at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington DC
- Theodore J. Lowi & Joseph Romance, *A Republic of Parties? Debating the Two-Party System* (1998)

\*\*\* Critical Response Essay #2 \*\*\*

**D. Federal Policymaking and the Institutions of National Government**

**The Problem of Presidential Power**

- Federalist Papers #70
- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 8
- Steven Stark, "The First Postmodern Presidency," *The Atlantic Monthly* (April 1993)
- Jacob Weisberg, "Bill Clinton: The Governor-President," *N.Y. Times Magazine* (January 17, 1999) (Lexis-Nexis)
- Richard E. Neustadt, "The Weakening White House," 31 *BR. J. OF POL. SCI.* 1 (2001) (eR)
- Fred Greenstein, "George W. Bush and Ghosts of Presidents Past," 34 *PS: POL. SCI. & POL.* 77 (2001) (eR)

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**The Bush White House: Early Assessments**

Richard Brookhiser, "Close-Up: The Mind of George W. Bush," *The Atlantic Monthly* (March 2003) (eR)

Carl Cannon, "Judging Bush," *National Journal* (June 5, 2003) (eR)

Princeton University, "The Bush Presidency: An Early Assessment"

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**Recommended:**

- Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents* (rev. ed. 1990)
- Stephen Skowronek, *The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to Bill Clinton* (1997)
- Charles O. Jones, *The Presidency in a Separated System* (1994)
- Marc Landy and Sidney M. Milkis, *Presidential Greatness* (2000)

**Congress: Representation v. Governance**

- O'Connor and Sabato, Ch. 7
- House and Senate Procedures, "How Our Laws Are Made"

- Steven Stark, "Too Representative Government," The Atlantic Monthly (May 1995)

### Recommended

- David Mayhew, *Congress: The Electoral Connection* (1974)
- Kenneth Shepsle, "The Changing Textbook Congress," in *Can the Government Govern?* (John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson eds., 1988)
- Morris Fiorina, *Congress: Keystone of the Washington Establishment* (1977)
- \_\_\_\_\_, "Keystone' Reconsidered," in *Congress Reconsidered 7<sup>th</sup>* ed. (Lawrence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer eds., 2001).

### **Gridlock: Why It's So Hard to Get Anything Done in Washington**

- Sarah Binder, "Going Nowhere: A Gridlocked Congress," Brookings Review (Winter 2000)

### Recommended

- Daniel Lazare, *The Frozen Republic: How the Constitution is Paralyzing American Democracy* (1997)
- Sarah Binder, "Congress, the Executive, and the Production of Public Policy: United We Govern?" in *Congress Reconsidered 7<sup>th</sup>* ed. (Laurence Dodd and Bruce Oppenheimer eds., 2001) (eR)

### **Solution: The Return of the Imperial Presidency?**

- Alexis Simendinger, "The Power of One," National Journal (January 25, 2002) (eR)
- Kirk Victor, "Escalating Hostilities," National Journal (October 3, 2003)

### **Reform "Successes": The Case of Welfare Reform**

- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 17
- R. Kent Weaver, "Ending Welfare As We Know It," in *The Social Divide: Political Parties and the Future of Activist Governance* (Margaret Weir ed., 1998) (eR)
- Steven M. Teles and Tim Prinz, "The New Politics of Welfare Policy," prepared for the New Politics of Public Policy Conference, November 21-22, 1997, Brandeis University (eR)
- Jason DePaule, "What Welfare to Work Really Means," N.Y. Times Magazine (December 20, 1998) (Lexis-Nexis)

- Richard P. Nathan and Thomas L. Gais, "Federal and State Roles in Welfare: Is Devolution Working?" *Brookings Review* (Summer 2001)

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PBS POV Documentary: "Take It From Me," by Emily Abt (a profile of welfare recipients, before and after the 1996 welfare reforms)

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### Recommended

- William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor* (1996)
- Bruce Katz and Katherine Allen, "Help Wanted: Connecting Inner-City Job Seekers With Suburban Jobs," *Brookings Review* (Fall 1999)
- Marty Gilens, *Why Americans Hate Welfare: Race, Media, and the Politics of Antipoverty Policy* (1999)

### **The "Fourth Branch": Washington Bureaucracies**

- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 9
- John B. Judis, "It's the EPA and OSHA, Stupid!" *American Prospect* (September/October 2000)
- E.J. Dionne, Jr., "'Political Hacks' v. 'Bureaucrats': Can't Public Servants Get Some Respect?" *Brookings Review* (Spring 2001)
- Nicholas Thompson, "Finding the Civil Service's Secret Sex Appeal: Why the Brightest Young People Shy Away From Government," *Washington Monthly* (November 2000)
- Paul Light, "The Empty Government Talent Pool: The New Public Service Arrives," *Brookings Review* (Winter 2000)

### Recommended:

- James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (1989)
- Terry M. Moe, "The Politics of Bureaucratic Structure," in *Can the Government Govern?* (John E. Chubb and Paul E. Peterson eds., 1989)
- James W. Fesler and Donald F. Kettl, *The Politics of the Administrative Process* (1991)
- Charles T. Goodsell, *The Case for Bureaucracy* (1994)
- Kenneth J. Meier, "Bureaucracy and Democracy: The Case for More Bureaucracy and Less Democracy," *57 PUB. ADM. REV.* 193 (1997)

## **Foreign Policy-Making**

- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 19
- James Mann, "Not Your Father's Foreign Policy," American Prospect (April 2001)
- Steven E. Miller, "The End of Unilateralism, Or Unilateralism Redux?" The Washington Quarterly (Winter 2002)
- James Kitfield, "Fractured Alliances," National Journal (March 7, 2003)

## **Recommended**

- Kenneth Waltz, "Globalization and American Power," The National Interest (Spring 2000) (eR)
- Samuel Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," Foreign Affairs (March/April 1999) (eR)
- Robert Kaplan, "Looking the World in the Eye: Samuel Huntington's Views..." The Atlantic Monthly (December 2001), 68-82 (eR)

## **The Role of the Supreme Court in American Politics**

- Federalist Paper # 78
- O'Connor & Sabato, Ch. 10
- Dahl, "Decision-Making in a Democracy: The Supreme Court as National Policy-Maker" 6 J. PUB. LAW 279 (1957)
- Rosenberg, *The Hollow Hope: Can Courts Bring About Social Change?* (1991) (selections)

## **Recommended:**

- David M. O'Brien, *Storm Center* 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (2001)
- Laurence Baum, *The American Supreme Court* 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (2001)
- Peter Irons, *A People's History of the Supreme Court* (1999)
- James Patterson, *Brown v. Board of Education: A Civil Rights Milestone and Its Troubled Legacy* (2001)

## **Review Session**

