This class will focus on theoretical approaches to the study of agenda-setting in both American and comparative settings, with emphasis on studies related to the policy agendas project. Students will engage in substantial research or literature review projects with progress reports and interim assignments due periodically during the semester. Projects may be either literature / theory based or may be empirical studies using agendas project or other data sources. I encourage you to think in the first two weeks about general areas that interest you. Students wanting credit in comparative or American politics may do so depending on their term paper assignments; by the nature of the syllabus comparative students may need to do more reading to be up to speed on the comparative literature as we cannot cover more than a small fraction of it in class discussion.

Assignments will include short discussion papers due from each student five times throughout the semester, with the professor using peer pressure and informal suggestions to ensure that each week a sampling of students is prepared to lead the discussion on various topics based on their prepared paper. These will be in response to discussion topics / paper assignments distributed each week in class for the following week’s discussion. All students should do the readings with these in mind, and they will serve as an agenda for the seminar. The one-page (single spaced) papers are due by email attachment by noon on the day of class. Discussion and active participation is fundamental. Note that it counts for 20 percent of the grade, and I will not necessarily assign participation grades only within a narrow B+ to A range. Readings are considerable but not so onerous that you should not be able to do all of them before class, and I expect that. Note that it is fine to come to class not having understood something, as long as you come with those questions and ask them.

Term papers can be in American or comparative politics and may be original data projects or focused on an extensive literature review and development of a theoretical argument or proposal for a future research project. I encourage both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The syllabus below allows for many “taking off points” for term paper projects and I encourage you to think of how an agendas approach can be useful for a variety of studies. I will encourage discussion of your term papers in class discussion so that all students can get a feeling for the range of studies being done and the strengths and problems of each approach. Note that it will be impossible to do well in this project by starting at the last minute, so I have a number of interim assignments designed to keep you on track throughout the semester. These also allow me to give you feedback along the way to push your project to a higher level. The grades
associated with these interim assignments are not huge, but they do add up, so make sure to hand them in on time and to take them seriously. You will be pleasantly surprised what a good term paper you can do if you work on it regularly rather than all in a rush at the last second. (It may become a habit, who knows!)

Grades will be calculated according to this formula:

- Participation 20
- 5 weekly assignments, equally weighted 25
- 4 Term paper draft assignments, equally weighted 20
- Term paper 35

Books for purchase:

All the required readings should be on the class web site. If some are missing let me know and I will post them. Note that in most weeks I also provide supplemental readings; these are not required so please do not freak out. I’ve also listed some at the end of the syllabus; related topics that just don’t fit into the syllabus but which may be of interest to many of you. All these supplemental readings are there for your information, further reading, or for a start on your term papers or other projects.

**Disabilities**: Please let me know in the first two weeks of class if you need any accommodation for a disability. No problem. But don’t delay in letting me know.

**Academic Honesty**: Study together but make sure the work you hand in is your own.

**Effort**: Don’t come to class unprepared to participate.

**Intimidation Factor**: I’m the author of a lot of the work discussed here. That can either be a cause not to critique and discuss, or an opportunity to engage with a person who is active in the field. I have thick skin and welcome criticism, discussion, and challenges. So feel free!
Weekly assignments and calendar

Please do all the readings listed in the first section in each weekly list below and use the others as a guide to further reading or browse them if they are of interest.

**Week 1, Jan 11. Introductions and discussion, no readings.**

Jan 18, no class, happy MLK’s birthday!

**Week 2, Jan 25. Classics and basic background.**


Additional books to buy if you ever run across them:


Good idea to get a feel for the early literature:

10. Scan APSR in JSTOR for the word “power” or “influence” in the title; you’ll see many of the biggest names in the profession struggled with how to measure power and influence in the 1950s and 1960s. They never succeeded.

**Week 3, Feb 1. Kingdon, Ambiguity, and Multiple Streams Models**

The background on where this came from:


**Week 4, Feb 8. Punctuated Equilibrium**

Note special guest Bryan Jones, class to be rescheduled for Thursday afternoon or Friday to accommodate his travel and APRG talk on Friday Feb 12


Review articles that you might find useful:


**Week 5, Feb 15. Developing a Model of Choice**

Note: **One-page memo due** describing your term paper topic in conceptual terms and a general idea of the empirical / theoretical approach.


Further reading, background


**Week 6, Feb 22. Threshold Models, Increasing Returns, Positive Feedback**


**Additional readings some of which are very fun, funny, or sad:**


**Week 7, Mar 1. Power Laws**

Note: **Annotated bibliography due.** This means you should have identified the key source material you are planning to use. You don’t have to have read it all yet but you should have identified the likely suspects. A longer bibliography is better than a short one. No need for extensive annotations, but rather just a list of readings organized by the topics that you plan to cover.

Applications: Read at least one of the following, focusing on the empirical findings:


Neat computer program to be familiar with:

9. [http://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/](http://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/) (Netlogo), and in particular the application that allows you to model Barabasi’s preferential attachment model of web linkages. Do this model yourself one click at a time, then let it run automatically for a few thousand iterations and see what the results look like. Feel free to play with the other simulation tools there as well. ([http://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/models/PreferentialAttachment](http://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/models/PreferentialAttachment))

Basic background and more applications

Mar 8, no class, happy spring break!

**Week 8, Mar 15. Attention and the Distributional Approach**

**Week 9, Mar 22. Applications.**

**Week 10, Mar 29. Heresthetics: Can People Control Agenda-Setting?**

Note: **Detailed outline of paper due.** This should include a full structure, planned cites, methods, etc. The text need not be written but the structure should be complete, in outline form. You’ll be surprised how easy it is to complete the paper if you have a complete outline in the proper order.


More Riker stuff:

**Week 11, Apr 5. Venue-Shopping: Can Actors Shop Freely?**

**Week 12, Apr 12. Comparative Studies I**

**Week 13, Apr 19. Comparative Studies II**


**Week 14, Apr 26 (final class meeting). Social Protest Studies**

**Term papers due**


Literatures we are not going to have time to cover but which may be of use to you for your papers:

Communications studies (small selection of classics):


Public Policy and “Who Leads Whom?” Studies (just a few from many):


Single-Issue Studies of Interest: US-based policy histories


Comparative / IR studies of the impact of ideas on policy communities