

**PS 201 Introduction to Political Behavior**  
**Winter 2011**  
**Course Syllabus**

**Instructor:** Dr. Swigger  
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**Office Hours:** 1-3:00 Tue., Thu. and by appointment

**INTRODUCTION:** Politics involves dynamic relationships in the struggle for power and influence. Political scientists attempt to understand these dynamics from different perspectives, often focusing on institutions and public policies while overlooking the role of individuals. However, government's very existence and purpose revolves around human actors. It follows that our study of politics must include attention to people and specifically to the attitudes and behaviors of citizens. This perspective is espoused by researchers in the field of political behavior. In this course we will analyze contemporary research on mass political behavior. In other words, our focus will be on non-elite political actors where "behavior" broadly encompasses psychological attachments, affect, cognitions, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs, in addition to overt behavior such as participation and voting. Though the course will focus on behavior in the American political context we may also look at behavior throughout the world as well.

As you read these you will quickly realize that political science involves rigorous examination of the political world based on scientific evidence. Though we are a social science, with all of the quirks and caveats that come with studying the social world, we are still a science. This means that we answer questions by forming theories and hypotheses, and collect data to test those hypotheses. There are a variety of experimental and observational methods used, and you will become familiar with most of these methods and how they are used to understand behavior in the political world.

**Attendance, Preparation & Participation.** Regular class attendance is expected. Additionally, reading assignments are to be completed before class meetings. You should be prepared at all times to discuss the readings and concepts scheduled for each class period. This is genuinely necessary for your success in this course!

**Missed Assignments.** You must notify the instructor at least one week in advance if you anticipate a conflict with the date of graded material. Excuses need to be verified in writing by Office of the Dean of Students or the Emergency Dean.

**Academic Honor Code:** This course is designed to encourage students to think for themselves about relevant research on political behavior. Therefore, it is critical that students complete their own work. Cheating and plagiarizing the work of others are both easily identifiable and the potential benefits are not worth the consequences. Any act of academic dishonesty or misconduct will be penalized. Students in violation of the University regulations regarding academic honesty will receive a failing grade in the course. Students with any additional questions are encouraged to ask the instructor rather

than risk the penalty associated with failing to maintain academic honesty.

**Academic Accommodations.** Students with disabilities or special needs who require academic accommodation should notify the instructor of their conditions and requested accommodations during the first week of class.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

Class participation	10%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Final exam	40%

**Each week students will be expected to submit at least two discussion questions via Carmen about the week's readings. These questions can cover any topic you wish or address any issue you might have with the materials. These questions should be submitted by midnight on the Monday of each week.**

Exams contain both multiple choice and short answer questions. The final exam will also contain essay questions and is a cumulative exam that will cover the entire course.

### **TENTATIVE COURSE CALENDAR AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

January 3: Course introduction on basic statistics and social science

January 5: Methods I: Observational methods in political science

**Reading Assignment:** Appendix: Survey Research Methods from Flanigan, William H. and Nancy H. Zingale. 2010. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. Washington D.C.: CQ Press.

January 10: Methods II: Experimental approaches in political science

**Reading Assignment:** Iyengar, Shanto, Mark D. Peters and Donald R. Kinder. 1982. "Experimental Demonstrations of the 'Not-So-Minimal' Consequences of Television News Programs." *American Political Science Review* 76(4): 848-58

January 12: Support for democratic values: Obedience

*Video: Obedience to Authority*

January 17: Support for democratic values

**Reading Assignment:** Flanigan and Zingale Chapter 1

January 19: Mass belief systems and partisanship

**Reading Assignment:** Flanigan and Zingale Chapters 3 & 5

January 24: Partisanship and voting behavior

**Reading Assignment:** Gaines, Brian J., James Kuklinski, Paul Quirk, Buddy

Peyton and Jay Verkuilen. 2007. "Same Facts, Different Interpretations: Partisan Motivation and Opinion on Iraq." *Journal of Politics* 69(4): 957-974

January 26: Emotions and political behavior

**Reading Assignment:** Chapter 4 of Marcus, George E., W. Russell Neuman and Michael MacKuen. 2000. *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

January 31: **Exam 1!!**

February 2: Persuasive messaging

**Reading Assignment:** None

February 7: Campaigns effects

**Reading Assignment:** Flanigan and Zingale Chapter 7

February 9: Political knowledge and the use of heuristics

**Reading assignment:** Lau, Richard R. and David P. Redlawsk. 2001. "Advantages and Disadvantages of Heuristics in Political Decision Making." *American Journal of Political Science* 45(4): 951-971.

February 14: Political knowledge: misinformation

**Reading assignment:** Kuklinski, James H., Paul J. Quirk, Jennifer Jerit, David Schwieder, and Robert F. Rich. 2000. "Misinformation and the Currency of Democratic Citizenship." *Journal of Politics* 62:790-816.

February 16: Media influence on public opinion

**Reading Assignment:** Druckman, James N. and Michael Parkin. 2005. "The Impact of Media Bias: How Editorial Slant Affects Voters." *Journal of Politics* 67(4):1030-1049

February 21: **Exam 2!!!**

February 23: Racial attitudes

**Reading Assignment:** None

February 28: Playing the race card

**Reading Assignment:** Valentino, Nicholas A., Vincent L. Hutchings and Ismail K. White. 2002. "Cues that Matter: How Political Ads Prime Racial Attitudes During Campaigns." *American Political Science Review* 96(1): 75-90.

February 28: Religion and political behavior

**Reading Assignment:** McDaniel, Eric L. and Christopher G. Ellison. 2008. "God's Party? Race, Religion, and Partisanship over Time." *Political Research Quarterly* 61(2): 180-191.

March 1: Civic engagement, political trust, and social communication

**Reading Assignment:** Fowler, James H. and Cindy D. Kam. 2007. "Beyond the Self: Social Identity, Altruism and Political Participation," *Journal of Politics* 69(3): 813-27.

March 6: Voting behavior

**Reading Assignment:** Flanigan and Zingale Chapter 8

March 8: No class: OSU-Newark student research forum

**March 15 (2:00): Final Exam**