
Voters and Elections

Political Science 2150
Fall 2013—MWF 4:10-5:05pm
Caldwell Lab 120

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Course Overview

Elected officials across the country make decisions that affect the lives, liberty, and well-being of millions of people. With matters such as taxation, civil rights, war, and peace hanging in the balance, it goes without saying that elections in America are important. However, since elections are decided by the people, one must understand the political behavior of individuals if they hope to know anything about elections and why they turn out as they do. Aristotle once said, “Man is by nature a political animal.” In this course we will try to gain a better understanding of what makes these political animals tick?

Course Goals and Objectives

The university’s objectives for this course are listed below. However, they are quite vague as they apply to a large number of courses. The specific objectives for this course are twofold. First, students will be exposed to the key debates and important research findings in American political behavior. Second, students will think critically about the larger political ramifications of these debates and research findings. Put simply, why are things the way that they are and does it matter in terms of the big picture of American democracy?

How will these Goals be Measured?

Through lectures and readings, you will be exposed to the substance of American political behavior. You will be expected to demonstrate your mastery of this substance through quizzes and exams as well as your comments and questions in class. After learning the substance of American political behavior, you will be equipped to grapple with the deeper questions and larger political ramifications of the things we learn. For example, the fact that men tend to know more about politics than women is one bit of the substance of American political behavior. Wrestling with the question of *why* this is the case and whether or not it matters in terms of democracy is the critical thinking aspect. Your ability to think critically about issues in

American political behavior will primarily be measured through the critical thinking papers but also through quizzes, exams, and class discussion.

Learning Objectives

This course fulfills a GEC requirement for breadth coursework in the social sciences for individuals and groups. Courses in social science help students understand human behavior and cognition; the structures of human societies, cultures, and institutions, and of the processes by which individuals, groups, and societies interact, communicate, and use human, natural, and economic resources. The specific goals are as follows:

1. Students understand the theories and methods of social scientific inquiry as they are applied to the studies of individuals, groups, organizations, and societies.
2. Students understand the behavior of individuals, differences and similarities in the contexts of human existence (e.g., psychological, social, cultural, economic, geographic, and political), and the processes by which groups, organizations, and societies function.
3. Students develop abilities to comprehend and assess individual and social values, and recognize their importance in social problem solving and policy making.

Readings

This class will not use a textbook. All required readings will be posted to Carmen. For some days, I will post a reading guide to Carmen. This document will outline the readings, provide background information, or pose questions for you to ponder as you read. It will also tell you the order in which to do the readings, so be sure to consult this document prior to diving into the readings. Completing the required readings before class is essential to succeeding in this course. The readings provide background material for the day's topic and serve as a jumping off point for our class discussions. That being said, simply passively reading the material will not suffice. Rather, students should critically read each piece, take notes, and bring those notes to class. Below are a few tips to aid you in becoming critical readers.

In one way or another, each of our readings poses a question. Some of these questions take the form of, "what is the effect of X on Y? For example, "What is the effect of gender on political knowledge?" Other questions are broader and more exploratory in nature, such as, "Why is voter turnout so low among young people?" After the research question has been identified in your notes, you should look for the author's answer to the question (e.g. Women know less about politics than men). Then, you'll want to note the evidence that the author(s) uses to support their answer/argument (e.g. A political knowledge quiz administered to 2,000 men and women demonstrated that men performed better on the quiz than women). In short, your notes on each reading should identify the piece's research question, argument, and evidence.

Lastly, you should tackle each reading with a critical eye. Why is the research question important? What are the larger ramifications for American politics if the author's assertions are

correct? Does the author overlook an alternate explanation to the research question they pose? Is the evidence used to support the argument appropriate or convincing?

Office Hours

Please feel free to meet with me during office hours. If the scheduled office hours are not convenient for you, do not hesitate to contact me to set up an appointment. I am happy to meet with students and encourage you to use office hours if you find yourself having trouble with the course, need help on an assignment, have questions about studying, or just want to discuss politics in general.

Course Requirements and Grading

Course Requirements	%	Points
Attendance/Participation	10%	20
Quizzes	10%	20
Papers (3 @ 10% each)	30%	60
Midterm Exam	25%	50
Final Exam	25%	50
Totals	100%	200

Attendance/Participation

In the past, I've taught classes where attendance is not required. In looking at students' final grades in those classes, a clear relationship between attendance and grade emerges. Namely, students who attend class generally do far better than students who don't. I take a two-pronged approach to class attendance. First, in order for you to get anything out of this class, you need to show up. Second, in order to get the most out of this class, you need to attend class prepared to participate by asking and answering questions. Don't just attend class to get the notes (I post them to Carmen anyway). Rather, show up to class *with* notes based on the readings that will allow you to meaningfully participate in class discussion. Class attendance will comprise $\frac{3}{4}$ of your Attendance/Participation grade. The other $\frac{1}{4}$ will be based on the quality and quantity of your class participation. So, if you attend every class but never speak you'll receive 75% (C+) of your Attendance/Participation points. All students will be allowed three unexcused absences during the semester. Any number of unexcused absences above three will result in the forfeiture of your attendance points ($\frac{3}{4}$ of the Attendance/Participation grade).

Quizzes

Over the course of the semester, there will be eight unannounced pop quizzes. The quizzes will generally take place during the first ten minutes of class. They will be one or two questions in length and cover the reading(s) due on that particular day. For instance, if there is a quiz on

October 2nd, the questions will deal with the reading by Fiorina. I will drop your three lowest quiz scores.

Critical Thinking Papers (CTP)

Throughout the semester, you will write *three* short papers on various topics. These papers might be different than writing you've done before in that they are not intended to be summaries. Rather, the purpose of the papers is for you to engage in some critical thinking with regard to complicated issues in American political behavior. Essentially, these are mini research papers, where I expect you to formulate a question, make an argument with regard to that question, and support that argument with evidence. There will be five topics to choose from, but you will only write three papers. I *will not* accept four or five papers and drop your lowest scores. Papers are due in class on the assigned day. With the exception of CTP #5, I will only accept hard copies of your papers—no email attachments. I do not accept late work—any papers handed in after 5:05pm will be marked as a zero. Also, problems with your home printer are not a valid excuse. Have a copy of your paper saved to a flash drive and print it on campus. More detailed instructions about the papers can be found on Carmen.

Exams

There will be a midterm exam and a final exam. Both will be taken in class and are closed book/notes. The final exam will not be cumulative and covers material from the second half of class. Exams will primarily consist of short answer, identification, and essay questions.

Absences

As mentioned earlier, you are allowed three unexcused absences in this class. If you miss a quiz, remember that I drop your three lowest scores. After that, the only excused absences will be doctor-certified illnesses and emergencies. In cases of prolonged illness or emergencies, contact me as soon as you can so that we can make arrangements. The key with all of this is communication. You must communicate with me *before* missing class (emergencies excepted but get someone to make arrangements with me soon). Telling me after the fact won't do any good. In general, there will be no make-up exams or alternate paper deadlines. Make-up exams and alternate paper deadlines will only be allowed in cases of emergency or serious illness. As an aside, I do not accept, "I have to work," as a valid excuse for missing class, exams, etc. Conflicts between our class schedule and your work schedule are between you and your employer.

Classroom Policy

I expect those who attend class to be active participants and pay attention to lecture. If you choose to spend the class talking on g-chat, looking at Facebook, or playing with your phone

you'll be asked to leave so you can do those things in the comfort of your own home without having to listen to me talk about political science.

Extra Credit

Faculty and graduate students from the political science department often conduct experiments as part of their research. Volunteering as a subject for these experiments will qualify students for extra credit. These opportunities are not guaranteed but stay tuned for more details.

Academic Misconduct

Ohio State University holds students to a high standard of ethics in terms of their academic work and the same standards apply in this class. I am confident that you will uphold these standards, but it is still worth stating that I expect all of the work you do in this course to be your own. No dishonest practices on the examinations or in the course will be tolerated, and any suspected cases of dishonesty will be reported to the university committee on academic misconduct and handled according to university policy. Oftentimes, instances of academic misconduct occur because students are unfamiliar with the rules, however a lack of knowledge about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating is not an acceptable excuse. Therefore, I encourage you to contact me if you are unsure about plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. The university penalties for academic misconduct are *severe* so I encourage you to contact me if you are ever unclear about these things.

Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have already been certified by the Office for Disability Services as well as any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs as soon as possible. Prior to contacting me, please contact the Office for Disability Services at 614-292-3307 in room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate accommodations.

Course Schedule and Required Reading

The schedule below is intended to provide an outline of the topics we will cover, the dates we will cover them, and the associated readings that are required. Over the course of the semester, I might have to adjust this schedule but will always provide you with advanced notice of any changes.

- Aug. 21 Introduction—What is Political Behavior?
- Aug. 23 American Political Culture: Points of Unity and Division
- Readings
 - Elazar
- Aug. 26 Polling Techniques—How we Study Political Behavior
- Readings
 - Erikson and Tedin
- Aug. 28 Political Socialization
- Readings
 - Ball
- Aug. 30 Political Socialization
- Readings
 - Buchen
- Sept. 2 No Class—Labor Day
- Sept. 4 Media Effects
- No Readings
- Sept. 6 Media Effects
- Readings
 - Prior
 - FDU Poll

- Sept. 9 Political Knowledge and Interest—How do Americans Stack Up?
- **CTP #1 Due**
 - Readings
 - Craig and Martinez
 - Pew—2007 Survey
- Sept. 11 Political Knowledge and Interest—Differences by Group
- Readings
 - Verba et al. 1997
- Sept. 13 Political Knowledge and Interest—Does it Matter? Can it be Fixed?
- No Readings
- Sept. 16 Party Identification I—What is Party ID?
- Readings
 - Lewis-Beck et al.
- Sept. 18 Party Identification II—The Impact of Party ID
- Readings
 - Douthat
 - Berinsky
- Sept. 20 Party Identification III—Independents and Third Parties
- Readings
 - Rosenstone et al.
 - Bruce et al.
- Sept. 23 Public Opinion—What does it Mean? Can we Trust it?
- Readings
 - Asher
- Sept. 25 Public Opinion—The Issues
- No Readings

- Sept. 27 Public Opinion—Does Ideology Tie our Opinions Together?
- Readings
 - Clawson and Oxley
 - Lyndon B. Johnson—Great Society Speech (1964)
 - Ronald Reagan—A Time for Choosing Speech (1964)
- Sept. 30 Polarization—America Divided
- Readings
 - Abramowitz
 - Gallup Polarization
- Oct. 2 Polarization?
- Readings
 - Fiorina
- Oct. 4 Polarization—Possible Effects and Possible Solutions
- Readings
 - Shea and Fiorina
 - Neblo
- Oct. 7 No Class—Study for Midterm Exam
- Oct. 9 Review Session
- Oct. 11 **Midterm Exam**
- Oct. 14 Voter Turnout I—Legal and Institutional Factors
- **CTP #2 Due**
 - Readings
 - Galston
 - Hershey
 - Spakovsky
- Oct. 16 Voter Turnout II—Individual Factors
- Readings
 - Bond et al.

- Oct. 18 Voter Turnout III—Youth Voting
- Readings
 - Wattenberg
- Oct. 21 Political Participation—Resource Model
- Readings
 - Verba et al. 1995
- Oct. 23 Political Participation—Social Aspects
- Readings
 - Putnam
 - Caren and Gaby
- Oct. 25 Political Participation Case Study—The Tea Party
- Readings
 - Arney and Kibbe
 - Contract from America
 - Judis
 - Zernicke and Thee-Brennan
- Oct. 28 Vote Choice I—Sociological Models
- **CTP #3 Due**
 - Readings
 - Beck et al.
- Oct. 30 Vote Choice II—The Social Psychological Model
- Readings
 - Flanigan and Zingale
 - Frank
- Nov. 1 Electoral Gaps
- Readings
 - McClerking
 - Gallup Gender Gap
- Nov. 4 Local Elections (Movie: Street Fight)
- Nov. 6 Finish the movie and discuss

- Nov. 8 Continue to Discuss the movie and Local Elections in General
- Readings
 - Baum
 - Byrne and Pueschel
 - Schaffner et al.
- Nov. 11 No Class—Veterans’ Day
- Nov. 13 Primary Elections
- **CTP #4 Due**
 - Readings
 - Guarino
 - Blake
 - Fenn
 - Sullivan
- Nov. 15 Ballot Initiatives—Power to the People?
- Readings
 - Federalist #10—James Madison
 - The Economist—War by Initiative
 - The Economist—What do you Know?
- Nov. 18 Congressional Elections
- Readings
 - Herrnson
- Nov. 20 Congressional Elections—Looking Ahead to the 2014 Midterms
- Readings
 - Browse Prof. Larry Sabato’s “Crystal Ball” website
 - <http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/>
- Nov. 22 The Electoral College
- Readings
 - Burmila
 - George

- Nov. 25 Election Campaigns—Do they Matter?
- Readings
 - Holbrook
 - Brader
- Nov. 27 No Class—Thanksgiving Break
- Nov. 29 No Class—Thanksgiving Break
- Dec. 2 Review Session
- Dec. 4 No Class—**CTP #5 due by 5pm via email**
- Dec. 6 No Class
- Dec. 10 Final Exam: 4:00pm-5:45pm**