
Washington University in St. Louis
Department of Political Science

American Elections and Voting Behavior: L32 336 POL SCI

Spring 2013

Instructor:

William D. MacMillan

Office: 207b Siegle Hall

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Office Hours: TuTh 1:30-3:30, and by appointment

Class Schedule:

TuTH 11:30a-1:00p

Course Objective

This course is designed to introduce you to a variety of key concepts pertaining to voting, elections, and political behavior in the United States. Throughout the semester we will cover topics such as: campaigns, electoral institutions, electoral reform, political participation (including but not limited to voting), voter turnout, presidential and congressional elections, partisan identification, and polling.

Course Policies

Homework assignments must be turned in at the beginning of class on the day they are due. I will only accept hard copies of assignments, and I will not accept emailed assignments. Students who fail to turn in homework assignments on time will receive no credit for that assignment. Likewise, take-home exams turned in late will be counted as zero. If a student anticipates missing class the day that an assignment is due, he or she is expected to make arrangements to turn the assignment in early. There will be no opportunities for making up quizzes missed due to absence or tardiness.

Course Textbooks

The required texts for this course are available for purchase at the Washington University bookstore. All of the additional material (denoted with an *) is available through ARES.

Jacobson, Gary. 2009. *The Politics of Congressional Elections.*, 8th ed. New York: Pearson Longman.

Keyssar, Alexander. 2009. *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*. New York: Basic Books.

Niemi, Richard, Herbert Weisberg, and David Kimball, eds. 2011. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 5th ed. Washington DC: CQ Press.

Smith, Steven S. and Melanie J. Springer, eds. 2009. *Reforming the Presidential Nomination Process*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Contacting the Instructor

My office hours are listed above. I encourage you to use office hours. You may also email me to set up an appointment to meet outside of this time; however, I cannot guarantee that I'll be able to meet with students that stop by my office outside of office hours and without an appointment.

I am typically quick to answer emails; however, I ask that you give me at least twenty-four hours to respond. In addition, many questions will be more easily addressed in class or in person, so please understand if I defer your question or concern until we can meet in person. **I ask that you include “PS 336” in the subject line of any email associated with this class that you send to me.** This will expedite the process of receiving and responding to your messages.

Most importantly, materials for the course (updated syllabi, readings, etc.) will be posted on the Blackboard site associated with this course. You are responsible for checking it regularly. Please contact me if you have a problem accessing the site or the files posted there.

Teaching Philosophy

I believe my role as instructor in this course is to provide an environment in which students may develop knowledge related to the U.S. electoral process. First, students should finish this class with an understanding of the basic facts about elections. Second, students should have an understanding of the analysis conducted by experts, their questions, their answers, and the methods used to analyze elections. Finally, students should be able to carry out their own analysis of the electoral process.

Teacher-student interaction is critical for the the development of these latter levels of knowledge. This interaction will occur in the classroom, but I also encourage you to take time to meet with me in person during my office hours. I will do my best to make time in class and in my office to answer students' questions, but that presupposes that students are intellectually curious (and humble) enough to ask.

Table 1: Grading Scale

A	100 – 95%
A-	> 95 – 90%
B+	> 90 – 87%
B	> 87 – 83%
B-	> 83 – 80%
C+	> 80 – 77%
C	> 77 – 73%
C-	> 73 – 70%
D+	> 70 – 67%
D	> 67 – 63%
D-	> 63 – 60%
F	> 60%

Evaluation

Research Paper (30%): 5% for a paper proposal, and 25% for the final draft.

Midterm Exam (25%): The midterm is a closed book exam. Material will be drawn from readings and lectures throughout the first half of the semester.

Final Exam (35%): The final is a take home exam. Material will be drawn from readings and lectures throughout the entire semester.

Quizzes & Class Participation (10%): This will be assessed by the instructor based on your consistent attendance and thoughtful contributions to class discussions. I reserve the right to give impromptu quizzes.

Homework Assignments

The final exam will be take home and due on the last day of class. I will distribute the exam itself at the end of the second to last class.

For the paper proposal, you must submit a two page proposal. The proposal should summarize the argument you plan to make, identify relevant literature, and describe the research you plan to implement. You must cite four scholarly works (i.e. journal articles or books) in the proposal. These must be from texts not assigned to the course.

The paper must be between 1500-2500 words in length, excluding any tables or figures. You must cite ten scholarly works in the paper itself. The paper is intended to be an empirical social science research paper on elections and voting behavior. As such, the paper should propose a research question, and attempt to answer it with data.

Class Participation

This component of your grade will be based on the quality of your participation in class. Students are expected to participate in lectures through asking questions and answering questions that I raise in class. The instructor reserves the right to call on students throughout the semester, and responses to such inquiries will factor into the class participation grade.

Academic Integrity

I will not tolerate any form of academic dishonesty in this course. The College of Arts and Sciences lists policies regarding academic honesty. Please review these materials carefully. Expect me to enforce completely the University's policies regarding academic integrity. This may include failing an assignment, failing the course, or referral to the Dean for further action. In general, if you have any question about issues of academic integrity, please feel free to ask me.

Course Schedule

Table 2: Course Schedule

Date	Topic and Readings
Jan 15	Introduction
Jan 17	The Study of Elections and Electoral Behavior NWK, Chap. 1
Jan 22	The Presidential Election SS, Chaps. 1, 5-6, 8 Abramson et.al 2012. <i>Change and Continuity. . . Chaps. 2-3*</i>
Jan 24	The Presidential Election, cont'd
Jan 29	The Presidential Election, cont'd
Jan 31	Congressional Elections Jacobson, Chaps. 1-4
Feb 5	Class Cancelled
Feb 7	Congressional Elections, cont'd Watch <i>Wag the Dog</i>
Feb 12	Congressional Elections, cont'd
Feb 14	Overlapping Themes in American Elections Niemi and Weisberg, Chapters 14-15*
Feb 19	Overlapping Themes in American Elections
Feb 21	Federalism, Democracy, and the History of Voting Rights Keyssar, Intro and Chaps. 1-2
Feb 26	Electoral Institutions Keyssar, Chaps. 3-8, Conclusion, and Afterword Kirkpatrick. 1967. "Statement by Comm. Kirk. . . "*

- Feb 28 **Electoral Institutions, cont'd**
- Mar 5 **Midterm Exam**
- Mar 7 **Political Participation and Voter Mobilization**
Niemi and Weisberg, Chap 3-4*
- Mar 12 **Spring Break**
- Mar 14 **Spring Break**
- Mar 19 **Political Participation and Voter Mobilization, cont'd**
- Mar 21 **Voter Turnout**
Jacobson, Chap. 5
Jamieson, Kathleen Hall. 2000. *Everything You Think You...* * Chs. 10-14
NWK, Chaps. 2 and 4
SS, Chap. 3
Paper Proposal Due
- Mar 26 **Voter Turnout, cont'd**
- Mar 28 **Vote Determinants and Political Behavior**
NWK, Chaps. 9-11
- Apr 2 **Vote Determinants and Political Behavior, cont'd**
- Apr 4 **Partisanship and Political Ideology**
Jacobson, Chap. 7
NWK, Chaps. 18-19
- Apr 9 **Partisan Polarization and Political Representation**
NWK, Chap. 12-17
- Apr 11 **Class Cancelled**
- Apr 16 **American Public Opinion and Polling**
Asher, 2004. *Polling and the Public. Chap 1**
Jamieson, *Everything You Think... Chapter 27**
- Apr 18 **American Public Opinion and Polling, cont'd**
- Apr 23 **Political Information and the Media**
NWK, Chaps. 3, 5-6
Final exam distributed
Paper due
- Apr 25 **Final exam due**
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