L32 Pol Sci 336 American Elections & Voting Behavior

M and W. 10AM to 11:30AM in Seigle 204

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Office: 231 Seigle Hall
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Office hours: Wednesdays 11:30 to noon and 1:30 to 3:00PM and by appointment. Sign up at http://www.andrewreeves.org/office-hours.

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Office hours: Mondays Noon to 2PM.

Course website available through http://bb.wustl.edu/

1 Course Description

We are a democracy because we have democratic elections. Selecting representatives is the fundamental democratic right of the citizenry. This class is an examination of the state of and development of this system. First, we examine the basic components of our system – the voter. What shapes the opinions and explains the actions of the individual voter? Why does she vote the way that she does? Why does she chose to be a Democrat or a Republican? Is it because of political ideology or is it because her friends and family are of a particular party? Second, we explore campaigns – the battlefield of electoral politics. Do campaigns matter? If we can predict individual vote choice using behavioral characteristics and aggregate vote outcomes using economic and presidential approval data, what room is there for campaigns to shift the electorate? Finally, we will examine the consequences of elections. Do they really make a difference in terms of policy outcomes?

This course is a broad survey of topics related to both voters and the U.S. electoral system. We cover many topics ranging from institutional questions about the operation of elections to behavioral questions about the origins and operation of an individual’s political identity.

This syllabus is subject to change. Any changes will be announces in class. Students who miss class are responsible for consulting the latest version of the syllabus to learn of any changes. It was last updated Monday 18th November, 2013 at 12:02.
2 Course Expectations

2.1 What are we doing today?

This syllabus presents the course schedule in Section 4. It is subject to change, any of which will be announced in class. Students who miss class are responsible for consulting the latest version of the syllabus to learn of the changes.

Students should come to class having read the assignment listed in Section 4 of the syllabus for the respective class meeting. All readings are posted on blackboard. There are no required texts for purchase for this course.

Each class will consist of short to medium length lectures with an in-depth discussion and analysis of the readings for that week.

2.2 Assignments

- In-class Reading Quizzes (5%): 10 to 12 5 to 8 unannounced throughout the semester. Lowest score dropped. Quizzes will be about 5 question and consist of true / false or short identification question.
- Short Response Papers (15%): Due throughout the semester, 1 to 2 pages. Assignments will be handed out on September 4 along with a handout detailing expectations for short response papers.
- Long(er) Paper (20%): Due December 4 in class; 6 to 8 pages; Topics handed out in class along with a handout detailing expectations.
- Presentation based on paper (5%): In class on November 25 and December 2.
- First Exam (25%): In class on October 9.
- Final (Comprehensive) Exam (30%): December 16 at 10:30AM.

2.3 Grading Scale

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<td>≥ 63</td>
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<td>≥ 77</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>≥ 67</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>&lt; 60</td>
<td>Fail</td>
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3 Course Policies

Academic Integrity. Unless otherwise noted, all assignments are to be completed individually. Plagiarism is unacceptable. Students should see me or the teaching assistant if he or she has the slightest question about or concern of potentially committing this most horrendous academic offense. Students should adhere to all ethical codes set forth by Washington University. Please carefully review the College
of Arts and Sciences Academic Conduct Code at http://wustl.edu/policies/undergraduate-academic-integrity.html. Cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the academic integrity committee, and students found guilty will receive a failing grade in the course.

Regrades. If you would like a regrade, you must prepare a one page memo describing why you would like additional credit for your response. You must submit a hard copy of this memo to your TA within 24 hours of when the assignment is returned. If I accept the appeal, I will regrade your entire assignment. The re-grade will replace the original grade and may be lower than the original. Except in the case of an obvious oversight on the teaching staff, there will be no partial or spot regrades of an assignment. While I am happy to meet with any student to discuss a grade, I require that you first meet with your teaching assistant to discuss the matter.

Late work. Work is considered late if it is not turned in when collected in class or, in other cases, immediately after the established deadline.

Late work is accepted but penalized. Papers received within 12 hours after the deadline will be deducted half a letter grade (a B becomes a B-). Papers received between 12 hours and 24 hours after the deadline will be penalized a full letter grade, and so on.

Extensions. Extensions are offered under the same terms as late work (see above).

Religious observances. If any conflicts arise between religious observances and a class assignment, notify at least two weeks beforehand and I will work with you to find an alternate means to complete the assignment.

Accommodations. If you are qualified for learning, testing, or access accommodations, inform me during the first week of class. For further information see http://cornerstone.wustl.edu/DisabilityResources.aspx.

4 Course Schedule

What follows is a schedule for the course detailing which topics and readings will be discussed on what dates. All readings should be completed by class on the date listed. I reserve the right to make any and all changes to this schedule and I will provide you with ample notification if do so.

1. August 28: Overview and Introduction
2. September 2: No Class (Labor Day)
3. September 4: Introduction to Political Models
4. September 9: Political Culture

Suggested further reading:

5. September 11: The Right to Vote

6. September 16: What if Everyone Voted?

7. September 18: Voting

8. September 23: Partisanship

9. September 25: Participation

10. September 30: Political Knowledge

11. October 2: Political Geography


12. October 7: Catch-up

13. October 9: Midterm Exam

14. October 14: Political Accountability


15. October 16: Campaigns


16. October 21: Forecasting Elections


17. October 23: Presidential Nominations


18. October 28: Old Media


19. October 30: New Media
Paper topics handed out.


20. November 4: Presidential Campaigns


21. November 6: Money and Politics


22. November 11: Campaign Strategy


23. November 13: Congressional Elections


24. November 18: Congressional Elections, continued


25. November 20: Elections and Policy


27. November 27: No Class (Thanksgiving).


29. December 4: Conclusion.