VOTING, ELECTIONS, AND THE AMERICAN ELECTORAL PROCESS
(POLITICAL SCIENCE 5010)
SPRING 2013

INSTRUCTOR:
Professor Melanie J. Springer
Office: Seigle Hall 235
Phone: (314) 935-7276
E-mail: mspringer@wustl.edu
Office Hours: By appointment

COURSE TIME AND LOCATION:
Tuesdays 2:30-4:30pm
Seigle Hall 205

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This is a graduate seminar intended to familiarize you with the extensive literature on voting and elections in the United States. The readings required in this course represent a combination of the classic work on voting behavior and elections, and contemporary studies presenting the latest theories and empirical innovations on the topic. The course material also deals with public opinion, campaigns, and the institutional factors that influence and structure elections. After completing this course, you will have a comprehensive understanding of the most influential research on voting and elections in American politics and a sense about the directions the field is currently heading.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

CLASSES will be comprised of student presentations and group discussions. You will be expected to read all of the required material for the week before attending class, and actively participate in class discussions. On a regular basis students will be assigned to lead class discussions on specific research questions or substantive debates, and individual students will be asked to report on selected readings.

THOUGHT PAPERS: Each student is required to write three thought papers based on the readings for the week. These are intended to be short (about 4 pages) and are reasonably unstructured. They are due before class on the day the readings are discussed. The first thought paper is due before February 13th; the second thought paper is due before March 27th; the third thought paper is due before April 17th.

RESEARCH PAPER: Each student must write an original research paper for this course. The paper should develop one or more testable hypotheses based on a thorough review of the relevant literature(s), and test these hypotheses using either an existing dataset or an original dataset that you construct. The data can be quantitative or qualitative in nature. The subject matter is open, except that the paper should have something to do with an aspect of elections or electoral behavior that was covered in this course. The paper should be approximately 25 pages in length.

All students will share the results of their research during the final seminar on April 23rd. To facilitate a productive discussion, students should prepare a 2-3 page summary of their paper for distribution in class on April 16th. At our last meeting, all students are expected to comment on the research presented by your classmates. The final research papers are due by 12:00pm on Monday, May 6th.
YOUR FINAL COURSE GRADE WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:

- Class Participation: 20%
- Three Thought Papers: 30% (10% each)
- Research Paper: 50%

CLASS SCHEDULE

JANUARY 15: INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OVERVIEW

JANUARY 22: THE STUDY OF VOTING AND ELECTIONS

JANUARY 29: EARLY (PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTACHMENT) MODELS OF VOTING

FEBRUARY 5: PARTISANSHIP

FEBRUARY 12: EXPLAINING VOTE CHOICE

FEBRUARY 19: CLASS CANCELED

FEBRUARY 26: CAMPAIGN DYNAMICS AND POLITICAL INFORMATION

MARCH 5: EXPLAINING ELECTION OUTCOMES

MARCH 12: CLASS CANCELED (SPRING BREAK)

MARCH 19: SPATIAL MODELS OF THE VOTE: DOWNS AND BEYOND

MARCH 26: VOTER TURNOUT

APRIL 2: ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS AND ELECTORAL REFORM

APRIL 9: CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS I

APRIL 16: CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS II

APRIL 23: PRESENTATION OF STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS
**COURSE READINGS:**


**ADDITIONAL BOOKS ON RESERVE AT OLIN LIBRARY:**


WEEKLY READING ASSIGNMENTS

JANUARY 15: INTRODUCTION AND COURSE OVERVIEW

JANUARY 22: THE STUDY OF VOTING AND ELECTIONS

Required:

JANUARY 29: EARLY (PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTACHMENT) MODELS OF VOTING

Required:

FEBRUARY 5: PARTISANSHIP

Required:

Recommended:
FEBRUARY 12: EXPLAINING VOTE CHOICE

Required:

Recommended:

FEBRUARY 19: CLASS CANCELED

FEBRUARY 26: CAMPAIGN DYNAMICS AND POLITICAL INFORMATION

Required:

**Recommended:**


**MARCH 5: EXPLAINING ELECTION OUTCOMES**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**

1. Campbell, James and James C. Garand (eds.). *Before the Vote*. Intro and Chapter 1.

**MARCH 12: CLASS CANCELED (SPRING BREAK)**

**MARCH 19: SPATIAL MODELS OF THE VOTE: DOWNS AND BEYOND**

**Required:**
1. Blais. To Vote or Not to Vote. Entire

**Recommended:**

**MARCH 26: VOTER TURNOUT**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**
10. Patterson, Thomas. The Vanishing Voter: Public Involvement in an Age of Uncertainty.
12. Teixeira, Ruy. The Disappearing American Voter.
14. Wattenberg. Where Have All the Voters Gone?

APRIL 2: ELECTORAL INSTITUTIONS AND ELECTORAL REFORM

Required:

Recommended:

APRIL 9: CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS I

Required:

**Recommended:**

**APRIL 16: CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS II**

**Required:**

**Recommended:**

**APRIL 23: PRESENTATION OF STUDENT RESEARCH PAPERS**

**Required:**
1. Student research paper summaries.