VOTING, ELECTIONS, AND THE AMERICAN ELECTORAL PROCESS  
(POLITICAL SCIENCE 5010)  
SPRING 2012

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:
Mondays 2:30-4:30pm  
Seigle Hall 305

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 21st; 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 7th.
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 23: THE STUDY OF VOTING AND ELECTIONS

JANUARY 30: EARLY (PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTACHMENT) MODELS OF VOTING

FEBRUARY 6: CLASS CANCELED

FEBRUARY 13: PARTISANSHIP

FEBRUARY 20: EXPLAINING VOTE CHOICE

FEBRUARY 27: 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 23: THE STUDY OF VOTING AND ELECTIONS

Required:

JANUARY 30: EARLY (PSYCHOLOGICAL ATTACHMENT) MODELS OF VOTING

Required:

FEBRUARY 6: CLASS CANCELED

FEBRUARY 13: PARTISANSHIP

Required:

Recommended:
FEVERUARY 20: EXPLAINING VOTE CHOICE

Required:

Recommended:

FEVERUARY 27: 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
3. Hinich and Munger, Analytical Politics. Chapters 1-4, 8.

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.