

American Political Behavior
Political Science 9100
Fall 2021

Thursday 3:00-5:30
104 Professional Building
Office Hours: TBA
Office: 316 Professional Building

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Course Objectives:

This class introduces the literature on mass politics and elections and provides a foundation for subsequent seminars and research in the field. It focuses on themes and issues that have consistently drawn the attention of scholars: the character of political attitudes in mass publics, party identification, turnout and political activity and participation, the vote decision, and how political parties structure elections to gain support. The coverage on these topics is neither extensive nor intensive, but a bit of both. The readings mingle “great books” (or articles) that set the research agenda with subsequent research literature that extended and revised the original results. The course presents important questions in the field and a variety of theories and methodologies.

Course Requirements:

All readings should be completed by the date indicated on the syllabus, and students should be prepared to discuss the topic and the literature during that class session. Active participation and discussion is an important component of this course

There are five writing assignments for the class. Four are short discussion/reaction papers of three to five pages. Discussion papers are submitted at approximately three-week intervals. These reaction papers are due on Sept. 28, Oct. 7, Oct. 28, and Nov. 18. The fifth writing assignment, due at the end of the semester, is a research essay of 15 or so pages, including data and bibliography, on some subject that falls within the scope of the course. The subject matter must focus on American politics. You are expected to replicate or extend some analysis that we cover.

The chief requirement for the course is a research paper (15-20 pages in length formatted in APSA style) which extends knowledge of political behavior beyond the assigned readings. The paper may review and critique relevant literature on one of the subtopics or may present some original theoretical or empirical research. For Political Science students, this might require you to run data from a recent American Nation Election Study (ANES) or another traditional data set. The format may be either a (1) replication or (2) a research note, not a full research paper. As a replication, you should focus on a finding about which you have some questions. Except in special circumstances, you may **not** use the same dataset that produced the finding you are attempting to replicate. A research note should elaborate some finding. For example, you may write a paper that fills in some details and ideas about why many believe that relatively ill-informed voters are virtually as likely as high information voters to vote “correctly” (support candidates who share their issue preferences). The paper must outline the conceptual issue, present the logic behind your analysis, and describe how

your results depart from (or confirm) expectations. A research design may an 2 acceptable substitute for the full research paper, but the design must be on that could be implemented and the quality of research design should be excellent. Another option for the research paper is a case study, either of a group or an event such as the cases used in class. Not all students are alike, and other forms of analyses will be considered.

Final course grades will be based on participation (25%), reaction papers (40%; 10% for each paper), and the research paper (35%).

Textbooks:

We will be covering all (or nearly all) material in the following required texts.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. Harper.

Leighley, Jan E., and Jonathan Nagler. 2013. *Who Votes Now? Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States*. Princeton University Press.

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., Helmut Norpoth, William G. Jacoby, and Herbert F. Weisberg. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. University of Michigan Press.

Niemi, Richard G., Herbert F. Weisberg, and David Kimball, eds. 2011. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 5th ed. CQ Press. (Below as NWK)

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press. (recommended)

Note: several readings are available through links via Blackboard. Many others are available electronically through J-STOR or other library links to electronic journals. For those interested in further study about organized interests, a reading list will be posted on the course Blackboard site.

Honesty:

Academic honesty is fundamental to the activities and principles of a university. Each student's work must be responsibly and honorably acquired, developed, and presented. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any examination, paper, or assignment tainted by academic dishonesty will automatically receive a grade of F. University regulations also require reporting of incidents of academic dishonesty, which may lead to probation or expulsion.

Accommodation:

If you have special needs, such as those addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act, please notify your instructor immediately. Every reasonable effort will be made to assist you. Students with disabilities who request academic accommodations must register with the Disability Center, A048 Brady Commons, 882-4696.

Readings should be completed by the date of class shown, and students should be prepared to discuss these readings in class. Each student should come to class prepared with three or four points or questions worthy of discussion. Exercises and assignments may be assigned during each weekly seminar and will complement the learning objectives for that week. Written assignments are due when shown unless otherwise noted in class. The following outline is, as always, *subject to change*.

Aug. 26 Introduction & Organization

Sept. 2 Party Identification: The Basics

Lewis-Beck, Norpoth, Jacoby, and Weisberg. *The American Voter Revisited*, chapters 1-4, 6.

Donald Green, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identity of Voters*. Chapter 2. PDF.

Berelson, Bernard R., Paul F. Lazarsfeld, and William N. McPhee, *Voting*, chapter 14. PDF.

Sept. 9 The Stability of American Political Beliefs

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems In Mass Publics," in David Apter, *Ideology and Discontent*. PDF

Norman H. Nie and Kristi Andersen. 1974. "Mass Belief Systems Revisited: Political Change and Attitudes Structure," *Journal of Politics*, PDF.

John L. Sullivan, James E. Pierson, and George E. Marcus, 1978 "Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings," *American Journal of Political Science*. PDF.

Converse, Philip E., and Gregory B. Markus. 1979. "Plus ça Change... The New CPS Election Study Panel," *American Political Science Review*, PDF.

Kaufmann, Karen, John R. Petrocik, Daron R. Shaw. 2008. *Unconventional Wisdom: Facts and Myths about American Voters*. Chapter 2. PDF.

Sept. 16 Voter Turnout

Leighley and Nagler, *Who Votes Now?* chapters 1-4

Lewis-Beck, Norpoth, Jacoby, and Weisberg. *The American Voter Revisited*, chapter 5.

Wolfinger, Raymond E., and Steven J. Rosenstone, *Who Votes?* PDF.

McDonald, Michael P., "Voter Turnout: Eligibility Has its Benefits," in NWK. **First Paper Due.**

Sept. 23 Formal Notions of Political Behavior

Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*

Riker, William H., and Peter C. Ordeshook, "A Theory of the Calculus of Voting," *American Political Science Review* (1968), 62:25-42.

Sept. 30 Voter Turnout (APSA—need to reschedule class meeting?)

Leighley and Nagler, *Who Votes Now?* chapters 5-7.

Plutzer, Eric. 2002. "Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood." *American Political Science Review* 96: 41-56.

Gerber, Alan S., Donald P. Green, and Christopher W. Larimer. 2008. "Social Pressure and Voter Turnout: Evidence from a Large-Scale Field Experiment." *American Political Science Review* 102:33-48.

Hansford, Thomas G. and Brad T. Gomez. 2010. "Estimating the Electoral Effects of Turnout." *American Political Science Review* 104: 268-288.

Oct. 7 Political Participation

Verba, Sidney, Kay Schlozman, and Henry Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality*. PDF

Putnam, Robert D. 1995. "Tuning In, Turning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America." *PS: Political Science and Politics*. (December) 38:4.

Second Paper Due.

Oct. 14 Partisanship, Socialization, and Social Groups

Lewis-Beck, Norpoth, Jacoby, and Weisberg. *The American Voter Revisited*, chapters 7-12.

Jennings, M. Kent, Laura Stoker, and Jake Bowers. 2009. "Politics across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined." *Journal of Politics* 71: 3 (July), 782-791.

Jennings, M. Kent, and Richard J. Niemi, *The Political Character of Adolescence, or Generations and Politics*. PDF.

Beck, Paul Allen. 1974, "A Socialization Theory of Partisan Realignment," in Richard G. Niemi, ed., *The Politics of Future Citizens*, PDF.

MacKuen, Michael, Robert S. Erikson, and James A. Stimson. 1989. "Macropartisanship." *American Political Science Review* 83:1125-1142.

Oct. 21 Realignment, Declining Partisanship, and/or Polarization

Sundquist, James L.. 1983. *Dynamics of the Party System*, chapter 2. PDF.

Merrill, Samuel, Bernard Grofman, and Thomas Brunell. 2008. "Cycles in American National Electoral Politics: 1854-2006: Statistical Evidence and an Explanatory Model." *American Political Science Review* (Feb) 102: 1-18.

Burnham, Walter Dean. "The Changing Shape of the American Political Universe," PDF.

Rusk, Jerrold G. "The Effect of the Australian Ballot Reform on Split Ticket Voting: 1896-1908," PDF.

Heatherington, Marc J., "Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization," in NWK.

Abramowitz, Alan I., and Kyle L. Saunders, "Is Polarization a Myth?" in NWK.

Fiorina, Morris P, Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope, "Polarization in the American Public: Misconceptions and Misreadings," in NWK.

Abramowitz, Alan I., "The 2008 Election: Polarization Continues," in NWK.

Fiorina, Morris P., and Samuel J Adams, "Where's the Polarization?" in NWK.

Oct. 28 Ideology and Issue Voting

Page, Benjamin I., and Robert Shapiro. 1992. *The Rational Public*. U of Chicago Press. Ch. 1 and 2. PDF.

Norman H. Nie, Sidney Verba, and John R. Petrocik, *The Changing American Voter*, PDF.

Carmines, Edward G., and James A. Stimson, "The Two Faces of Issue Voting," PDF.

Petrocik, John R. 1996. "A Theory of Issue Ownership." *American Journal of Political Science* 40:825-850.

Hinich, Melvin J., and Michael C. Munger. 1994. *Ideology and the Theory of Political Choice*, selection, PDF.

Lau, Richard R., and David P. Redlawsk, "Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making," in NWK

Goren, Paul, "Political Sophistication and Policy Reasoning: A Reconsideration," in NWK

Third Paper Due.

Nov. 4 Public Opinion

Zaller, 1992, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Public Opinion*.

Nov. 11 Vote Choice and Economic Voting

Lewis-Beck, Norpoth, Jacoby, and Weisberg. *The American Voter Revisited*, chapters 13-15.

Morris P. Fiorina, *Retrospective Voting in American National Elections*, selection, PDF.

Donald R. Kinder and D. Roderick Kiewiet, "Sociotropic Politics: The American Case," *British Journal of Political Science* (1981), 11: 129-16.

Evans, Geoffrey, and Robert Anderson, "The Political Conditioning of Economic Perceptions," in NWK.

Ansolabehere, Stephen, Jonathan Rodden, and James M. Snyder, Jr., "Purple America," in NWK

Nov. 18 Mass Media and Political Communication

Graber Doris A., and Johanna Dunaway, *Mass Media and American Politics*, , 9th ed., PDF

Patterson, Thomas E. *The Mass Media Election*, PDF

McCombs, Maxwell E., and Donald L. Shaw. 1972. "The Agenda-Setting Function of the Press," *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald Kinder, *News That Matters*, PDF.

Prior, Markus, "News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout," in NWK.

Baum, Matthew A., and Angela S. Jamison, "The Oprah Effect: How Soft News Helps Inattentive Citizens Vote Consistently," in NWK.

Fourth Paper Due.

- Nov. 25 Thanksgiving Recess No class!
- Dec. 2 Election Campaigns
 Geer, John G., 2006. *In Defense of Negativity: Attack Ads in Presidential Campaigns*, PDF.
 Shaw, Daron, 2006. *The Race to 270: The Electoral College and the Campaign Strategies of 2000 and 2004*, chapters 4, 5, PDF.
 Erikson, Robert S., and Chris Wlezien, 2012, *The Timeline of Presidential Elections: How Campaigns Do (and Do Not) Matter*, PDF.
- Dec. 9 Southern Realignment; Congressional State and Local Elections:
 Shafer, Byron E., "Economic Development and a Politics of Class," in NWK.
 Hood, M.V. III, Quentin Kidd, and Irwin L. Morris, "The Reintroduction of the Elephas Maximus to the Southern United States: The Rise of the Republican State Parties," in NWK.
 Hillygus, D. Sunshine, and Todd G. Shields, "Racial and Moral Issues in the Evolution of the "Southern Strategy,"" in NWK.
 Jacobson, Gary C. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, selection, PDF.
 Mayhew, David R. "Congressional Elections: The Case of the Vanishing Marginals," PDF
 Campbell, James. 1993. "Surge and Decline: The National Evidence," from Campbell. *Congressional Elections: The Presidential Pulse*. PDF.
- Student Presentations of Research Findings**
- Dec. 14 **Final Research Paper Due**