

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

POLS 030:050

Fall 2012

M,W 1:30-2:20

1505 SC

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the political behavior of the American electorate. The basic goals of this course are to explain political behavior and investigate the consequences of it. In this course, we will primarily focus on voter turnout, however, we will also discuss other forms of political participation (e.g., giving money), vote choice, partisanship, and ideology. We will address the following questions: Who votes? How has voting rates changed over time? What influences why some people vote? Who votes for whom? In order to address these questions, we will explore literatures, controversies, and theories of political behavior.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course, students should (1) have a basic understanding of existing social science theories and debates regarding voting behavior and political participation; (2) be able to apply these theories to real world events in order to better understand political behavior in American politics; and (3) be a more informed reader of social science research.

Required Texts

Political Behavior of the American Electorate, 12th Ed., by William Flanigan & Nancy Zingale, CQ press

Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America by Steven Rosenstone & John Hansen, 1st edition, Longman

Additional material as stated on the syllabus

Course Requirements and Expectations

Exams: There will be two in-class exams. The exams will cover approximately one-third of the course materials and will most likely consist of a combination of multiple choice, short answer/conceptual questions, and essay questions. Each exam is worth 20% of the final grade. The dates for the exams are listed below in the Course Schedule.

Make-up exams will be given *only in extreme circumstances*. These include extreme illness (student must provide a note from a physician), mandatory religious obligations, University activities (student must provide a written statement from a coach), or other family emergencies (student must provide documentation e.g., a funeral program). If you need to reschedule an exam, you *must* contact me or the TA *prior* to missing the exam.

Final Exam: The final exam will be taken in-class, during the assigned final exam period. *I will not be giving this exam any other time, so if you know you will not be able to take the final exam, you should take this course another semester.* The exam may be cumulative and will consist of multiple-choice, short-answer, and/or essay questions. The final exam counts towards 30% of the final grade.

Discussion Grade: The discussion grades are based on attendance, participation, and 3 short writing assignments in the following ways:

Attendance: Students are expected to attend each and every class meeting, especially discussion sections. Attendance will be taken in the discussion sections and excessive absences will result in an overall course grade penalty. Because unavoidable conflicts sometimes arise, students will be allowed 2 discussion section absences without penalty and without need to provide an excuse. After that, each absence will result in a penalty of one point deducted from the student's final numerical average for the course. This penalty can be waived only under very limited circumstances, such as travel to represent the University, serious documented illness, or a real family emergency. Exceptions to the attendance policy *must* be cleared with the TA, in advance if possible. Attendance counts towards 10% of the overall discussion grade.

If you must miss a day, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed. Talk to your classmates; borrow their notes. Be aware that important announcements regarding course materials, schedule, and assignments may be made solely in class.

Participation: Class participation is our way to gather information about how well you have read and understood the material presented in the readings and a chance for you to pull things together with the help of your peers and the TA. In-class discussion should be inclusive. Always feel comfortable asking questions. If you have a particular question, others will too. Occasionally, we will administer class polls/surveys through ICON. Participation in these will count towards your participation grade. Participation counts towards 10% of your overall discussion grade.

NY Times Assignments: Students are required to write three newspaper assignments (roughly 1-2 pages) to apply topics learned in class to current events. Students will be asked to find a newspaper article from the *NY Times* and write a short paper showing how the article relates to concepts used in class. Students may choose which sections they want to write the *NY Times* article (there are six sections of the course). Students can only write one assignment per section. More detailed instructions will be distributed in discussion section and posted to the class's ICON website. Students will submit their entries to the class's ICON website (in the "drop box") by the due date. Late entries will be docked one point per day. Students are required to

use standard 12 pt font, 1 inch margins, and double spacing. Due dates are posted on the course schedule. These *NY Times* assignments will count towards 10% of your overall discussion grade.

Grading

Exam 1: 20%

Exam 2: 20%

Final: 30%

Discussion Grade: 30% (10% attendance, 10% participation, 10% *NY Times* assignment)

Course grades will be distributed as follows:

98-100: A+	78-79: C+
94-97: A	74-77: C
90-93: A-	70-73: C-
88-89: B+	68-69: D+
84-87: B	64-67: D
80-83: B-	60-63: D-
	Below 60: F

Grade Appeals: We will not discuss changes in grades on exams for 24 hours after the exam has been handed back. If you feel that we missed an important point that you made or there is some other problem with your grade, after 24 hours, you may submit a grade appeal. Your appeal should be a typed argument for why your grade should be changed. It should be no longer than 1 page. You will need to hand the appeal and the original exam back to Christine for review. We will then ask you to schedule a time to meet or come in during office hours to discuss the appeal. Appealing the grade does not mean that we will automatically increase your grade.

Other Considerations

If you have questions or concerns, please contact the TA first. If you would like to talk to me, please come to my office hours. I will not answer any questions immediately after class. If you cannot make my office hours, please email me to set up an alternative time to meet. The best way to get a quick response is through email. I will do my best to promptly answer your emails; however, typically you should not expect a same-day response after 7:00 pm.

We will only respond to emails sent from your UI account.

Please turn off all cell-phones during class. I and the TA reserve the right to dismiss you from class if disruptions occur, resulting in an absence for the day.

All slides and class materials will be posted to the ICON website. Occasionally, polls or other online discussions may be administered through ICON. These will count towards your participation grade.

This class is about political behavior, not politics. We will not engage in political discourse about which views are “right” or “wrong.” Instead, we will focus on the scientific study of political behavior—backed by evidence and logic. Personal opinions about particular politicians,

for example, should be checked at the door. Students are expected to have an open mind and be respectful of other students in class so as to create a comfortable and health classroom environment. However, I will try to incorporate “real-world” examples into the class materials as much as possible.

While my own political viewpoints are trivial for our purposes, this class is not value-free. A general premise is that democracy is good and that it is better to have a democratic government compared to other alternatives. You do not need to agree to this principle to do well in this class, yet there may be times where you are expected to assume this for the sake of argument.

Course Schedule

I. Trends in Voter Turnout and Who Votes?

8/20-Organizational Session and Introduction

8/22-Democracy and Political Participation
Flanigan & Zingale-Introduction & Chapter 1

8/27-Trends in Voter Turnout
Flanigan & Zingale-Chapter 2

8/29- Trends, continued/Who Votes
Rosenstone & Hansen-Chapter 1, Chapter 3

9/3-No Class

9/5- Who Votes, continued
Census Report on Voter Turnout, 2012
Pew Center Report: Young Voters in the 2008 Election

II. Theories of Voter Turnout-Why do People Vote (or Not)?

9/10-Individual Characteristics
Rosenstone & Hansen, Chapter 5
***NY Times* Assignment for Section I is due by this date**

9/12-Individual Characteristics, Continued

9/17-Mobilization
Rosenstone & Hansen, Chapter 6

9/19-Moblization, Continued
Rosenstone & Hansen, Chapter 7

9/24-Electoral Laws
Flanigan & Zingale, Chapter 2; Rosenstone & Hanson, Chapter 6

9/26- Electoral Laws/Catch-up

http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/fd_State_Level_Estimates_of_Felon_Disen_2010.pdf

10/1-Exam 1

III. Other Forms of Political Participation

10/3- Governmental Politics

Rosenstone & Hansen, Chapter 4

***NY Times* Assignment for Section II is due by this date**

10/8-Governmental Politics, Continued

10/10-Direct Democracy, Referendums & Initiatives

Lupia, Arthur and John G. Matsusaka. 2004. "Direct Democracy: New Approaches to Old Questions." *Annual Review of Political Science*, 7: 463-482. On ICON.

Also look around here: <http://www.iandrinstute.org/>

IV. Partisanship

10/15-What is partisanship? How has it changed over time?

Flanigan & Zingale, Chapter 4

***NY Times* Assignment for Section III is due by this date**

10/17-Partisanship, Continued

10/22-Individual Partisan Change

Flanigan & Zingale, Chapter 5

10/24-Individual Partisan Change, Continued

10/29- Democrats versus Republicans, who are they?

Flanigan & Zingale, Chapter 6

10/31-Democrats versus Republicans, Continued/Catch-up

11/5-Exam 2

V. Vote Choice and Ideology

11/7- How do people vote?

Flanigan & Zingale, Chapter 8

***NY Times* Assignment for Section IV is due by this date**

11/12-How do people vote, continued

11/14- Ideology

Flanigan & Zingale, Chapter 6

11/19-11/21-Thanksgiving Break

11/26-Ideology, Continued

VI. Campaigns and the Mass Media

11/28- Mass Media

Flanigan & Zingale, Chapter 7

***NY Times* Assignment for Section V is due by this date**

12/3-Campaigns

Reading TBA

12/5-Wrap up/Catch-up

***NY Times* Assignment for Section VI is due by 12/10/12**

Final Exam TBA

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Policies and Procedures

Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at <http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook>.

Electronic Communication

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).

Accommodations for Disabilities

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty

All CLAS students have, in essence, agreed to the College's Code of Academic Honesty: "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies

The final examination schedule for each class is announced around the fifth week of the semester by the Registrar. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the dates and times of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.