Course Description

It is common for nearly every syllabus for a course in American Politics to say that the subject of this class is fundamentally central to American representative democracy. Well, that certainly applies here. Democracy doesn’t make sense without elections, and representation doesn’t make sense without some mechanism that links citizens to elected officials. Elections are such a mechanism. We will not focus on the normative issues surrounding the place of elections in democratic government. Rather, we will focus on the empirical evaluation of elections, trying to discover how they work and why they work that way rather than how they should work. However, normative concerns will always be just under the surface.

There is much ground to cover. I dare say that more has been written about elections in the last 70 years than any other major topic in American politics. If you add to it the growing study of elections in Comparative politics, it becomes even more obvious that we can only cover a small slice of the existing work in this course. I intend to focus on the American context, but am open to adding comparative examples to the reading list. My goal is to offer some balance between foundational classics and contemporary innovations in the study of elections. We will focus primarily on individual-level voting behavior, elite-level campaign behavior, and the connection between the two.

We will consider the theoretical, substantive, and methodological debates that exist in the study of elections. We’ll see some qualitative data being used, but much of what we read will be quantitative. We’ll see some formal theory, lots of survey research, and some experimental work. We will consider behavioral, rational, psychological, and sociological perspectives on elections. We will search for points of tension and conflict as well as places of common ground. We won’t be experts on elections when we are done, but I hope you will have a firm foundation upon which to build.

Course Objectives

This course serves as a senior seminar in the study of electoral politics in the United States. The course has several goals, including:

1. understanding and debating the competing theories of voting behavior by the mass electorate.
2. understanding how candidates for public office navigate the challenges faced over the course of a campaign regarding self presentation, interaction with opponents, campaign strategies,
and framing in the media (among others).

3. writing a research design outlining a theory, hypotheses to test, as well as an outline for a research paper.

Course Structure

This course is designed as a seminar. As such, an emphasis will be placed on critical discussion of the assigned reading material. Because we only meet once each week, each session must cover a lot of material. Students should come to class prepared and ready to participate actively in these discussions.

My Teaching Philosophy

I believe that my role in the classroom is to help you learn the class material, as well as skills such as clear writing, speaking, and critical thinking. Towards this end, I develop a class that calls upon students to engage in reading, writing, talking, and listening. I want you to learn; I try to help make the material and tasks as clear as possible so that you are able to learn. I have an open door policy and will work with you to help you master class and reading material, as well as critical thinking skills.

Your Learning Philosophy

If you want a high grade with a minimum amount of work, you should enroll in another class. You will need to be dedicated to keeping up with the reading load and course assignments. If you want to learn as much as possible on the topic of electoral politics, this class should be highly satisfactory. As upper level students, I expect that you will consistently come to class prepared and ready to participate.

Course Materials Required for Purchase


These are three classic books that anyone studying American elections, political behavior, or public opinion should have on their shelf. We'll read most of these books over the course of the semester. Virtually all of the rest of the reading will be journal articles that you can find online. Any book chapters or other items that are not online will be copied and posted to the course SLU Global site.
Course Assessment

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<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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Paper

The paper accounts for 35% of your overall course grade (5% for the prospectus and 20% for the final paper, 5% for the peer review, and 5% for the presentation). You will write a 10 page research design on a topic relating in some way to electoral politics in America. You may also write research papers if you choose, but it is not required. Papers are due in class on December 3. Late papers will not be accepted except under extraordinary circumstances. I do not accept papers emailed to me. They must be turned in during the class period. A 10 point deduction will be made for every half page less than 10. Tables, charts, figures, or other supporting material (e.g. survey questionnaire, experimental design, etc) do not count towards the page expectations. I also reserve the right to deduct fractions of this amount. I will stop reading if it is too long. The typesetting standards are 1 or 1.25 inch margins, 12 point font, Times New Roman, double spacing.

Peer Review of Paper

You will offer a critique and review of one of your classmate’s research project which will count for 5% of your final grade. You are to give comments and recommendations on how to improve the final product. This should be 2-3 pages, double spaced.

Presentation

You will give a 8-10 minute presentation of your research project to your classmates at the end of the semester which will count for 5% of your final grade. You should prepare a powerpoint presentation highlighting your theory, hypothesis, data, and findings.

Exam

There will be a cumulative final exam. The final exam counts for 35% of your final grade. The exam will be essay format. The exam date is Tuesday, December 10th at 4 p.m.

Attendance and Class Participation

Attendance and participation account for 30% of your overall course grade. You are expected to be an active participant in our discussions and classroom activities. An emphasis will be put not only on quantity of participation, but the quality of comments. If speaking in class is difficult for you, come see me. I reserve the right to administer quizzes if participation becomes a problem.

Class attendance is required. You will be allowed one unexcused absence over the course of the semester. After that, each additional unexcused absence will lower your attendance grade by one letter grade. If you know you will be missing a class, please let me know as soon as possible. If you are more than ten minutes late to class, I reserve the right to mark you absent.
Grade Scale

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale. I reserve the right to make adjustments to grades based on overall performance in the course. There will be no extra credit offered in the course, nor will there be curving grades.

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
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<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>F</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>83-87</td>
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Honor Code

The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the student’s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination or quiz without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, sharing or receiving the questions from an on-line quiz with another student, taking an on-line quiz with the help of another student, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

All clear violations of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. In this course, academic dishonesty on an assignment will result in an automatic grade of F for the course and a report of academic dishonesty sent to the Academic Honesty Committee of the College of Arts and Sciences. In the case of Class B violations, the Academic Honesty Committee may impose a larger sanction including, but not limited to, assigning a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

Students should refer to the following SLU website for more information about Class A and B violations and the procedures following a report of academic dishonesty: http://www.slu.edu/x12657.xml

Expectations and Procedures

Technology

Put everything on mute. Keep cell phones in your bag or pocket—I do not want to see them. You do not need to use your lap top for this course, so please take notes the old fashion way. This
will dissuade the trend of college students to browse the web, check e-mail, and frequent social networking sites during lecture. If I use additional material I will post it on blackboard so you may access it at a later point.

**Communication**

I will post grades, send class e-mails, etc. . . with Blackboard. Be sure that you can access the e-mail address listed. I will only send e-mail out to your SLU e-mail accounts listed on the course roster in Blackboard. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses you may use.

I am very accessible both during and after normal work days. Please feel free to contact me or stop by my office if you need to talk. Also, please contact me immediately if you are going to miss an exam or need to reschedule. I do not like to give make up exams, but under extenuating situations, I will make allowances. Please contact me prior to the exam if you need to reschedule, I will not allow make up exams if contacted after the exam period.

**Disabilities**

In recognition that people learn in a variety of ways and that learning is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., prior experience, study skills, learning disability), resources to support student success are available on campus. Students who think they might benefit from these resources can find out more about:

- Course-level support (e.g., faculty member, departmental resources, etc.) by asking your course instructor.
- University-level support (e.g., tutoring/writing services, Disability Services) by visiting the Student Success Center (BSC 331) or by going to [www.slu.edu/success](http://www.slu.edu/success).

Students who believe that, due to a disability, they could benefit from academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Services at 314-977-8885 or visit the Student Success Center. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Course instructors support student accommodation requests when an approved letter from Disability Services has been received and when students discuss these accommodations with the instructor after receipt of the approved letter.

**Tentative Course Schedule**

**Aug 27th** INTRODUCTION, COURSE OVERVIEW

**Sep 3rd** INTRO TO THEORETICAL TRADITIONS

*Required Readings:*

- The American Voter: Chapters 1-2
- An Economic Theory of Democracy: Chapters 1-3
Sep 10 THE CENTRALITY OF PARTY ID

Required Readings

- The American Voter: Chapter 3, 4, 6, 7

Recommended Readings


Sep 17 SPATIAL AND DIRECTIONAL THEORIES OF VOTING

Required Readings

- Downs, Anthony. 1957. An Economic Theory of Democracy, chapters 5-8

Recommended Readings


**Sep 24th GENDER AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOR** Turn in paper prospectus. Include research questions, hypotheses to be tested, proposed data and methods, and core references

*Required Readings*


*Recommended Readings*

 oct 1st  contextual effects of race

required readings


recommended readings


Oct 8th Mass Opinion

Required Reading


Oct 15th TURNOUT

Required Readings


Recommended Readings


 Oct 22nd  NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

 Oct 29th  STRATEGIC CANDIDATES AND CAMPAIGN DYNAMICS

 Required Readings


 Recommended Readings


 Nov 5th Paper Meeting Week. No reading assignment but you must schedule a meeting with me during the week to discuss your papers.

 Nov 12th  CAMPAIGNS LEARNING AND/OR PERSUASION

 Required Readings


– Petersen, David A. 2009. “Campaign Learning and Vote Determinants (p 445-460)


**Recommended Readings**


**Nov 19th CAMPAIGN MESSAGES: LOUD AND CLEAR?**

**Complete Drafts of Papers Due by Class Time to Me and Your Two Reviewers**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**
Nov 26th Voting Behavior

Comments on Papers you Reviewed Due Today in Class (Copies to Authors and to Me)

Required Readings


Recommended Readings

– Lupia and McCubbins. The Democratic Dilema Cambridge University press.

Dec 3rd Research Presentations

Papers due in class

Dec 10th Final Exam