

PS1234

Electoral Behavior and Democratic Process

Contact Information

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Office Hours: Wednesday 10-12 or by appointment (remote available upon request)

Course Information

June 27, 2022- August 6, 2022

Classroom: 203 Lawrence Hall

Class-time: 1:30-3:45pm

Course Description:

Every November, voters go to the polls and decide who they want to represent them in offices ranging from those as powerful as the President of the United States to offices as niche as county coroner (yes, we do vote for these!). Elections are a cornerstone in democratic politics, connecting voters to governing officials. Ensuring that everyone participates in elections and makes informed decisions is a central part of any campaign and healthy democracy.

This is an advanced seminar on political participation and electoral behavior in the United States. We will occasionally use insights from Comparative Politics to better understand the US. This course is structured in three parts, each comprising two weeks of the course:

- 1) The first third of the course will focus on the American electoral system. We will review the rules under which we vote and how variations in these rules impact electoral outcomes.
- 2) The second third of the course will focus on unpacking who participates and who doesn't participate. We will review rational, sociological, institutional, and habit-based explanations for why you feel inclined to go to the ballot box or stay home.
- 3) The final third of the course will focus on the process by which citizens determine their vote choice: why do people vote the way they do? We will explore sociological, psychological, rational, issue-based, and strategic explanations for why some of you vote for Democrats and why some of you vote for Republicans.

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Identify how American elections are structured and the consequences of those rules
- Evaluate who votes and why they voted in a given election
- Analyze that factors that shape who voters pick when they cast a ballot

Course Requirements and Grading:

Participation	10%
Quizzes & Assignments	15%
Exam 1	25%
Exam 2	25%
Elections Essay	25%

Letter grades will be assigned at the end of the semester based on the following scale. I will **not** round your grade and grades will not be curved.

A+	98-100%	B+	87-89%	C+	77-79%	D+	67-69%
A	93-97%	B	83-86%	C	73-76%	D	63-66%
A-	90-92%	B-	80-82%	C-	70-72%	D-	60-62%

Participation (10%)

Active participation in this course is critical! Coming to class well prepared and offering comments and questions in discussions will result in a superior participation grade. Attendance is mandatory. Two “freebie” absences are allowed. Each subsequent absence will result in a decrease in the participation and attendance grade. Note that attendance alone is not sufficient to receive full credit. Students with perfect attendance but no participation in class should expect to receive a 60% on the participation and attendance grade.

If you are exposed to COVID-19 or test positive and must quarantine, you must provide the positive covid test (digitally) or a note indicating you are expected to quarantine. We will arrange an alternative assignment for you to complete to makeup credit.

Quizzes & Assignments (15%)

Throughout the course, there will be a combination of reading quizzes and other in-class activities that will cumulatively makeup 15% of the overall course grade.

Exams (2x 25%)

At the end of the first two modules, there will be an exam on the material from that module. Exam 1 will cover material from Week 1 and 2. Exam 2 will cover material from Week 3 and 4. Each exam will consist of multiple choice and short answer ID questions. Exams will be online/take-home exams administered via Canvas and are open note and open book. They are **not** open friend, meaning they should not be taken with other students.

Exam Dates:

- Exam 1 will be available from *Saturday, Jul. 9 @ 12pm – Monday, Jul. 11 @ 12pm*
- Exam 2 will be available from *Saturday, Jul. 23 @ 12pm – Monday, Jul. 25 @ 12pm*

Elections Essay (25%)

There will be one essay in lieu of a final exam for this course which will be worth 25% of the overall course grade. Students are expected to write 1600-2000 words on one battleground Senate race in the upcoming 2022 midterms not including Pennsylvania's. Students will be expected to provide an overview of the race (who are the candidates, who is the incumbent if one is running, is there a presumptive favorite, etc.). Students will then be expected to analyze election result data in previous senate races in that state to make their own predictions for the results in 2022. Who voted in the past and who is expected to vote now? What issues are driving the campaign and who does this favor? How much has the state historically “swung” between the two parties? More specifics will be available on a separate assignment sheet on Canvas. Essays will be due on Saturday, August 6th at 11:59pm.

Late/Makeup Assignment Policy

All assignments must be submitted by their specified due date as designated in the syllabus. Late assignments will suffer a 10 percent penalty for each day that they are late and will not be accepted after three days. There will be no make-up exams or extensions without a university approved excused absence and these must be communicated to the instructor prior to the due date. If you miss an assignment or exam without a university approved excuse, you will receive a 0.

Email Policy

Emails must have PS1234, PS1234, Electoral Behavior, or a logical alternative indicating the email pertains to this course. Emails pertaining to this course must be sent from your official University of Pittsburgh email address. It is class policy that grades will not be discussed over email. I will generally reply to e-mails within 24 hours.

Schedule

Assigned readings are subject to change, but you will be notified in advance if this occurs. All readings are available on Canvas under “Files”.

Module 1: American Campaigns & Elections

Week 1: June 27 to July 1

Monday, June 27th : Introduction & Why Study Electoral Behavior (No Class)

- No readings. Watch course introduction video on Canvas

Wednesday, June 29th: How elections are structured (the rules of the game)

- Watch: Election Basics: “Crash Course Government and Politics”:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=48EZKXweGDo>
- Blais, A., & Carty, R. K. (1991). The Psychological Impact of Electoral Laws: Measuring Duverger’s Elusive Factor. *British Journal of Political Science*, 21(1), 79–93.

Friday, July 1st: Who can and can’t vote

- Hershey, M. R. (2009). What We Know about Voter-ID Laws, Registration, and Turnout. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42(1), 87–91.
- Mycoff, J. D., Wagner, M. W., & Wilson, D. C. (2009). The Empirical Effects of Voter-ID Laws: Present or Absent? *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 42(1), 121–126.

Week 2: July 4 to July 8

Monday, July 4th: No Class- Independence Day

Wednesday, July 6th: Impact of electoral reforms on election outcomes

- Nickerson, D. W. (2015). Do Voter Registration Drives Increase Participation? For Whom and When? *The Journal of Politics*, 77(1), 88–101.
- Watch: How does vote-by-mail work and does it increase election fraud?:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Vz7d0C1cGE>

Friday, July 8th: Campaigns

- Jacobson, G. C. (2015). How Do Campaigns Matter? *Annual Review of Political Science*, 18(1), 31–47.
- “How Political Campaigning has Changed Throughout US History”. *Stacker*
<https://stacker.com/stories/3943/how-political-campaigning-has-changed-throughout-us-history>

EXAM 1: Saturday, July 9 @ 12pm – Monday, July 11 @ 12pm

Module 2: Political Participation

Week 3: July 11 to July 15

Monday, July 11th: Rational Model of Voting

- Aldrich, J. H. (1993). Rational Choice and Turnout. *American Journal of Political Science*, 37(1), 246–278.

Wednesday, July 13th: Sociological & Resource Models of Voting

- Leighley, J. E., & Nagler, J. (1992). Socioeconomic Class Bias in Turnout, 1964-1988: The Voters Remain the Same. *The American Political Science Review*, 86(3), 725–736.
- “Why are the Poor and Minorities Less Likely to Vote?” *The Atlantic*
<https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/01/why-are-the-poor-and-minorities-less-likely-to-vote/282896/>

Friday, July 15th: Habitual Voting vs Voter Fatigue

- Plutzer, E. (2002). Becoming a Habitual Voter: Inertia, Resources, and Growth in Young Adulthood. *The American Political Science Review*, 96(1), 41–56.

Week 4: July 18 to July 22

Monday, July 18th: Effect of Campaigns

- Green, D. P., Gerber, A. S., & Nickerson, D. W. (2003). Getting Out the Vote in Local Elections: Results from Six Door-to-Door Canvassing Experiments. *The Journal of Politics*, 65(4), 1083–1096.
- “How Republicans Swept A Bluish State?”. *FiveThirtyEight*.
<https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-republicans-won-the-virginia-governors-race/>

Wednesday, July 20th: Impact of electoral rules on participation

- Burden, B. C., Canon, D. T., Mayer, K. R., & Moynihan, D. P. (2014). Election Laws, Mobilization, and Turnout: The Unanticipated Consequences of Election Reform. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(1), 95–109.

Friday, July 22nd: Other Forms of Participation: Protests & Beyond

- Dalton, R., Van Sickle, A., & Weldon, S. (2010). The Individual–Institutional Nexus of Protest Behaviour. *British Journal of Political Science*, 40(1), 51–73.

EXAM 2: Saturday, July 23 @ 12pm – Monday, July 25 @ 12pm

Module 3: Vote Choice

Week 5: July 25 to July 29

Monday, July 25th: A Rational Voter: Economic Voting

- Erikson, R. S. (1989). Economic Conditions and The Presidential Vote. *The American Political Science Review*, 83(2), 567–573.
- “5 Things to Watch Going Into The Midterms”. *FiveThirtyEight*. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/5-things-to-watch-going-into-the-midterms/>

Wednesday, July 27th: A Rational Voter: Spatial Models of Vote Choice

- Rabinowitz, G., & Macdonald, S. E. (1989). A Directional Theory of Issue Voting. *The American Political Science Review*, 83(1), 93–121.

Friday, July 29th: A Rational Voter: Strategic vs. Sincere Voting

- Nonnemacher, J., Spoon, J.-J., & Ringe, N. (2022). An Institutional Safety Net? How Electoral Institutions Mediate the Fortunes of Parties under Threat. *Working Paper*.

Week 6: August 1 to August 5

Monday, August 1st: Sociological Voting

- Sokhey, A. E., & McClurg, S. D. (2012). Social Networks and Correct Voting. *The Journal of Politics*, 74(3), 751–764.

Wednesday, August 3rd: Partisanship

- Bartels, L. M. (2000). Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996. *American Journal of Political Science*, 44(1), 35–50.

Friday, August 5th: Impact of electoral rules on vote choice & wrap-up

- Cervas, J., & Grofman, B. (2022). Why Donald Trump Should Be a Fervent Advocate of Using Ranked-Choice Voting in 2024. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 55(1), 1–6.

DUE: Elections Essay by Saturday, August 6 at 11:59 pm

Student Disabilities

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), 140 William Pitt Union, drsrecep@pitt.edu, as early as possible in the term. DRS will determine reasonable accommodations for the course. All discussions will remain confidential.

Academic Integrity

All students are expected to be familiar with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. These principles will be strictly enforced in this course. While students are encouraged to discuss readings and ideas with other students to improve clarity, all course submissions must be your own work. Anyone suspected of cheating or plagiarism on any assignment, paper, or exam will be subject to university investigation and disciplinary procedures.

Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Pittsburgh does not tolerate any form of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation based on disability, race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, genetic information, marital status, familial status, sex, age, sexual orientation, veteran status or gender identity or other factors as stated in the University's Title IX policy. The University is committed to taking prompt action to end a hostile environment that interferes with the University's mission. For more information about policies, procedures, and practices, see:

<https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/civilrights-title-ix-compliance/policies-procedures-and-practices>

I ask that everyone in the class strives to help ensure that other members of this class can learn in a supportive and respectful environment. If there are instances of the aforementioned issues, please contact the Title IX Coordinator, by calling 412-648-7860, or e-mailing titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu. Reports can also be filed online: <https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/make-report/report-form>. You may also choose to report this to a faculty/staff member; they are required to communicate this to the University's Office of Diversity and Inclusion. If you wish to maintain complete confidentiality, you may also contact the University Counseling Center (412-648-7930).

Gender-Inclusive Language Guidelines

Aspiring to create a learning environment in which people of all identities are encouraged to contribute their perspectives to academic discourse, the University of Pittsburgh Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies Program provides guidelines and resources regarding gender-inclusive/non-sexist language (<http://www.gsws.pitt.edu/node/1432>). Following these guidelines fosters an inclusive and welcoming environment, strengthens academic writing, enriches discussion, and reflects best professional practices.

Language is gender-inclusive and non-sexist when we use words that affirm and respect how people describe, express, and experience their gender. Gender-inclusive/nonsexist language acknowledges people of any gender. It also affirms non-binary gender identifications and recognizes the difference between biological sex and gender expression. Students may share their preferred pronouns and names, and these gender identities and gender expressions should be honored.

Take Care of Yourself

Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this term by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax. Despite what you might hear, using your time to take care of yourself will actually help you achieve your academic goals more than spending too much time studying. All of us

benefit from support and guidance during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available at Pitt. An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Take the time to learn about all that's available and take advantage of it. Ask for support sooner rather than later – this always helps. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or difficult feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty, or family member you trust for assistance connecting to the support that can help.

The University Counseling Center is here for you: call 412-648-7930 and visit their website.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, call someone immediately, day or night:

University Counseling Center (UCC): 412 648-7930

University Counseling Center Mental Health Crisis Response: 412-648-7930 x1

Resolve Crisis Network: 888-796-8226 (888-7-YOU-CAN)

If the situation is life threatening, call the Police:

On-campus: Pitt Police: 412-268-2121 Off-campus: 911