

Tuesday, November 04, 2003

American Political Behavior
Political Science 542
Fall 2001

Monday 11:15-2:15
Room 316 Burrowes Bldg.

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Course Description.

This course is an advanced graduate seminar on American political behavior. It does not survey classic works, but instead focuses on a set of themes in theory and research on electoral behavior. This semester I have selected a set of readings and we will jointly select the remaining readings.

What are the parameters? The questions we study will be about how citizens, often voters, make political choices and think about politics. Readings could cover a variety of topics including: presidential and congressional elections; the role of economics in elections; the nature and extent of political participation; the meaning and stability of party identification; the nature of belief systems within the public; and the evaluation of political leaders.

Goals.

My goals for this course are diverse. At a minimum you should leave the course with a sense of the current controversies and important questions about how citizens behave, as well as how the subfield is answering them. You should also develop ideas about how to resolve some of the debates. In addition, you should see a progression in your writing skills.

This means that you will spend the semester reading what other people have done and synthesizing it, framing questions, developing methods, and considering measurement. To that end, you will be required to do extensive reading and writing. I promise detailed feedback on your writing. The final course project will bring all these goals together: each student will write a research proposal.

Evaluation.

Your grade in the course will be based on your performance in three areas.

1. Written work. Weekly written assignments will be the basis of 25% of your course grade (each weighted equally). An additional 25% will be based on your research proposal.
2. Participation. In class participation is extremely important. The better class discussions, the more we learn and the more enjoyable our time together. Participation will be worth 25% of your final grade.
3. Final Exam. The final exam will be an essay/short answer exam. It will be cumulative and worth 25% of your grade.

The texts.

Neimi, Richard and Herbert Weisberg. 2000. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 4th edition. Congressional Quarterly, Inc.

Marcus, George E., W, Russell Neuman, and Michael B. MacKuen. 2000. *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*. University of Chicago Press.

Chong, Dennis. 1999. *Rational Lives: Norms and Values in Politics and Society*. University of Chicago Press.

Lupia, Arthur, Mathew D. McCubbins, and Samuel L. Popkin. 2000. *Elements of Reason: Cognition, Choice, and the Bounds of Rationality*. Cambridge University Press.

MacKuen, Michael B., Robert Erikson and James Stimson. 2001. *The Macro Polity*. Cambridge University Press.

Bartels, Larry. 2000. *Campaign Reform: Insights and Evidence*. University of Michigan Press.

I have selected a set of texts that will serve as our reading material for roughly half the course. We will select the remaining readings as a group, depending on your interests. In general, I selected a set of new readings split between hot topics and old questions. The Neimi and Weisberg text is an edited volume that focuses on the central controversies in the subfield. (It is a companion text to their *Classics in Voting Behavior*, a text that follows the same format but focuses on classic questions.) We will begin with this text. It sets the stage for all that follows.

The next 3 texts all revolve around both methodological and theoretical debates. In particular, each questions the roles of rational choice and social psychological approaches for understanding how citizens think about politics. We will read them in a set, but spread over 3 weeks. We will read *The Macro Polity* late in the semester. I would like to do it sooner, but the publisher's original availability date (September) has been pushed back to November. We'll read it when we can. The final text that I have ordered is Larry Bartel's edited volume on campaign reform. The book is timely and includes chapters by many of the foremost researchers in the subfield.

This leaves much of the semester unscheduled. There are at least 2 approaches we can take to fill out the semester. We can read more classic works – Downs, *The American Voter*, Zaller, *Who Votes?* And the like (I'll mix in articles). Alternatively, we can select topics like my favorite, economic voting, and collectively select weekly readings.

The Weekly Plan.

Below is a tentative schedule of weekly readings. You are responsible for any changes in these readings. Books and journal articles have NOT been placed on reserve, but all journal articles can be found in Pattee library or on JSTOR (or see me for a copy). The books are (or will be) available in the student bookstore. I expect every student to read ALL the assigned material each week. Also, if you need to miss class, let me know in advance; poor attendance will result in a poor grade.

We will maintain a class email list. I will send announcements and schedule changes via email. I encourage you to use the list as a way to communicate with your classmates regarding questions about class readings, assignments, and other things related to class.

In addition to the readings, roughly each week you will hand in portions of "mock" research proposals. That is, you will write portions of research proposals as if you were proposing to conduct the research in the week's readings. You will receive comments on your written work from classmates as well as myself. These written assignments are designed both to help you to organize your thinking about the weekly readings and to get you accustomed to writing proposals so that you will find writing your own proposals easier. We will discuss these proposals in detail in class.

Introduction

August 27

Course expectations and policies.
Writing and Reading.

September 3

No class: Labor Day

Voters and Elections

September 10

Neimi and Weisberg. 2000. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*.
Introduction through part III

September 17

Neimi and Weisberg. 2000. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*.
Part IV through end.

Rationality, psychology, and how citizens think about politics

September 24

Marcus et al. 2000. *Affective Intelligence and Political Judgment*.

October 1

Chong. 2000. *Rational Lives*.

October 8

FALL BREAK CLASS ON OCTOBER 10

Lupia 2000. *Elements of Reason*. Half for this week.

October 15

Class Cancelled.

Macro Politics

October 22 Class will be held on Friday the 19th during Jim Stimson's visit.
Erikson, MacKuen, and Stimson 2001. *The Macro Polity*.

October 29

Lupia 2000. *Elements of Reason*. Finish for this week.

Returning to some Classics Voters and Elections

November 5

Converse, Philip E., Angus Campbell, Warren Miller, and Donald E. Stokes.
1960. *The American Voter*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
Chapters 1-4, 6-10 and 19. (Plus one of chapters 5, 12, 14, and 18)

Individual Opinion

November 12

Converse, Philip E. 1964. "The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics." In
D.E. Apter, *Ideology and Discontent*. New York: Free Press.

Zaller, John. 1992. *The Nature and Origin of Mass Opinion* New York:
Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1-5, 7 and 9.

Realignment, issues definition

November 19

Carmines and Stimson. *Issue Evolution*.

Economics and Elections

November 26

We will divide this week's readings among the class.

Kiewiet, D. Roderick. 1983. *Macroeconomics and Micropolitics*. Chicago, IL:
University of Chicago Press.

Kramer, Gerald H. 1977. "Short-Term Fluctuations in U.S. Voting Behavior, 1896-1964," *The American Political Science Review*, 65:131-143.

Gregory B. Markus. 1988. "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions on the Presidential Vote: A Pooled Cross Sectional Analysis," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 32, No. 1. (February), pp. 137-154.

Gregory B. Markus. 1992. "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions on Presidential Voting, 1956-1988 (an Update)", *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 36, No. 3. (August), pp. 829-834.

Kinder, Donald R. and D. Roderick Keiwiet 1981. "Sociotropic Voting: The American Case," *British Journal of Political Science*, 11:129-161.

Kiewiet, D. Roderick and Douglas Rivers 1984. "A Retrospective on Retrospective Voting," *Political Behavior*, 6: 369-393.

MacKuen, Michael B., Robert S. Erikson, and James A. Stimson 1992. "Peasants or Bankers? The American Electorate and the U.S. Economy." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3. (September), pp. 597-611.

Krause, George A. 1997. "Voters, information Heterogeneity, and the Dynamics of Aggregate Economic Expectations." *American Journal of Political Science* 41, No. 4.(October), 1170-1200.

Campaign Reform

December 3

Bartels. 2000. *Campaign Reform*.

December 12

Wednesday 10:10-12:00 Final Exam

Additional Information.

Academic Integrity Statement.

*Penn State defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an Open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20).

Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

Disability Access Statement.

*The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell me as soon as possible.

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Research Proposal Guidelines.

There are many different ways to put together a research proposal or research design. The following guidelines have proven effective for lots of people. All successful research proposals must include each of these components in some form. We will use these guidelines for all written work in this class.

1. State the question. **LITERALLY.**
 - a. Is there a paradox? A big unanswered question? Or what?
 - b. Be precise with the question, but present it without political science jargon.
2. State the theory.
 - a. Locate yourself in the broader literature. How is the question looked at now? How do the major perspectives approach the question?
 - b. How does current research fall short? We need to do X because...
 - c. What's your basic logic? Think here about causal mechanisms. What do you think is driving behavior? Tell us!
3. Concepts and Measurement.
 - a. What are the key concepts for your research question?
 - b. How will you measure them?
4. Method -- How will you do it.
 - a. What techniques will you use to answer the research question?
 - b. How can you justify this approach? Justify your method **THEORETICALLY**, not practically
5. Significance.
 - a. What does it matter if you are right/wrong?
 - b. What contribution can you make? "It will settle the debate over..."
 - c. Be assertive, really sell the proposal here.
6. Link to broader normative concerns.
7. First paragraph should say all the above quickly, immediately, forcefully.

Proposal Schedule.

Friday, October 12: Introductory paragraph and outline due by 3:00pm.

Friday, November 9: Full proposal draft due by 3:00pm.

Friday, December 7: Final version of the proposal is due by 3:00pm.