Political Science 821: Mass Political Behavior

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University of Wisconsin
Spring Semester 2017
Tuesdays 3:30-5:25pm
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Office hours: Mondays 1:30-3:00pm and by appointment

This graduate seminar provides an examination of mass political behavior in the United States, with an emphasis on political participation, elections, and voting behavior. The goal is to survey what the best and most visible scholarship in the field has to say about why the American electorate behaves as it does. To define our inquiry, the syllabus mostly excludes work that is focused squarely on public opinion, political communication, political parties, and political psychology because those topics are addressed in other courses. The readings emphasize topics that are of interest to researchers today, so the material tends to be contemporary rather than classic.

Responsibilities

I expect that students will do all of the required reading and come to class prepared to discuss it in a thoughtful fashion. The number of pages required each week is kept at manageable level for this reason. Careful reading and participation in class discussion are the keys to making the class productive for everyone involved.

You might not immediately understand everything in the readings. In particular, the methodologies deployed in the readings will be difficult to grasp if you have not yet taken courses in research design and advanced statistics. That is fine. I ask that you give it a serious try and then bring your insights as well as your questions to class.

One half of the course grade is based on reaction papers and class participation. The other half of the grade is based on the final paper.

Each student will write four reaction papers during the semester for class meetings of your choosing. You do not need to inform me in advance of the weeks you will be writing. For each of the four weeks that you select, papers should be uploaded to the Learn@UW site by 5pm on Monday. The papers should touch on all of the week’s readings on their terms, but should identify one theme, shortcoming, or question to address as a way to connect them. Each paper should be no longer than three double-spaced pages. You should be prepared to discuss the materials covered in each class, whether or not you wrote a reaction paper for that session.

Each student will write a longer paper to be submitted at the end the semester. The paper may take one of two forms. One form is a focused literature review and research design of 15-20 pages. The
other form is an original empirical paper that actually reports research. In most cases these papers will rely on secondary data such as the ANES, CCES, or aggregate election results. Be aware of the IRB requirements that will require you to start earlier if you decide to collect original data. With my permission you may co-author the research paper (but not the literature review and research design) with a fellow student. If you are a Ph.D. student in Political Science and beyond the first year, I strongly recommend writing an original research paper.

Be thinking about the paper from the beginning of the semester. You might want to read ahead on the syllabus if you intend to write on a topic that is addressed later in the semester. Please feel free to contact me for advice on readings or resources. In most cases we should discuss your paper idea in person or by email in the first half of the semester. A prospectus for the paper of about two pages should be uploaded to Learn@UW by 5pm on Friday, April 14. The final paper is due in hard copy by 5pm on Saturday, May 13.

Readings

Most of the course readings are from journal articles. They will be posted on Learn@UW. Two books are required:


The books are on reserve at the library but should be purchased if possible. You might also decide to purchase other books even if the assigned chapters are posted online. Please brings readings to class meetings as we will be referring to them frequently during our discussion.

Other Considerations

Your success in this class is important to me. All students are strongly encouraged to visit office hours if only to introduce yourself and let me know how the course is working for you.

If you have a disability or circumstance that could affect your performance, please contact me early in the semester so that we can consider accommodations. The McBurney Center for Disability Services can provide official documentation of disabilities.

If you must miss class due to illness or another valid conflict, please contact me in advance.

I reserve the right to modify the syllabus timeline or specific readings as needed.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes using someone else’s words or ideas without proper attribution. I will report any cases of academic dishonesty to the appropriate dean’s office.

Please only use electronic devices in class for referencing course materials, taking notes, and occasionally tracking down online items that are necessary for our discussions. Everything else should be quieted and stowed away for later use.
January 17: Introduction

January 24: Voting as a (Unique) Form of Participation

Required
1. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady. Voice and Equality. (chapters 2, 3, 7-14, & 16)

Recommended

January 31: Voter Turnout

Required

Recommended
February 7: Emotion in Political Participation

**Required**

**Recommended**

February 14: The Basic Vote Choice

**Required**
1. Achen and Bartels. Democracy for Realists. (chapter 2)

**Recommended**

February 21: Party Identification

**Required**
1. Achen and Bartels. Democracy for Realists. (chapters 9-11)

Recommended

February 28: Partisan Polarization

Required

Recommended

March 7: Interests and Choices

Required
Recommended

March 14: Economic Voting

Required
1. Achen and Bartels. Democracy for Realists. (chapters 3-7)

Recommended

March 21: Spring Recess

March 28: Political Information

Required

Recommended

April 4: Social Networks

Required

Recommended

April 11: Campaign Effects

Required

Recommended

**April 14: Prospectus Due**

**April 18: Media Influence**

**Required**

**Recommended**

**April 25: Congressional Elections**

**Required**

**Recommended**

May 2: Consequences of Election Administration

Required

Recommended

May 13: Paper Due