

Elections, Parties, and Political Opinion

POSC 4213/5213

Spring 2010

Prof. Azari

julia.azari@mu.edu

Office: 458 William Wehr Physics

Office hours: MW 2-4, by appointment

“To govern according to the sense and agreement of the interests of the people is a great and glorious object of governance. This object cannot be obtained but through the medium of popular election, and popular election is a mighty evil.” - Edmund Burke

“If pigs could vote, the man with the slop bucket would be elected swineherd every time, no matter how much slaughtering he did on the side.” - Orson Scott Card

“I'm tired of hearing it said that democracy doesn't work. Of course it doesn't work. We are supposed to work it.” - Alexander Woollcott

Course Description

This is a course about political attitudes and beliefs, voting behavior, and elections. As such, the course is divided into three units that emphasize these themes.

The first unit examines how we measure opinion, attitudes, and knowledge, as well as where those come from. The second unit is on voting. The third unit deals with elections on a “macro” level, assessing election forecasting and interpretation, as well as the impact of campaign activity.

Reading list

Four books have been ordered to the BookMarq for this course. All other readings are available on D2L.

Rosalee Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley, *Public Opinion: Democratic Ideals, Democratic Practice*.

Paul R. Abramson, John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 2008 Elections*.

Stephen Ansolabehere and Shanto Iyengar, *Going Negative*.

John G. Geer, *In Defense of Negativity*.

Workload and Grading Breakdown

Midterm Exam 20% of grade

Analytical writing assignment 15% of grade

Capstone assignment worth 20% of grade

Final exam 25% of grade

Participation 10% of grade

Quizzes 10% of grade

Summary of Important Dates

QUIZZES: Feb. 4; Feb. 16; March 11; April 8; April 20; May 4

Midterm Exam March 4

Analytical writing paper due April 13

Capstone assignment due May 6

Final Exam May 14 3:30-5:30

Course Policies

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Mere attendance is not worthy of a high participation grade, however; you must also be on time and be prepared for class. Students who are demonstrably unprepared for class will lose participation points. This class is a collaborative exercise, not an exercise in information delivery. In order to have meaningful discussions of the material, everyone needs to read the material carefully and thoughtfully before class. Everyone is expected to contribute to class discussions throughout the semester.

Quizzes and Exams

Quizzes and exams will be given on the dates listed below. Academic honesty is expected; nothing is open-book or open-note unless otherwise specified. Make-ups are available **ONLY** in the event of a family or medical emergency.

Written Assignments

Political Science 4213 is a writing development course; as such, you will complete several written assignments. These assignments will be distributed well in advance of deadlines and include specific instructions about how to complete the assignment. Following instructions is crucial for earning a good grade on an assignment. Course policy concerning late work is the same as for make-up quizzes and exams: only in an emergency. If you have a serious extenuating circumstance, I am somewhat reasonable about extensions. Otherwise, ***I DO NOT ACCEPT LATE WORK IN UPPER DIVISION COURSES***. Late work is irritating for me, reflects poorly on you, and does not fly in the real world. So, let's avoid it. Time management and ability to meet deadlines are very valuable professional skills and it will behoove you to develop them now. Finally, writing assignments are subject to stringent standards of academic honesty. If you quote it, cite it. Learn the difference between a quote and a paraphrase. Academic dishonesty is a very serious violation of personal and institutional integrity and I consider it to be at odds with the mission of the university. So, let's avoid it.

To sum up:

1. Follow directions
2. Turn in work on time
3. Scrupulously follow the university's guidelines for academic honesty

Email and Office Hours

Office hours are listed at the top of the syllabus, as is my office location. Maps of campus are available online. Please come to office hours, but please do not email me to ask that information. More about that below...

... But first, let's expand on "please come to office hours." Office hours are a very useful time to come and discuss issues that are tangentially related or go beyond the material covered in class. They are also an excellent time to go over things you don't understand, to talk about strategies for successful studying and writing, or to ask questions if you are considering a major in political science or a career in a related field. So, please come to office hours. If you can't make office hours, email me and we'll schedule an appointment...

... Which brings us to the subject of email. Email is a very useful tool. It is perfectly appropriate to email me if you are studying and you find your notes are not clear on a particular concept or a term. It is perfectly appropriate to email to bring my attention to news items that relate to something we are studying in class, or to set up or confirm an appointment. Email etiquette is very important, and it is another professional skill that

you will want to acquire before entering the work world. Below I have included a checklist of what a professional email should include:

1. Proper salutation, including the recipient's proper title. In the case of this course and most university courses, that is as simple as "Hello Professor _____" or "Hi Dr. _____." (I don't mind "hey" but this seems to be a generational thing, so approach with caution in other contexts). The proper form of address for university instructors, unless otherwise specified, is Professor or Dr. (for those of us holding doctoral degrees- most of us).
2. Identification of the sender. If you use your university email address, I'll already have your name. Just include the course number the first time you email me. "I'm in your poli sci class" won't help - since that's what my PhD. is in, that's all they'll let me teach!
3. Specific and clear question that cannot be answered on your own. I will not answer emails that ask questions that are answered on the syllabus. These emails will be answered "SYS" - see your syllabus.
4. Proper punctuation, capitalization, and grammar. It's not a text message.

Week 1: Introduction

January 19

Introducing the questions and methods of studying elections and political participation

January 21: Introduction to public opinion

Required reading: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 1

"Is 'popular rule' possible?: Polls, political psychology, and democracy," Larry Bartels, *Brookings Review* 2003

Recommended: Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*

January 26: Political Attitudes and Socialization

Required Reading: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 2

Recommended: Huckfeldt and Sprague, "Discussant Effects on Vote Choice: Intimacy, Structure, and Interdependence," *Journal of Politics* 1991

January 28: Framing

Required: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 3

Recommended: "Issue Framing Effects on Belief Importance and Opinion," Thomas Nelson and Zoe Oxley, *Journal of Politics* 1999

February 2: Attitude stability

Required: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 4

Recommended: Zaller, *Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*, continued

February 4: Political Knowledge

: Clawson and Oxley, Chapter 7

Recommended: Delli Carpini and Keeter, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why it Matters*

February 9: Understanding Voter Turnout: In-Depth Study

Required: Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde (AAR), Chapter 4

Powell, "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective"

Recommended: Jackman, *Political Institutions and Voter Turnout*

Feb. 11 : Mobilization

Required: Green and Gerber, "The Effects of Canvassing, Phone Calls, and Direct Mail on Voter Turnout: A Field Experiment," *APSR* 2000

Recommended: Rosenstone and Hansen, *Mobilization* (D2L)

Bergan, Gerber, Green, and Panagopolous, "Grassroots Mobilization and Voter Turnout in 2004"

February 16: Social Capital as alternative explanation for decline in turnout

Reading: Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Chapters 2, 8, 16, 21 (D2L) (note: chapters are quite short)

Recommended: McDonald and Popkin, "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter," *APSR*
"Why has voter turnout changed? Because it has not," *MPSA* paper

February 18: Partisanship as a political attitude

Required: Abramson, Aldrich and Rohde, Chapter 8

Recommended: Larry M. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996," *American Journal of Political Science* 44 (2000), 35-50

Bafumi and Shapiro, "A New Partisan Voter," *Journal of Politics* 2008

Bruce E. Keith, *The Myth of the Independent Voter*, Chapters 1 and 4

Rappoport and Stone, *Three's A Crowd*

February 23: Red and Blue America? Religion, Culture, Values, and Voting

AAR, Chapter 5

Laura R. Olson & John C. Green, "The Religion Gap," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39:3 (July 2006), 455-59 (D2L)

David Brooks, "One Nation, Slightly Divisible," *The Atlantic* (D2L)

Recommended: Gregory Allen Smith et al., "Understanding the Politics of American Muslims," 2008 APSA paper

Mark D. Brewer, "Catholic Electoral Behavior in the United States: An Examination," SPSA conference paper, 1999

February 25: Retrospective and Prospective voting

AAR, Chapters 6 and 7

March 2: Midterm review

March 4: Midterm exam

March 9: The impact of campaigns

Required: Gelman and King, "Why Are American Presidential Campaign Polls so Variable When Election Results Are So Predictable?"

March 11:

Required: AAR, Chapter 2

SPRING BREAK

March 23: Studying Campaign Advertising

Required: Ansolabehere and Iyengar, *Going Negative*, Chapter 1; Geer, *In Defense of Negativity*, Chapter 1

Recommended: Freedman, Franz, and Goldstein, "Campaign Advertising and Democratic Citizenship," *American Journal of Political Science*

March 25:

Required: Asolabehere and Iyengar, *Going Negative*, Chapters 2 and 4

April 6:

Required: Geer, *In Defense of Negativity*, assigned chapters 2 and 5

April 8:

Required: *Going Negative*, Chapters 5 and 7; *In Defense of Negativity*, Chapter 7

April 13: Nominations:

Required: AAR, Chapter 2

Analytical writing paper due

April 15: Predicting, Explaining, and Interpreting

Required: Abramowitz, "Forecasting the 2008 Election with the Time-for-Change Model" (D2L); Abramowitz, "When Good Forecasts Go Bad" (D2L)

April 20: The debate about electoral realignments

Required: Walter Dean Burnham, *Critical Elections and the Mainsprings of American Politics*, Chapters 1 and 2 (D2L)

April 22:

Required: David Mayhew, *Electoral Realignments: A Critique of an American Genre* (D2L)

April 27: Mandates

Required: Grossback, Peterson, and Stimson, *Mandate Politics* (D2L)

Recommended: Stanley Kelley, *Interpreting Elections*

Terry J. Royed, "Testing the Mandate Model in Britain and the United States: Evidence from the Reagan and Thatcher Eras," *British Journal of Political Science* 1996

April 29: Implications of the 2008 Elections

Required: AAR, Chapter 9

May 4:

Required: AAR, Chapter 11

May 6: Summing up and final exam review