

PSC 332-01
Elections and Voting
Fall, 2008
MWF, 11:00-11:50
209 Graham

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SYLLABUS

This course analyzes American elections and voting behavior, with an emphasis on recent presidential elections. The primary thrust of this course is toward understanding the behavior of voters, which means explaining why people vote the way that they do. Understanding the behavior of voters allows us to interpret and understand election outcomes. In attempting to explain the behavior of voters and the outcomes of elections, we will be especially concerned with recent changes and the implications of these changes for the future of American politics.

Among the questions that we will discuss in this course are: Why do so many Americans fail to vote? How do party affiliations influence voters? Do specific issues affect how voters cast their ballots? How much do economic conditions affect the outcomes of presidential and congressional elections? What impact do the personal characteristics of presidential candidates have on the way that people vote? What changes have taken place in American voting patterns over the past several decades? How and why do congressional elections differ from presidential elections. Why were the last two presidential elections such close contests? Why did the Republicans win the past two presidential elections? What factors are likely to influence the outcome of the 2008 presidential election?

Because this is a course in political science, we will be concerned with how elections and voting behavior can be studied. The collection and analysis of data to examine voting behavior will be discussed throughout the course, and the research papers will provide "hands-on" experience. Both papers will involve computer-based analysis of survey data. No prior experience with this computer application is necessary, but those who have already taken PSC 301 should find some familiar material in this course.

Student Learning Objectives:

As a result of taking this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the impact of the important factors that affect individual voting behavior.
2. Describe the relationship between voting behavior and social and demographic characteristics.
3. Identify the sources of change in voting patterns over time.
4. Analyze survey data in order to investigate individual voting behavior.

Books

The following two books are available at the bookstore in paperback editions:

- P. Abramson, J. Aldrich, and D. Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 2004 and 2006 Elections* (2007).
W. Flanigan and N. Zingale, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 11th ed. (2006).

(If you are purchasing used copies of the books, be sure that you are purchasing the correct editions. Both books have earlier editions, which you do not want to buy.)

Library Reserves

There is a considerable amount of library reserve reading for this course. I think that this reading is important for many of the topics. While the course textbooks are very good, they do not cover every topic in sufficient depth, so supplementary reading is needed. Furthermore, I think that it is desirable for students in upper-level political science courses to read some journal articles. If you dislike having substantial library reserve reading, this course probably is not for you.

Chapters from the following books are available as e-reserves (through Blackboard):

- A. Campbell, et al., *The American Voter*, chpts. 5, 8.
- M. Fiorina, et al., *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*, chpts. 1-3.
- G. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 7th ed., chpt. 5.
- E. Ladd & C. Hadley, *Transformations of the American Party System*, 2nd ed., chpt. 1.
- M. Lewis-Beck, et al., *The American Voter Revisited*, chpts. 11-12.
- W. Miller and J. M. Shanks, *The New American Voter*, chpts. 8, 15.
- J. Sudquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, rev. ed., chpt. 1.

The following journal articles are available as e-reserves (through Blackboard):

- A. Abramowitz and K. Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the American Electorate," *Journal of Politics* (August, 1998).
- L. Bartels, "Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996," *American Journal of Political Science* (January, 2000).
- G. Markus, "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions on the Presidential Vote," *American Journal of Political Science* (February, 1988).
- G. B. Powell, "American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective," *American Political Science Review* (March, 1986).
- C. Prysby, "Perceptions of Candidate Character Traits and the Presidential Vote in 2004," *PS: Politics and Policy* (January, 2008).
- W. Schreckhise and T. Shields, "Ideological Realignment in the Contemporary U.S. Electorate Revisited," *Social Science Quarterly* (September, 2003).

The following books are available at the library on closed reserve (these will be useful references for the class presentations later in the semester):

- P. Abramson, et al., *Change and Continuity in the 2000 and 2002 Elections*.
- H. Weisberg (ed.), *Democracy's Feast*.
- P. Klinkner (ed.), *Midterm: Elections of 1994 in Context*.
- G. Pomper, et al., *The Election of 1988*.
- G. Pomper, et al., *The Election of 1992*.
- G. Pomper, et al., *The Election of 1996*.
- G. Pomper, et al., *The Election of 2000*.
- M. Nelson (ed.), *The Elections of 1988*.
- M. Nelson (ed.), *The Elections of 1996*.
- M. Nelson (ed.), *The Elections of 2000*.
- L. Sabato (ed.), *Midterm Madness*.
- L. Sabato (ed.), *The Sixth Year Itch*.

Course Requirements

This course is designated as writing intensive. That not only means that there will be a great deal of writing in this course; it also means that you will receive feedback on your writing and that we will devote some class time to discussing writing in political science. More information on this aspect of the course is on another handout.

The grades in this course will be determined by:

1. Reading summaries, due throughout the course. There will be 20 summaries assigned, each worth up to 10 points. Your best 10 summaries will be counted. The summaries should be limited to one single-spaced typed page (approximately 500-600 words). Summaries must be submitted in person during the class period in which they are due. Details on the reading summaries are on another handout.
2. A paper that examines the relationship between partisan choice and social and demographic factors. This paper will involve a computer-based analysis of survey data from the 2004 presidential election. Details on this project will be distributed in late August. There will be a preliminary and final draft of this paper, but only the final draft will receive a grade.
3. A paper that analyzes the impact of political attitudes and evaluations on the presidential vote in 2004, based on an analysis of survey data from the 2004 election. Details on this paper will be distributed in early October. There will be a preliminary and a final draft of this paper, and both drafts will be graded.
4. Class participation, based on contributions to class discussion and on a class presentation dealing with a specific national election. The class presentation will be a group project, with 2-4 students presenting the information and leading the discussion of a specific presidential or congressional election. Details on the presentation will be distributed in early October. Forty percent of the class participation points will be determined by the presentation and sixty percent by general class participation.

The course grade will be determined by a point system:

Reading summaries (10 x 10 points each)	100 points
Paper on social factors and voting	100 points
Paper on attitudes and voting, first draft	100 points
Paper on attitudes and voting, final draft	100 points
Class participation	<u>100 points</u>
Total =	500 points

One note about your written work. You should be familiar with the UNCG academic integrity policy and abide by its provisions in any work that you do. Among other things, this means that your written work should not contain plagiarized material. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me for clarification. While I expect that any work that you submit will be your own work, not that of someone else, I encourage you to study and work together. It is a good idea to discuss the readings, compare data analyses, and exchange ideas with others in the class. I think that you will benefit from the right kind of collaborative work.

Course Outline

As the following outline indicates, many of the topics are covered by readings from several sources. The class sessions will be especially important for integrating this diverse material, as well as for clearing up anything that is confusing in the readings. In order for the class sessions to be worthwhile, it is essential that you complete the readings prior to each scheduled class session.

The reading assignments are listed below. The tentative dates for each topic are listed, although these are subject to change, depending on how the course develops. The due date for each reading assignment will be announced in class.

Readings that are on library reserve are so indicated by a “[e-reserve]” or a “[reserve]” following the listing. The books that are not on e-reserve are on closed reserve at the library. Books usually are referred to simply by the author’s last name; consult page 2 of this syllabus for the title (e.g., Campbell et al. refers to *The American Voter*). For journal articles on e-reserve, a more complete citation is provided.

A. Turnout in national elections (Aug. 27, Sept. 3, 5, 8)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 2

Campbell, et al., chpt. 5 [e-reserve]

Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpt. 4

Powell, “American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective,” *APSR* (March 1986) [e-reserve]

B. Party identification (Sept. 10, 12, 15)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpts. 3 (pp. 61-66) and 4

Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpt. 8

Bartels, “Partisanship and Voting Behavior, 1952-1996,” *AJPS* (January, 2000) [e-reserve]

C. Analyzing data from the 2000 election (Sept. 17, 19, 22, 24)

Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpts. 1-3

Examine the material on the SETUPS Web site (www.icpsr.umich.edu/SETUPS)

D. Social factors and the vote (Sept. 26, 29, Oct. 1)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 5

Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpt. 5

Lewis-Beck, et al., chpts 11-12 [e-reserve]

E. Attitudinal basis of the vote (Oct. 3, 6, 8)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 8

Miller and Shanks, chpt. 8 [e-reserve]

F. Issues, attitudes and the vote

1. The role of policy issues in elections (Oct. 10, 13, 15, 17)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 6, chpt. 7 (pp. 161-174)

Campbell, et al., chpt. 8 [e-reserve]

Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpt. 6

2. Retrospective evaluations and voting behavior (Oct. 22, 24, 27)

Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpt. 7

Markus, "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions on the Presidential Vote,"
AJPS (Feb. 1988) [e-reserve]

3. The influence of perceptions of candidate characteristics (Oct. 29, 31, Nov. 3)

Miller and Shanks, chpt. 15 [e-reserve]

Prysby, "Perceptions of Candidate Character Traits and the Presidential Vote in 2004," *PS*
(January 2008) [e-reserve]

G. Aspects of electoral dynamics

1. Short-run versus long-term electoral change (Nov. 5, 7, 10)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 3 (pp. 66-80)

Sundquist, chpt. 1 [e-reserve]

Ladd and Hadley, chpt. 1 [e-reserve]

2. Recent changes in the American electorate (Nov. 12, 14, 17, 19)

Abramowitz and Saunders, "Ideological Realignment in the American Electorate," *JOP* (August
1998) [e-reserve]

Schreckhise and Shields, "Ideological Realignment in the Contemporary U.S. Electorate
Revisited," *SSQ* (September 2003) [e-reserve]

Fiorina, et al., chpts. 1-3 [e-reserve]

H. Candidates and issues in recent presidential elections

1. 1988 presidential election (Nov. 21)

Nelson (ed.), *The Elections of 1988*, chpts. 1, 3, 5 [reserve]

Pomper, et al., *The Election of 1988*, chpts. 3-5 [reserve]

2. 1992 presidential election (Nov. 21)

Pomper, et al., *The Election of 1992*, chpts. 1, 4, 5 [reserve]

Weisberg, *Democracy's Feast*, chpts. 1, 3, 4 [reserve]

3. 1996 presidential election (Nov. 24)

Nelson (ed.), *The Elections of 1996*, chpts. 3, 5 [reserve]
Pomper, et al., *The Election of 1996*, chpts. 1, 4, 5 [reserve]

4. 2000 presidential election (Nov. 24)

Nelson (ed.), *The Elections of 2000*, chpts. 3, 4, 7 [reserve]
Pomper, et al., *The Election of 2000*, chpts. 1, 4, 6 [reserve]

I. Congressional elections

1. Voting behavior in congressional elections (Dec. 1)

Jacobson, chpt. 5 [e-reserve]

2. 1994 congressional elections (Dec. 3)

Klinkner, chpts. 1, 3, 6, 10 [reserve]

3. 2002 congressional elections (Dec. 3)

Sabato (ed.), chpt. 1, 2, 5 [reserve]
Abramson, et al., *Continuity and Change in the 2000 and 2002 Elections*, chpt. 11 [reserve]

4. 2004 congressional elections (Dec. 5)

Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpts. 9, 10

5. 2006 congressional elections (Dec. 5)

Sabato (ed.), chpt. 1, 2, 5 [reserve]
Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpt. 11

J. Summing up and future prospects (Dec. 8)

Abramson, Aldrich, and Rohde, chpt. 12