

Political Science 242: Political Behavior

Dickinson College, Spring 2016
MR 3:00-4:15, Denny Hall - Room 204

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1:30-3:00; Wednesdays 9:30-11:00; and by appointment

Course Description

This course is devoted to examining and discussing mass political behavior. What this means, very generally, is that we will explore questions related to how everyday people interact with the American political system. More specifically, we will address questions related to who participates in politics, when, where, why, and how. In the first part of the course, we consider what constitutes political participation, paying special attention to voting. We will also think about political knowledge; partisanship and issue preferences, and vote determinants. Much of the second part of the course will investigate how various groups of individuals -- specifically groups related to income, religion, gender, race, age, and geography -- interact with the American political process. We will end the semester by discussing intersectionality as well as the changing face of political participation in the United States.

As you know, 2016 is a presidential election year and this semester we will watch the Democratic and Republican presidential nominating contests unfold. In class, we will discuss the campaign and the behavior of members of the electorate as they participate in the electoral process. There are several blogs, some of which are curated by political scientists, you will likely find interesting and relevant to course content:

- "The Monkey Cage" hosted by *The Washington Post*
- "Mischiefs of Faction" hosted by *Vox.com*
- "Politics" hosted by *Fivethirtyeight.com*

This class fulfills the college distribution requirement of Writing in the Discipline (WiD) and as such we will focus heavily on writing throughout the semester. You will write several short analytical papers as well as one longer "state of the field" paper exploring existing scholarly work related to a question of your own choosing in the field of political behavior. Requirements for all the writing assignments will be handed out early in the semester.

Course Materials

There are two required books for the course (available at the bookstore):

- Niemi, Richard G., Herbert F. Weisberg, and David Kimball. 2010. *Controversies in Voting Behavior, 5th Edition*. Washington, DC: CQ Press. (Controversies)
- Fisher, Patrick. 2014. *Demographic Gaps in American Political Behavior*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. (Gaps)

Additional readings are available on Moodle or online as specified in the syllabus.

Requirements and Grading

Since this is a WiD (Writing in the Discipline) course, it is small and therefore will largely be run as a seminar. In order to succeed in the class, your consistent attendance and regular participation in class discussions is essential. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences; if you miss more than two course meetings, your attendance at participation grade will begin to be adversely affected. If something arises in your life that affects your ability to come to class and/or complete assignments in a timely manner, I encourage you to speak with me and/or your College Dean as soon as you are able so we can discuss potential accommodations.

Class participation involves regular, high-quality contributions to class discussion. Quality is more important than quantity, but during class meetings, I expect everyone to participate meaningfully in the discussion. High-quality comments are usually only possible when you have read carefully and prepared for the class session. For some, speaking up in class is an especially difficult challenge. If this is true for you, please come see me so we can talk about alternative ways to participate in the course overall.

Beyond participation, your grade will be based on a series of response papers, a midterm exam, and a final paper. The relative weight and due dates of each component are as follows:

Attendance and Participation	15%	
Short Analysis Papers (6 + 1 revision)	30%	February 4 February 11 February 29 March 10 (Revision of #2 or #3) March 24 April 11 April 18
Midterm	20%	March 7
Final Paper	35%	February 22 = Proposal March = Individual meeting with Prof April 28 = Draft for Peer Review May 13 at 5:00pm = Final Draft

Final letter grades will be assigned in the following way:

A = 93-100	B- = 80-82	D = 60-69
A- = 90-92	C+ = 77-79	F = 0-59
B+ = 87-89	C = 73-76	
B = 83-86	C- = 70-72	

How to calculate your own grade

Attendance and Participation = Graded out of 15 points

Short Analysis Papers = Graded out of 20 points each (divide your points by 4 on each paper)

Short Analysis Paper Revision = Graded out of 20 points (replace paper #2 or paper #3 score)

Midterm = Graded out of 100 points (multiply your points by 0.20)

Final Paper Proposal = Graded out of 5 points

Final Paper Individual Meeting = Pass/Fail; Not coming will count for an absence from class and will likely have an adverse effect on your final paper grade

Final Paper Draft for Peer Review = Graded out of 5 points based on bringing a reasonable draft for peer review

Final Paper Final Version = Graded out of 100 points (multiply your points by 0.25)

Academic Integrity

From Dickinson College's Community Standards... "Respect for ideas — our own and others' — is a hallmark of academic integrity. We show respect by acknowledging when we have used another's words or ideas in our work. We expect others to acknowledge when they use our ideas or words in their work. Students are expected to do their own work on quizzes, papers, examinations, class assignments, etc. Normally, a paper may be submitted in fulfillment of an assignment in only one course. Exceptions require permission from the instructors. Collaboration must be noted in writing and requires the consent of all instructors."

(http://www.dickinson.edu/info/20273/dean_of_students/867/community_standards/)

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to the Office of Disability Services (ODS) in Dana Hall, Suite 106. Because classes change every semester, eligible students must obtain a new accommodation letter from Director Marni Jones every semester and review this letter with their professors so the accommodations can be implemented. The Director of ODS is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have. ODS proctoring is managed by Susan Frommer (717-254-8107 or proctoring@dickinson.edu). Address general inquiries to 717-245-1734 or e-mail disabilityservices@dickinson.edu. For more information, go to www.dickinson.edu/ODS.

Technology in the Classroom

A recent study conducted by psychologists Pam Mueller and Daniel Oppenheimer shows that students who take notes on a computer do less well answering conceptual questions than do students who take notes by hand (<http://www.vox.com/2014/6/4/5776804/note-taking-by-hand-versus-laptop>). However, I know that many students have become accustomed to using laptops

and/or tablets for note-taking. I leave the decision to you as to what works best for you. As such, I do permit students to use technology in the classroom. In fact, there might be a few days I will explicitly encourage you to use online resources during class.

With respect to audio recording, however, Pennsylvania is a “two-party consent” state, meaning that it is a crime to “intercept or record a telephone call or conversation **unless all parties to the conversation consent**” (<http://www.dmlp.org/legal-guide/pennsylvania/pennsylvania-recording-law>). Practically, what this means is that you should not be using any device to record class lectures or discussions. If a student with an accommodation from ODS is permitted to record class, all members of the class will be informed; students with ODS accommodations agree to strict guidelines with respect to how they use the recording.

Outline of the Course

Unit 1: Studying Political Behavior; Socialization of Non-Elite Actors

January 25 - Introductions and Expectations (No Reading)

January 28 - Davenport, Gerber, and Green "Field Experiments and the Study of Political Behavior" (on Moodle); Atkeson, "The State of Survey Research as a Research Tool in American Politics" (on Moodle);

February 1 - Jennings, Stoker, and Bowers, "Politics Across Generations: Family Transmission Reexamined" (on Moodle); Kahne, Crow, and Lee, "Different Pedagogy, Different Politics: High School Learning Opportunities and Youth Political Engagement" (on Moodle)

February 4 - Fowler, Baker, and Dawes, "Genetic Variation in Political Participation" (on Moodle); **Analysis Paper #1 Due**

Unit 2: Controversies in Political Behavior

Voting and Political Participation

February 8 - Controversies, "Is Political Participation Declining...?" (pages 23-40); Controversies, McDonald (pages 65-74)

February 11 - Controversies, Prior (pages 41-64); **Analysis Paper #2 Due**

Political Knowledge and Information

February 15 - Controversies, "How Important are Informational Differences...?" (pages 75-89); Controversies, Baum and Jamison (pages 90-110)

February 18 - Controversies, Lau and Redlawsk (pages 111-140)

Issue Positions and Partisanship

February 22 - Controversies, Is the American Electorate Polarized? (pages 221-241); Controversies, Hetherington (pages 242-265); **Final Paper Proposal Due**

February 25 - Controversies, Abramowitz (pages 297-308) and Fiorina and Abrams (pages 309-318)

February 29 - Polarization Readings from "The Monkey Cage", available from:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/tag/polarization/>; **Analysis Paper #3 Due**

Vote Determinants

March 3 - Controversies, "Are Economic Factors Weakening...?" (pages 167-182); Bartels, "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind," (on Moodle)

March 7 - **Midterm Exam**

March 10 - Excel Workshop Day; **Revision of Analysis Paper #2 or #3 Due**

March 14 – SPRING BREAK

March 17 – SPRING BREAK

Unit 3: Political Behavior of Groups

March 21 - Gaps, "The Income Gap" (pages 21-49); Wasserman, David. 2015. "How Demographics will Shape the 2016 Election," *FiveThirtyEight.com* (available from: <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-demographics-will-shape-the-2016-election/>)

March 24 - Hillygus, "The Missing Link: Exploring the Relationship Between Higher Education and Political Engagement," (on Moodle); **Analysis Paper #4 Due**

March 28 - Gaps, "The Religion Gap" (pages 51-81)

March 31 - Hecló, "Is America a Christian Nation?" (on Moodle); Jamal, "The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans" (on Moodle)

April 4 - Gaps, "The Gender Gap" (pages 83-108)

April 7 - Dolan, "Gender Stereotypes, Candidate Evaluations, and Voting for Women Candidates: What Really Matters" (on Moodle); Morehouse Mendez and Osborn, "Gender and the Perception of Knowledge in Political Discussion," (on Moodle)

April 11 - Gaps, "The Race Gap" (pages 109-140); **Analysis Paper #5 Due**

April 14 - Barreto, Fraga, Manzano, Martinez-Ebers, and Segura, "Should They Dance with the One Who Brung 'Em?' Latinos and the 2008 Presidential Election," (on Moodle); Damore and Barreto, "The Latino Threshold to Win in 2016", *Latino Decisions* (available from: <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2015/07/17/the-latino-threshold-in-2016-to-win/>)

April 18 - Gaps, "The Age Gap" (pages 141-166); **Analysis Paper #6 Due**

April 21 - Pew Report, "Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change," (available from: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/>); Pew Report, "Millennials in Adulthood, Introduction and Political Trends," (available from: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/> and <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/chapter-1-political-trends/>)

April 25 - Gaps, "The Geography Gap" (pages 167-194); Cramer, Katherine. 2012. "Putting Inequality In Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspectives," *American Political Science Review* (on Moodle)

April 28 – **Peer Review; Draft of Final Paper Due**

- May 2 - Collins, "Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection (on Moodle); Lindsay, "God, Gays, and Progressive Politics: Reconceptualizing Intersectionality as a Normatively Malleable Analytical Framework" (on Moodle)
- May 5 - Kristofferson, White, and Pelosa, "The Nature of Slacktivism: How the Social Observability of an Initial Act of Token Support Affects Subsequent Prosocial Action" (on Moodle)

Friday, May 13 at 5:00pm - Final Paper Due