

Political Science 242: Political Behavior

Dickinson College, Spring 2019
TR 10:30 - 11:45, Denny Hall - Room 303

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Office Hours: Monday 10:00-11:30; Thursday 3:00-4:30; and by appointment

Course Description

Who participates in politics, when, where, why, and how? This course examines the ways in which everyday people living in the U.S. can participate in the political process. 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.

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.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to...

- Understand some of the issues related to political behavior in the U.S. and appreciate how different demographic groups participate in the American political process differently
- Summarize, apply, and analyze scholarly literature about political behavior in the U.S.
- Identify relevant scholarly literature and identify gaps in that literature as potential avenues for future research

Course Materials

There is one required book for the course (available at the bookstore):

- Fisher, Patrick. 2014. *Demographic Gaps in American Political Behavior*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Additional readings are available on Moodle, via the Dickinson College library, or online as specified in the syllabus.

Finally, as a student of American politics, you should be keeping up with the news regularly. In addition to following reputable news sources such as (but not limited to) *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, and NPR, there are several blogs edited

by, and/or contributed to by political scientists that you will likely find interesting and relevant to course content:

- “The Monkey Cage” hosted by *The Washington Post* (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/>)
- “Mischiefs of Faction” hosted by *Vox.com* (<https://www.vox.com/mischiefs-of-faction>)
- “Politics” hosted by *Fivethirtyeight.com* (<https://fivethirtyeight.com/politics/>)

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 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.

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%	January 31 February 7 February 21 March 7 (Revision of #2 or #3) March 21 April 9 April 16
Midterm	20%	March 5
Final Paper	35%	February 14 = Proposal March = Individual meeting with Prof April 25 = Draft for Peer Review May 9 at 5:00pm = Final Due

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
- 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
- Draft for Peer Review = Graded out of 5 points based on bringing a reasonable draft for peer review
- 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 values diverse types of learners and is committed to ensuring that each student is afforded equitable access to participate in all learning experiences. If you have (or think you may have) a learning difference or a disability – including a mental health, medical, or physical impairment – that would hinder your access to learning or demonstrating knowledge in this class, please contact Access and Disability Services (ADS). They will confidentially explain the accommodation request process and the type of documentation that Dean and Director Marni Jones will need to determine your eligibility for reasonable accommodations. To learn more about available supports, go to www.dickinson.edu/access, email access@dickinson.edu, call (717) 245-1734, or go to ADS in the Lower Level of Old West, Room 5.

If you've already been granted accommodations at Dickinson, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can meet soon to review your Accommodation Letter and complete your Blue Forms. If you will need test proctoring from ADS, remember that you will need to provide them with at least one week's notice.

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 ADS is permitted to record class, all members of the class will be informed; students with ADS 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 22 – Introductions and Expectations

January 24 –

- 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)

January 29 –

- 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)

January 31 –

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

Monday, February 4 at 7:00 pm in ATS – “Why People Believe Conspiracy Theories,” Clarke Forum Talk by Joanne Miller, University of Delaware

Unit 2: Issues in Political Behavior

Voter Turnout in the U.S.

February 5 –

- Brady, Verba, and Schlozman, “Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation” (on Moodle)
- Prior, “News vs. Entertainment: How Increasing Media Choice Widens Gaps in Political Knowledge and Turnout” (on Moodle)

February 7 –

- McDonald and Popkin, “The Myth of the Vanishing Voter” (on Moodle)
- **Analysis Paper #2 Due**

Political Knowledge and Information Shortcuts

February 12 –

- Lau and Redlawsk, “Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Heuristics in Political Decision Making” (on Moodle)
- Jerit, Barabas, and Bolsen, “Citizens, Knowledge, and the Information Environment” (on Moodle)

February 14 –

- Miller, Saunders, and Farhart, “Conspiracy Endorsement as Motivated Reasoning: The Moderating Roles of Political Knowledge and Trust” (on Moodle)
- **Final Paper Proposal Due**

Issue Positions, Partisanship, and Polarization

February 19 –

- Hetherington, “Putting Polarization in Perspective” (on Moodle)

February 21 –

- Mason, “‘I Disrespectfully Agree’: The Differential Effects of Partisan Sorting on Social and Issue Polarization” (on Moodle)
- **Analysis Paper #3 Due**

Vote Determinants

February 26 –

- Nadeau and Lewis-Beck, “National Economic Voting in U.S. Presidential Elections” (on Moodle)
- Bartels, "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind," (on Moodle)

February 28 –

- Schaffner, Macwilliams, and Nteta, “Understanding White Polarization in the 2016 Vote for President: The Sobering Role of Racism and Sexism” (on Moodle)

March 5 – **Midterm Exam**

March 7 – Excel Workshop Day

- **Revision of Analysis Paper #2 or #3 Due**

March 12 & 14 – SPRING BREAK

Unit 3: Political Behavior of Groups

March 19 –

- Fisher, “The Income Gap” (pages 21-49);
- Schaffner, “These 5 Charts Explain Who Voted How in the 2018 Midterm Election” (Available online at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/11/10/these-5-charts-explain-who-voted-how-in-the-2018-midterm-election/?utm_term=.fdcf9e7277) (Link also on Moodle)

Wednesday, March 20 at 7:00 p.m. in ATS – “Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity,” Clarke Forum Talk by Lilliana Mason, University of Maryland, College Park

March 21 –

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

March 26 –

- Fisher, “The Religion Gap” (pages 51-81)

March 28 –

- Heclo, “Is America a Christian Nation?” (on Moodle)
- Jamal, “The Political Participation and Engagement of Muslim Americans” (on Moodle)

April 2 –

- Fisher, “The Gender Gap” (pages 83-108)

April 4 –

- 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 9 –

- Fisher, “The Race Gap” (pages 109-140)
- **Analysis Paper #5 Due**

April 11 –

- Barreto, Fraga, Manzano, Martinez-Ebers, and Segura, "Should They Dance with the One Who Brung 'Em?' Latinos and the 2008 Presidential Election,” (on Moodle)
- Krogstad, Flores, and Lopez, “Key Takeaways about Latino Voters in the 2018 Midterm Election” (Available online at: <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/11/09/how-latinos-voted-in-2018-midterms/>) (Link also on Moodle)

April 16 –

- Fisher, “The Age Gap” (pages 141-166)
- **Analysis Paper #6 Due**

April 18 –

- Niemi and Hanmer, “Voter Turnout Among College Students: New Data and a Rethinking of Traditional Theories” (on Moodle)
- CIRCLE, “Young People Dramatically Increase their Turnout to 31%, Shape 2018 Midterm Elections” (Available online at: <https://civicyouth.org/young-people-dramatically-increase-their-turnout-31-percent-shape-2018-midterm-elections/>) (Link also on Moodle)

April 23 –

- Fisher, “The Geography Gap” (pages 167-194)
- Cramer, “Putting Inequality In Its Place: Rural Consciousness and the Power of Perspectives” (on Moodle)

April 25 –

- **Peer Review – Draft of Final Paper Due**

April 30 –

- 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 2 –

- Kristofferson, White, and Peloza, “The Nature of Slacktivism: How the Social Observability of an Initial Act of Token Support Affects Subsequent Prosocial Action” (on Moodle)

Thursday, May 9 at 5:00pm - Final Paper Due (may be submitted by email)