

PSC 332W-01  
Elections and Voting  
Spring, 2000  
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-- i.e., why do 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? Are voters becoming increasingly disenchanted with the two major political parties? 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 mass media have on elections? Why is there a gender gap in voting? What changes have taken place in southern voting patterns? Why did Clinton win in 1992 and 1996? What factors are likely to influence the outcome of the 2000 presidential and congressional elections?

Because this is a course in political science, we will be concerned with how elections and voting behavior can be studied. The collection and assessment of data to analyze and examine political 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.

### Books

The following three books are available at the bookstore in paperback editions. Be sure that you purchase the most recent editions if you buy used copies.

P. Abramson, J. Aldrich, and D. Rhode, *Change and Continuity in the 1996 and 1998 Elections* (1999).

W. Flanigan and N. Zingale, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 9th ed. (1998).

C. Prysby & C. Scavo, *Voting Behavior in the 1996 Election* (1997).

The following books are on closed library reserve:

S. Ansolabehere, R. Behr, and S. Iyengar, *The Media Game*.

A. Campbell, et al., *The American Voter*.

E. Black and M. Black, *The Vital South*.

G. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 4th ed.

P. Klinkner (ed.), *Midterm: Elections of 1994 in Context*.

E. Ladd & C. Hadley, *Transformations of the American Party System*, 2nd ed.

W. Miller and J. M. Shanks, *The New American Voter*.

T. Patterson, *The Mass Media Election*.

G. Pomper, et al., *The Election of 1992*.

H. Weisberg (ed.), *Democracy's Feast*.

Several journal articles also are on closed reserve.

### Course Requirements

The grades in this course will be determined by:

1. Reading summaries, due throughout the course. There will be 20 summaries assigned. Each will be worth up to 4 points. Your best 10 summaries will be counted. The reading assignment to be summarized and the due date will be announced at least two class periods in advance. 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. If you are not present for a class session, you may not submit a reading summary due that day, regardless of the reason for your absence. Since only 10 of the 20 summaries will count toward your grade, you have considerable allowance for illness and other unavoidable absences. The purpose of these assignments is twofold: (a) to help you understand the readings better by having to summarize the key points; and (b) to make sure that you are prepared to engage in class discussions about the readings.
2. A paper that describes the relationship of social and demographic factors to partisan choice. This paper will involve a computer-based analysis of survey data from the 1996 presidential election. Details on this project will be distributed in late January.
3. A paper that analyzes the impact of political attitudes and evaluations on the presidential vote in 1996, based on an analysis of data from the presidential election. Details on this paper will be distributed in early March.
4. A take-home final exam, which will be an essay that will require you to discuss possible outcomes for the 2000 elections, drawing on the course material to support your assertions. Details for this assignment will be distributed on the final day of class, and the paper will be due the time and day of the scheduled final exam (Monday, May 8, 11:00 am).
5. Class participation, based on contributions to class discussion.

The course grade will be determined by a point system:

Reading summaries (10 x 4 points each)	40 points (20%)
Paper on social factors and voting	40 points (20%)
Paper on attitudes and voting	80 points (40%)
Final exam	30 points (15%)
Class participation	<u>10 points (5%)</u>
Total=	200 points (100%)

## 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 “[reserve]” following the listing. Books are referred to simply by the author’s last name; consult page 1 of this syllabus for the title (e.g., Campbell et al. refers to *The American Voter*).

### A. Turnout in national elections (Jan. 12, 14, 19, 21)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 2  
Campbell, et al., chpt. 5 [reserve]  
Abramson, et al., chpt. 4  
Powell, “American Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective,” *American Political Science Review* (March 1986) [reserve]

### B. Party identification (Jan. 24, 26, 28)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpts. 3, 4  
Abramson, et al., chpt. 8

### C. Analyzing data from the 1992 election (Jan. 31, Feb. 2, 4)

Prysby and Scavo, chpts. 3-7

### D. Social factors and the vote (Feb. 7, 9)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 5  
Abramson et al., chpt. 5

### E. Psychological basis of the vote (Feb. 11, 14)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 8  
Abramson, et al., chpt. 6  
Miller and Shanks, chpt. 8 [reserve]

## F. Aspects of electoral dynamics

## 1. Change in national elections (Feb. 16, 18)

Key, "A Theory of Critical Elections," *Journal of Politics* (Feb. 1955) [reserve]

## 2. The New Deal realignment (Feb. 21)

Ladd and Hadley, chpt. 1 [reserve]

## 3. The changing South (Feb. 23, 25)

Black and Black, chpts. 1-3 [reserve]

## G. Issues, attitudes and the vote

## 1. The role of policy issues in elections (March 6, 8, 10)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 6

Campbell, et al., chpt. 8

Carmines and Stimson, "The Two Faces of Issue Voting," *American Political Science Review* (March 1980) [reserve]

## 2. Retrospective evaluations and voting behavior (March 13, 15)

Abramson et al., chpt. 7

Markus, "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions on the Presidential Vote," *American Journal of Political Science* (Feb. 1988) [reserve]

## 3. The influence of perceptions of candidate characteristics (March 17, 20)

Miller and Shanks, chpt. 15 [reserve]

## H. The Impact of the mass media

## 1. Media and election campaigns (March 22, 24)

Flanigan and Zingale, chpt. 7

Patterson, chpts. 6-8 [reserve]

## 2. Media effects (March 27, 29)

Ansolabehere, et al., chpts. 6,7 [reserve]

Keeter, "The Illusion of Intimacy," *Public Opinion Quarterly* (Fall 1987) [reserve]

I. Candidates and issues in recent presidential elections

1. 1992 presidential election (April 3, 5)

Pomper, chpt. 3 [reserve]

Weisberg, chpts. 3-4 [reserve]

2. 1996 presidential election (April 7, 10)

Abramson, chpts. 1-3

J. Congressional elections (April 12, 14, 17, 19)

Jacobson, chpt. 5 [reserve]

Klinkner, chpt. 1 [reserve]

Abramson et al., chpts. 9-11

K. Summing up and future prospects (April 24, 26, 28, May 1)

Abramson, et al., chpt. 12