

**POLI 713, Dynamics of Electoral Politics, Fall Semester, 2009**  
**Tuesday, 2:00-5:00, Hamilton Hall Room 351**

**[Updated Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009]**

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### **Course Description**

It is common for nearly every syllabus for a course in American Politics to say that the subject of this class is fundamentally central to American representative democracy. Well, certainly applies here. Democracy doesn't make sense without elections, and representation doesn't make sense without some mechanism that links citizens to elected officials. Elections are such a mechanism. We will not focus on the normative issues surrounding the place of elections in democratic government. Rather, we will focus on the empirical evaluation of elections, trying to discover how they work and why they work that way rather than how they *should* work. However, normative concerns will always be just under the surface.

There is much ground to cover. I dare say that more has been written about elections in the last 70 years than any other major topic in American politics. If you add to it the growing study of elections in Comparative politics, it becomes even more obvious that we can only cover a small slice of the existing work in this course. I intend to focus on the American context, but am open to adding comparative examples to the reading list. My goal is to offer some balance between foundational classics and contemporary innovations in the study of elections. We will focus primarily on individual-level voting behavior, elite-level campaign behavior, and the connection between the two. We have other courses that focus on the macro-relationship in representation and the role of the media, so I will devote less time to these topics.

We will consider the theoretical, substantive, and methodological debates that exist in the study of elections. We'll see some qualitative data being used, but much of what we read will be quantitative. We'll see some formal theory, lots of survey research, and some experimental work. We will consider behavioral, rational, psychological, and sociological perspectives on elections. We will search for points of tension and conflict as well as places of common ground. We won't be experts on elections when we are done, but I hope you will have a firm foundation upon which to build.

### **Course Requirements**

The course will be conducted as a seminar. That means that while I will provide direction and guidance along the way, the real success or failure of the seminar rests with the students. I expect our evenings together to be filled with lively and thoughtful discussion and debate of our readings and the ideas those readings provoke. That can only happen if every student accepts responsibility for coming to class prepared and ready to participate. I cannot stress this point enough – there are no short-cuts in the process of getting a Ph.D. You simply have to put in the work now. Remember, you are not just trying to get through each class meeting. You are completing a course, you are completing a semester, you are studying for prelims, you are preparing to write and defend a dissertation, you are preparing for the job market. In short, you are preparing for a career as a professional political scientist. The day-to-day work

you do adds up to become the type of political scientist you will be. Gaps in your work now lead to lost time trying to make up for it later and/or weaknesses in your overall development down the road.

There are three books required for the course:

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1960 *The American Voter (Unabridged Edition)*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. New York: Harper and Row.

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

These are three classic books that anyone studying American elections, political behavior, or public opinion should have on their shelf. We'll read most of these books over the course of the semester. Virtually all of the rest of the reading will be journal articles that you can find online. Any book chapters or other items that are not online will be copied and posted to the course BlackBoard site.

### Assignments and Grading

Students will be evaluated on the standard graduate school grading scale employed at UNC: H = High Pass, P=Pass, L=Low Pass, F=Fail. I will not grade this course on any sort of curve. Internally, the department permits the giving of pluses and minuses, but the University does not recognize them. Faculty are also asked to fill out an evaluation sheet for every student in the class. I take this quite seriously, and I am happy to discuss that evaluation with you at any time. The grade for the course will be based on performance on several assignments.

**Seminar Participation (15%):** Students are expected to come to class each week and to participate actively and constructively in the discussion. Saying nothing will be unsatisfactory, but just saying anything won't help much either. Demonstrating a careful reading and consideration of the material is what counts. Of course, that does not mean I will be keeping score on how many things you say that are "right" or "wrong." In some cases, there will be clear right and wrong answers, but in many others, the answer will not be obvious. Furthermore, good questions about matters that were confusing are often more helpful than simple statements that, while correct, do not really further the discussion. In other words, I do not want you to feel concerned about voicing uncertainty, raising disagreements, or having others disagree with you. Quite the contrary, I view these as essential elements of meaningful discussion. We won't learn anything if we all agree with each other every week. You should also be aware that I will take on the role of disagreeing with a point for pedagogical reasons at times, so you shouldn't necessarily assume that when I argue with you that I actually disagree with you. Finally, it is important that we all learn how to engage in lively and stimulating debate that is both challenging, yet also respectful. You will need this skill in your professional life, so we should work to develop it now.

**Weekly Reaction Papers (15%):** Every week, you will be required to write and submit a reaction paper to that week's readings **BEFORE** the class meets. Your reaction papers will be due by 9:00 a.m. every Tuesday morning that we are meeting unless otherwise directed. You **MUST** submit your reaction papers to me as an e-mail attachment in a form that I can access and edit with MS Word. The reaction papers should be a critical assessment of the week's readings. They should NOT be simple summaries (I've already read the articles). So, don't tell me what they say, tell me what you think about what they say. Critique the theory, the methods, the conclusions, etc. These papers should only be about 1 to 1½ pages long, single spaced. Thus, you need to write them very tightly. Some weeks, your papers might come together as a single coherent essay. Other weeks, it might feel more like a few very distinct and

unconnected paragraphs. That's O.K. The point is to cut right to the heart of what you think are the important theoretical, methodological and/or substantive issues raised by the readings and offer a critique. You cannot successfully complete these papers by focusing on only one or two of the readings each week. I do not intend to keep a strict count of exactly how many of the readings you comment on each week, but keep in mind that I wouldn't put an article on the syllabus if I didn't think there was something to be learned from reading it. Every reaction paper must conclude with 2 or 3 research questions provoked by that week's readings. Each one should be a short paragraph where you outline an idea for a study. I want these to be concrete in the sense of presenting the core of an idea that could potentially become a paper.

This is a lot to do in 1 to 1½ pages. It will take some time to get good at writing these, but it is a valuable skill. Just keep in mind that it is your ideas that matter here, not flowery prose, so you should spend much more time thinking than writing each week.

Seminar Paper (45%): You will write a full-blown research paper for this course. It should take the basic form of a refereed journal article (like the many you will be reading for this course). That is, you need a research question grounded in theory, hypotheses generated from that theory, an empirical evaluation of those hypotheses, and a conclusion. I won't require that the paper be quantitative, but my tendency is to think in those terms. There is no specific page requirement, but my experience suggests that papers that are 15 pages of text or less tend to be under-developed while papers over 25-30 pages of text would often be better if shorter. Note that one acceptable alternative would be a replication and extension of an existing published paper. However, the extension needs to be "meaningful." Finally, while the paper can be related to previous work you have done or work you are doing for another class, it needs to be a distinctively new paper. For those who have ideas about a thesis or dissertation, this might be a great opportunity to pursue that work. In all of this, the goal should be to produce publishable quality work. There is no point in writing it if you don't envision publication. Sometimes papers blow up, but if the initial goal does not include potential publication, you are wasting time – pick a different topic. The paper is due Monday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> at NOON.

We will talk regularly about the paper over the course of the semester in class, and I expect I'll see most of you in my office outside of class as well. I have several deadlines throughout the semester where I expect you to show me progress. However, the only aspect of the paper that is graded will be the final version you turn in to me. That said, it is VERY important that you get started on this right away. You cannot bang out a quality paper over the last weekend before it is due, and you need to build in time for the inevitable problems with data, writing, etc. that occur. The final version of the paper will be due to me on Monday, Dec. 14<sup>th</sup> at Noon.

Seminar Paper critiques (5%): On November 17<sup>th</sup>, each of you will turn in a complete draft of your paper. At that point, you will give a draft to me and to two other students in the class. You will also receive drafts from two other students in the class. You will provide written feedback for the authors of the two drafts that you received (copies of your comments are sent to me as well). Your responsibility is to provide feedback that will help the authors improve their papers. Point out strengths, note weaknesses, raise challenges, and make suggestions for alternatives. Think of these as the type of comments you wished you received when you submit a paper for publication or present one at a conference. Remember, you are not helping the paper improve if you only provide generic praise. I expect you to write at least one full single-spaced page of comments for each paper, and you should stop if you get to three (just because you need to manage your time). I will also be providing each of you with written comments at the same time. Once I know who is writing what, I'll construct the pairings.

Seminar Paper presentations (5%): Near the end of the semester, we will schedule a time for each student to present his/her paper to the class. Each presentation will last 10-15 minutes, followed by 15 minutes for Q&A. I may invite other graduate students and faculty to attend these presentations.

Students will have different levels of experience with having done this, and I will take that into account. However, I expect these presentations to be of professional quality. Again, think about the type of presentation you would like to give of your paper at APSA the year you are on the job market (and hoping someone in the audience might be hiring!). To get all of these in might force us to run long that night – I'll buy the pizza!

Final Exam (15%): The course will include a final exam. The exam will be a one-on-one oral defense of your paper with me. It will last between 30 minutes and an hour. The exam will be centered on the paper you wrote for the class, but will be broader in focus. You'll be quizzed about the paper itself, but also about how it fits into the broader literature on elections that you reviewed for the paper and that we covered in class. The point is to prepare to discuss your own work within the broader study of elections, and to consider how your paper might be thought of as part of a larger research agenda.

### **Communication**

I make every effort to communicate to you my expectations, your responsibilities, and the substantive information covered in this course. I will send e-mails to the entire class. I maintain a Blackboard site for the class, and I will make announcements and issue some reminders in class. Note that I will only send e-mail out to your UNC e-mail accounts as listed on the course roster in Blackboard. I will not keep track of any other e-mail addresses that you might use. I am also very easy to reach if you need to communicate with me. Come to my office hours, call my office, or even better, send me an e-mail. It is important for you to stay in touch, particularly if any problems arise. I or any faculty member will be much more understanding if you just communicate with us up front and early if there is a problem.

### **A Note on Academic Honesty**

In order for me to evaluate your work fairly, you have to do your own work. It is much easier to study, work hard, and complete your own assignments than it is to try and figure out some way to “beat the system” without getting caught. Cheating, plagiarism, and all other forms of academic dishonesty are pretty easy to spot and come with severe consequences. All students should familiarize themselves with the Academic Honor Code at UNC (<http://honor.unc.edu/honor/code.html>). Students caught cheating in any form in this course may receive an F for the course and may be turned over for further disciplinary action by the University. By taking this class, you have committed to comply with all aspects of the Honor Code regarding all aspects of this course.

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should; (1) contact the office of Learning Disabilities at UNC (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/index.html>), (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class.

### **Responsibilities**

The success of this course depends upon all of us meeting our responsibilities. I am responsible for being prepared each week to present and discuss course material, for challenging you academically and stimulating your curiosity, and for being available for and responsive to your questions and inquiries. You are responsible for being prepared each week as well, for asking questions when you are confused and actively engaging the material, for doing your own work, for meeting the course requirements, and for pushing yourselves to get the most out of this course that you can. Ultimately, this is your education and you should take responsibility for it.

## Course Schedule

Below is a semester-long schedule for the course. There may be some need to adjust it here and there as we proceed, but I expect to follow the basic structure of the schedule pretty closely. Remember, you need to read the required reading each week before coming to class. All of these articles are available online through the UNC Library. If you have a problem, let me know ASAP. I think all of them prior to 2005 are available in JSTOR, but I find the easiest way to find them is to go to the main UNC library webpage, located here: <http://www.lib.unc.edu/> and then clicking on the E-Journals tab near the top center of the page. This gives you a search page in which you can type the title of the journal. What will pop up is a list of the electronic archives to which UNC subscribes that includes that particular journal, along with the dates covered. NOTE: To get the Journal of Politics to pop up, it is easier to just ask for the list of Political Science Journals and then click this title.

**All articles marked with an asterisk (\*) are required. Others are not.**

### **AUGUST 25: INTRODUCTION, COURSE OVERVIEW**

### **SEPTEMBER 1: INTRO TO THEORETICAL TRADITIONS**

\**The American Voter*: Chapters 1-2

\**Voting*: Chapters 1, 4 and 5

\**An Economic Theory of Democracy*: Chapters 1-3

### **SEPTEMBER 8: THE CENTRALITY OF PARTY ID**

\**American Voter*: Chapter 3,4,6,7

\*Franklin, Charles H. and John E. Jackson. 1983. "The Dynamics of Party Identification" *APSR* 77(4):957-73.

\*Bartels, Larry M. 2002. "Beyond the Running Tally: Partisan Bias in Political Perceptions" *Political Behavior* 24(2):117-50

Fiorina, Morris P. 2002. "Parties and Partisanship: a 40-Year Retrospective." *Political Behavior* 24(2):93-116.

Carsey, Thomas M. and Geoffrey C. Layman. 2006. "Changing Sides or Changing Minds? Party Identification and Policy Preferences in the American Electorate" *AJPS* 50(2):464-77.

Gerber, Alan and Donald P. Green. 1998. "Rational Learning and Partisan Attitudes." *AJPS* 42(3):794-881.

Miller, Warren E. 1991. "Party Identification, Realignment, and Party Voting: Back to the Basics." *APSR* 85(2):557-68.

Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Schattschneider, E. E. 1960. *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Hinsdale, IL: The Dryden Press.

## SEPTEMBER 15: WRITING FOR SOCIAL SCIENTISTS

**Turn in a one-page statement regarding your proposed research paper**

## SEPTEMBER 22: SPATIAL THEORIES OF VOTING

\*Downs, Anthony. 1957. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*, chapters 5-8

\*Carsey, Thomas M. 2000. *Campaign Dynamics: The Race for Governor*, Chapter 3.

\*Rabinowitz, George and Stuart Elaine Macdonald. 1989. "A Directional Theory of Issue Voting." *The American Political Science Review* 83(1):93-121.

Enelow, James M. and Melvin J. Hinich. 1984. *The Spatial Theory of Voting*. Cambridge University Press.

Hammond, Thomas H. and Brian D. Humes. 1993. "What This Campaign is All About Is . . .": A Rational Choice Alternative to the Downsian Spatial Model of Elections." In *Information, Participation, and Choice*, ed. Bernard Grofman. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press.

Hinich, Melvin J. and Michael C. Munger. 1997. *Analytical Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MacDonald, Stuart Elaine, Ola Listhaug, and George Rabinowitz. 1991. "Issues and Party Support in Multiparty Systems." *The American Political Science Review* 85(4):1107-1131.

Riker, William H. 1982. *Liberalism against Populism*. San Francisco: W.H. Freeman.

Riker, William H. "Heresthetic and Rhetoric in the Spatial Model." In *Advances in the Spatial Theory of Voting*, ed. James M. Enelow and Melvin J. Hinich. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## SEPTEMBER 29: DIRECTIONAL AND MIXED MODELS OF VOTING

\*Westholm, Anders. 1997. "The Illusory Defeat of the Proximity Theory of Electoral Choice." *American Political Science Review* 91:865-85.

\*Macdonald, Stuart Elaine, George Rabinowitz and Ola Listhaug. 1998. "On Attempting to Rehabilitate the Proximity Model: Sometimes the Patient Just Can't Be Helped." *The Journal of Politics* 60:653-90

\*Kedar, Orit. 2005. "When Moderate Voters Prefer Extreme Parties: Policy Balancing in Parliamentary Elections." *American Political Science Review* 99: 185-199.

\*Tomz, Michael, and Robert P. Van Houweling. 2008. "Candidate Positioning and Voter Choice." *American Political Science Review* 102: 303-318.

\*Macdaonld, Stuart Elaine and George Rabinowitz. 2009 "The Issue Dynamic of the 2008 Presidential Election." (Unpublished Manuscript – this one is fairly light)

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, David Brady, and John Cogan 2002. " Out of Step Out of Office: Electoral Accountability and House Members' Voting." *American Political Science Review* 96: 127-140.

Rabinowitz, George, Stuart Elaine Macdonald, Erik Engstrom, and Nicholas Pyeatt 2009. "Representation in the United States." (Unpublished manuscript)

Adams, James, Samuel Merrill III, and Bernard Grofman. 2005. *A Unified Theory of Party Competition*. Cambridge University Press.

**OCTOBER 6:**

**Turn in Outline of Proposed paper. Include research questions, hypotheses to be tested, proposed data and methods, and core references**

**OCTOBER 13:**

**OCTOBER 20:**

**OCTOBER 27:**

**Turn in Rough Draft of Your Research Paper**

**NOVEMBER 3:**

**NOVEMBER 10:**

**NOVEMBER 17:**

**Complete Drafts of Papers Due by Class Time to Me and Your Two Reviewers**

**NOVEMBER 24:**

**Comments on Papers you Reviewed Due Today in Class (Copies to Authors and to Me)**

**DECEMBER 1:**

Paper presentations (plan for a longer night)

**DECEMBER 8:**

**DECEMBER 14<sup>TH</sup> (MONDAY): FINAL PAPERS DUE ELECTRONICALLY AT NOON**

**FINAL EXAM - TBA**