American Politics: Behavior

This course provides an introduction to some of the major themes in political behavior including partisanship and elections, political attitudes and ideology, and the role of the mass media in shaping the public’s political beliefs and orientations. This course is also designed to help prepare graduate students in political science to pass the political behavior component of comprehensive examination in the field of American Politics.

Course Requirements:

(1) Prepare for every class by reading and digesting the assigned material. Recommended readings will not be discussed in-depth in class but you will want to read them at some point for exams.

(2) Actively participate in class discussions. In addition, each student will be assigned the task of introducing and briefly critiquing one of the readings each class. In their overview, students should highlight the question, research design, evidence, results, and implications of their reading as well as note any major flaws.

(3) For the writing part of the course you have two options.

Option A: Write three 5 page papers critically reviewing the literature in some specific topic of political behavior. Each paper should consist of:
A. A description of the work that has been published on your topic of choice. This section should be organized to illuminate the differing perspectives in the literature, and (possibly) show how those perspectives have emerged over time.
B. A critical evaluation of the strengths and weakness of the differing perspectives. This section should also address the extent to which the different perspectives are complementary to or in conflict with each other.
C. An evaluation of what sort of future research would be most important to further our understanding of the specific topic you chose.
These three papers are due April 13th, May 4th, and June 1st.

Option B: Write a research paper on some aspect of American political behavior. The paper should be a quality product that could ultimately be publishable – although you do not have to complete all parts of the project for this class. The paper should be different from papers you have written for other classes or should show substantial progress from previous work. Please see me to discuss different projects and the exact requirements for the paper.

Books you should have:
S. Rosenstone and M. Hansen, Mobilization, Participation, and American Democracy 1993
We will also read major sections from other books. They are almost all classics and you might want to purchase them as well. Look through the syllabus to determine what makes sense for you. In addition, I will place one copy of all books that I have not recommended for purchase and any articles that are not on JSTOR in the grad lounge.

I. Ideology- How well organized or sophisticated is our thinking about politics?

Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes. *The American Voter* (1960), Ch 10


Marcus and MacKuen. “Anxiety, Enthusiasm, and the Vote: The Emotional Underpinnings of Learning and Involvement during Presidential Campaigns” *APSR* 87(1993): 672-685

**Recommended:**


Ted Brader *Campaigning for hearts and minds : how emotional appeals in political ads work* (2006)


II. Information – Do we have enough information to make reasoned political decisions?

Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes. *The American Voter* (1960), Ch. 8


**Recommended:**


III. Influences – What are the factors that drive public opinion and how do they distort our views?


Recommended:


Andrew Gelman and Gary King “Why are American Presidential Campaign Polls so Variable When Votes are so Predictable?” *BJPS* 23 (1993): 409-451


IV. Party Identification – What is it?


Recommended:


V. Vote Choice- What factors govern vote choice?
Morris Fiorina, Retrospective Voting in American National Elections (1981), chs. 1, 2, 7, 8, 9
Recommended:
V.O. Key, Jr., The Responsible Electorate (1966), chs. 1-3.
Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and McPhee, Voting (1954), chs. 1, 4-7, 11,13

VI. Dealignment/Realignment – Explaining major partisan changes
Recommended:
Nie, Verba, and Petrocik. The Changing American Voter (1976) Chs. 4, 6, 10

VII. Participation- Why do we vote in the first place? Who votes? When do we vote?
Sidney Verba and Norman Nie. Participation in America: Political Democracy and Social Equality (1972) Chs. 2-6, 8-10
S. Rosenstone and M. Hansen. Mobilization, Participation, and American Democracy (1993). Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7
Recommended:


**Recommended Continued:**

Zoltan Hajnal. *America’s Uneven Democracy: Turnout, Race, and Representation in City Politics* (2009)
Kevin Arceneaux and David Nickerson “Who is Mobilized to Vote? A Re-Analysis of 11 Field Experiments” AJPS (2009)

**VIII. Values- What are the basic values of the American public? Are we exceptional?**

Alexis de Toqueville. *Democracy in America*, Part I, Sections 1 (Origins of the Anglo Americans) 2 (Democratic Social Condition), and 3 (The Sovereignty of the People).


**Recommended:**

Herbert McCloskey and Ada Brill, *Dimensions of Tolerance* (1983), chs. 3,6


**IX. Race- What role does race play in American politics?**


**Recommended:**


V.O. Key. *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (1949)


X. Public Opinion, Participation, and Democratic Outcomes- What are the consequences of our political views and our actions?


Recommended:

STUFF YOU SHOULD KNOW BUT WON'T LEARN HERE

Voting Behavior in Congressional Elections
A. Alesina and H. Rosenthal, “Partisan Cycles in Congressional Elections and the Macroeconomy,”
APSR 83 (1989):373-398

Interest Groups
Mancur Olson, The Logic of Collective Action (1965), chs 1, 2, 5, 6
Grant McConnell, Private Power and American Democracy (1966), chs. 5, 8, 9, 10.
Theodore Lowi, The End of Liberalism, 2nd ed (1979), chs. 3, 5, 8, 10
James Q. Wilson, Political Organizations (1973), chs. 1-6, 9.
Kay L. Schlozman and John Tierney, Organized Interests and American Democracy (1986)
Bauer, Pool and Dexter, American Business and Public Policy (1963)
Robert Salisbury, Interests and Institutions (1992), Chs. 1-4