

# Elections and Voting Behavior (PLS 341-01) Winter 2016

**Class Location:** ASH 1117

**Class Time:** 3:00pm - 4:15pm, Monday and Wednesday

**Professor:** Whitt Kilburn, Ph.D.

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**In Person Office Hours:** I'm around the Poli Sci department, 1103 ASH. When my door is open, feel free to stop by to talk. On Tuesdays I hold office hours in Grand Rapids, 12pm - 2pm, next to the Steelcase library, room DEV 111A. On Wednesdays, prior to this class I am in the Pew Library (LIB) 135 from 1-3pm. I'm also available by appointment.

**Virtual Office Hours:** Whenever I am logged in to GVSU Gmail chat — feel free to contact me.

**Course Websites:** This term we will be using Piazza for class discussion. We will use it to share news media resources on the presidential primaries and all things for the U.S. 2016 campaigns and elections. We will also use it for planning presentations and research projects. For class questions, rather than emailing questions to me, I encourage you to post your questions on Piazza. If you have any problems or feedback for the developers, email [team@piazza.com](mailto:team@piazza.com). Find our class page at: <https://piazza.com/gvsu/winter2016/pls341/home>. For submitting assignments, grades, and reading assignment storage: <http://mybb.gvsu.edu>.

In this course we will focus our study of elections and voting behavior on some of the central organizing concepts and theories that have formed our discipline's study of the subject. We will study how voters form political attitudes (opinions), a vote choice, and the consequences of low levels of civics knowledge and participation for democratic governance. Along the way, we will examine the factors shaping voter behavior from early childhood socialization, core values and personality, neighborhood influence, and social group, among other factors. We'll also study what these dynamics mean for political party competition. Hopefully, our insights will shape our understanding of a few key developments in contemporary American politics, such as the polarization and sorting across the 'red' and 'blue' Americas, geographic mobility and its effect on political behavior, perpetual claims about 'soccer' or 'security' moms etc. as swing voters, party issue ownership, changes in voter turnout, and ideological changes in American political parties.

The study of elections and voting behavior is vast. We can't possibly cover it all in one semester. We will, however, focus our attention on contemporary work drawing upon major theories guiding the discipline over the past 50 years. There are three overarching, broad course goals. By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Explain some of the general, major theories of American elections and voting behavior in political science.
2. Apply general theories to an interpretation of contemporary developments in American electoral politics.
3. Write an empirically based research paper applying theories of elections and voting behavior.

## Required Course Texts:

Abramowitz, A. I. 2010. *The Disappearing Center: Engaged Citizens, Polarization, and American Democracy*. New Haven: Yale University Press. (Print version only — available at the bookstore)

Berinsky, A. 2015. *New Directions in Public Opinion*, 2nd edition. New York: Routledge. (e-book at library, <http://www.gvsu.ebib.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/patron/Read.aspx?p=4219375>).

Norrander, B. 2015. *The Imperfect Primary*, 2nd edition. New York: Routledge. (e-book at library, <http://gvsu.ebib.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1974347>).

Stimson, J. 2015. *Tides of Consent*, 2nd Edition. New York: Cambridge University Press. (Print version only — available at the bookstore)

Other reading will come from various supplementary book chapters and journal articles, available as PDF documents through Blackboard. These articles are in PDF form and should be printed off and brought to class.

## Schedule and Activities

**Mondays and Wednesdays** The class will be conducted seminar style, with relatively little lecturing on my part. Each day we will discuss the theories and results from the various readings assigned for the day. *The reading assignments are always required and never optional; the course is a senior level class, so you should expect a demanding reading load.* You must come to class prepared to share your thoughts about the reading assignments.

**Discussion Questions and Summaries** For each class day's reading assignment, at a minimum, you should 1) be prepared to share with the class one or two discussion questions for which you would like the class to respond, and 2) write a short two to three paragraph summary, in which you identify interesting theories, results, or themes from the reading assignments. **Post summaries and questions to Piazza.com. There are separate subfolders — or create one if not already there — for reading summaries and discussion questions.**

You will need to turn in 12 of these questions and reaction pieces for course credit, graded on a High Pass (100%), Pass (85%) or Fail (50%) basis. If you do not turn one in, you receive a 0%. You must write these pieces in complete sentences; 'bullet points' are not acceptable. These written assignments are due on Piazza at 1 pm the day of class. Twelve responses are required; do responses for each class day for extra credit.

On most class days I will select a few of you to write your discussion question up on the board at the beginning of class. While we will try to work in every class member's topics for discussion, beyond the subjects that I think are the most important to discuss we will address the questions raised by you and your peers.

**Other Homework Assignments** Once a week or so, you will be expected to find and link online through Piazza.com news media articles on current campaigns and elections. You will be expected to comment on others' links through Piazza.

**Research Papers** You will write a quantitative paper applying the skills you acquired and refined in STA 215 and PLS 300, your paper will be approximately 10-15 pages (double-spaced).

**Presentation** You will be responsible for presenting a 'bridge' to the course material, through a discussion of news media articles, and then present your research paper during the last week of class.

**Exams** There will be a mid-semester and a final examination. The format will be chosen at my discretion. The questions will draw upon the course readings and discussions, emphasizing the reading discussion questions brought up during class.

### General Policies and Procedures

I will hold you accountable to high standards. Beyond that, there are a few key things you should know about my expectations of you:

1. If you are in class, I expect you to *be in class*. Avoid incessantly checking your phone or watching cat videos on your laptop. Please don't sit in class and scroll through your phone or do non-class related activities on your laptop, tablet, etc. During the first day of class, I'll ask you to figure out a plan to monitor and re-direct students who are doing so.
2. Please arrive to class on time and actively participate throughout the entire class. The class suffers when any student routinely skips class or is apathetic about assignments.
3. I do not accept late assignments without penalty. There are no make-ups for any of the in-class activities. If you want to turn in these assignments, attend class.
4. *You can miss three classes without a grade penalty. Beyond three absences, your final course grade will be reduced by one - increment for each additional absence.* I don't like being the taskmaster and attendance taker, so please come to class as expected.
5. You should *always* bring a copy of the assigned reading with you to class. Print out copies of the articles from JSTOR or wherever and other online sources and bring those too. Just like for any other upper-division course in the PLS department, you should always have the reading with you.
6. If you believe you will have trouble with the course, I encourage you to call an academic counselor at the Advising Resources and Special Programs Unit, 331-3588.

### Grades

Reading & Project Questions, Homework 20%  
Components of Class Research Paper 35%  
Research Presentation 10%  
Exams (averaged) 25%  
Online and In-class participation 10%

Unless standardized scores are necessary, the course grading scale will be:

A 93-100	A- 90-92
B+ 87-89	B 84-86
B- 80-83	C+ 76-79
C 72-75	C- 69-72
D+ 65-68	D 60-64
F <60	

## HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE

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1. Studiously avoid last-minute preparation and complete all assignments.
  2. Attend every class session.
  3. Make peace with the fact that you do have a heavy reading load for the course. Save time for it.
  4. Participate regularly in class discussions, demonstrating your mastery of the day's reading assignments.
  5. Talk to me during office hours about any concerns or to clarify expectations.
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## Tentative Schedule

Please note the schedule really is tentative. I may make modifications to the readings and schedule depending on course progress. The schedule will be divided up into modules covering different themes. If the assigned readings are *not* from a library accessible journal or one of the books available for the course at the bookstore, a PDF copy will be posted on Blackboard Course Documents.

### 1 Course Organization and Introduction to Presidential Primaries

**1/11** : Course orientation. Read Menand, “The Unpolitical Animal”, at <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/08/30/the-unpolitical-animal>.

**1/13** : Please read Chapters 1-3 of Norrander, B. 2015. *The Imperfect Primary*. Available as an e-book at <http://gvsu.ebilib.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1974347>. In theory, you could print out the entire book – there's no limit to printed pages on this e-book title.

More than you have ever wanted to know about factual details of presidential primaries is at <http://frontloading.blogspot.com>

### 2 Primaries, and the Foundation of Belief Systems

**1/18** : MLK day, no class scheduled. Continue reading the Norrander book. We'll continue an online discussion on Piazza.com.

**1/20** : Converse, Philip E. 1964. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics.” In David E. Apter, ed. *Ideology and Its Discontents*. New York: Free Press. (BLACKBOARD)

*Few studies have had as great an influence on the study of electoral behavior than research by Converse, summarized in this chapter.*

Optional: For a review of electoral research over the past few decades, much of it following in Converse' footsteps, see “The Study of Electoral Behavior”. In Jan E. Leighley, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of American Elections and Political Behavior* <http://www.princeton.edu/~bartels/electoralbehavior.pdf>

### 3 Belief Systems, Elections, and Representation

1/25 : Stimson, *Tides* Chapters 1-2

“Voter Behavior: Traditional Paradigms and Contemporary Challenges” (Online. See chapter 10 at <http://www.gvsu.ebib.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/patron/Read.aspx?p=668302>

1/27 : Stimson, *Tides* Chapter 3, Berinsky, Chapter 4, “The Structure, Foundations, and Expression of Ideology”

### 4 Belief Systems and Ideologies

2/1 : Stimson, *Tides* Chapter 4, and please read the following:

<http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/harrys-guide-to-2016-election-polls/>  
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/11/16/politics-and-the-new-machine>  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/21/opinion/sunday/whats-the-matter-with-polling.html>

2/3 : Stimson, *Tides* Chapters 5-6

### 5 Party and Voter Coalitions

2/8 : Excerpts from Sundquist, James L. 1983. *Dynamics of the party system: Alignment and realignment of political parties in the United States*. Brookings Institution Press, 1983.

Brady, H. 2002. “Trust the people: political party coalitions and the 2000 election” In J. Rakove, eds. New York: Basic Books.

2/10 : Excerpt from Lewis-Beck, Michael S., et al. 2008. *The American voter revisited*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Berinsky, Chapter 14.

### 6 Varieties of Mass Polarization

2/15 : Chapters 1-3 of Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center*

2/17 : Chapters 4-5 of Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center*

### 7 Polarization and Representation

2/22 : Chapters 6-8 of Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center*

2/24 : *Midsemester Examination in class*.

## 8 Geographical Sorting and the Effect of Geography on Electoral Behavior

**2/29** : Excerpt from Bishop, Bill. 2009. *The Big Sort*. New York: Mariner Books. Posted on Blackboard.

Abrams, Samuel J., and Morris P. Fiorina. "The Big Sort That Wasn't: A Skeptical Reexamination." *PS Political Science and Politics* 45.2 (2012): 203.

**3/2** : Very brief excerpt from Gimpel, J. G. 2004. *Patchwork Nation: Sectionalism and Political Change in American Politics* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Excerpt from Fenton, John. H. 1966. *Midwest Politics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.

## Spring Break, March 6 through 13

## 9 Personality, Heredity, and Political Behavior

**3/15** : Excerpts from Hetherington, M. J. and J. D. Weiler. 2009. *Authoritarianism and Polarization in American Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

**3/17** : Barker, D. and J. Tinnick. 2006. Competing Visions of Parental Roles and Ideological Constraint. *American Political Science Review* 100:29-63.

Berinsky, Chapters 8 - 9.

## 10 Cues, Class, the Economy, and Representation

**3/21** : Excerpt from Gilens, M. 2014. *Affluence and Influence: Economic Inequality and Political Power in America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Excerpt from Leighley, J. and Nagler, J. 2013. *Who Votes Now?: Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

**3/23** : Excerpts from Gelman, A. 2009. , *Blue State, Rich State, Poor State: Why Americans Vote the Way They Do (Expanded Edition)*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/22/opinion/sunday/who-turned-my-blue-state-red.html>

## 11 Race and Ethnocentrism

**3/28** : Race and the Group Bases of Public Opinion. Berinsky, Chapter 5. Excerpt from *Public Opinion Quarterly* , posted on Blackboard.

- 3/30** : Hajnal and Rivera, 2014. "Immigration, Latinos, and White Partisan Politics: The New Democratic Defection". *American Journal of Political Science*, posted on Blackboard.  
Excerpts from Kinder and Kam. *Us against Them Ethnocentric Foundations of American Opinion*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Posted on Blackboard.

## **12 Gender in Candidates and Voters**

- 4/4** : Excerpts from Kahn, K. F. 1996. *The Political Consequences of Being a Woman: How Stereotypes Influence the Conduct and Consequences of Political Campaigns*. New York: Columbia University Press. and Brooks, D. J. 2013. *He Runs, She Runs: Why Gender Stereotypes Do Not Harm Women Candidates*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- 4/6** : Shapiro, R. Y., and H. Mahajan. 1986. Gender Differences in Policy Preferences: A Summary of Trends From the 1960s to the 1980s. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 50(1):42-61. The Politics of Gender, Berinsky Chapter 6. Elder, L., and S. Greene. 2007. The Myth of Security Moms and NASCAR Dads: Parenthood, Political Stereotypes, and the 2004 Election. *Social Science Quarterly* 88 (1):1-19.

## **13 Religion in American Elections and Voting Behavior**

- 4/11 - 4/13** : set of readings on religion posted on Blackboard. Schedule announced in class, dependent on progress.

## **14 Class Presentations**

- 4/18- 4/20** : Research project presentations to the class

### **Final Examination Period, April 25 - 30**

**When** *Please check the registrar's calendar to verify the time and date of the final examination time slot.*

**What** A final examination will cover material from the second half of the class.