

Political Science 4212 Elections

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Course Description:

This course examines how politicians and policies are selected by citizens in democracies. The literatures exploring voter behavior and the rules and procedures that govern elections are perhaps the most theoretically and empirically sophisticated body of knowledge in the scientific study of politics. We will explore how differences in these institutional rules across a variety of democracies shape the types of choices voters make, the coalitions that legislators form, whose interests are represented, the career paths of politicians, and the policies that governments pursue. We will further investigate the dynamics of campaigns, campaign finance, and the politics underlying changes to electoral systems. The course, while having no formal prerequisites, will cover technical material. Statistical and game theoretic methods will be introduced and used throughout. A familiarity with high school level math is assumed.

Course Requirements:

Reading/Participation (20%): Articles or book chapters are assigned for each class meeting. You should do the readings prior to the class for which they are assigned and participate actively in class. All of the readings are available either from the universities electronic reserve, online at JSTOR, or website links are provided on the syllabus.

Problem Sets (10% each): Three problem sets will be assigned during the course. They will be due in class one week after they are assigned.

Midterm Exam (20%): There will be one midterm.

Final Exam (30%): The final will be comprehensive, covering the entire course, though focusing more heavily on the second half.

Course Materials

Most of the readings are available online, either from ERes or JSTOR. Those available on JSTOR are marked as such. Any readings not marked as available on JSTOR are either on ERes or in one of the following three books, available for purchase in the book store:

1. Cox, Gary. 1997. *Making Votes Count: Strategic Coordination in the World's Electoral Systems*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
2. Jacobson, Gary. 2001. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 5th edition. (Longman).

Course Schedule:

January 20 – Introduction

Philosophical Issues

January 22 – What is the roll of voting in democracies?

- Madison, James. *Federalist 39*. Available online at http://memory.loc.gov/const/fed/fed_39.html.
- Rousseau, Jean Jacques. 1762. *The Social Contract, Book 2*. Available online at http://www.constitution.org/jjr/socon_02.htm

January 27 –Fair Representation

- Shepsle, Kenneth and Mark Bonchek. *Analyzing Politics*. Chapter 7. **ERES**
- Gelman, Andrew. 2002. “Voting, Fairness, and Political Representation.” **ERES**

Voter Behavior

January 29 – Party identification

- Campbell, Angus, Phillip Converse, Warren Miller, and Donald Stokes. “The Impact and Development of Party Identification.” In *Classics of Voting Behavior*. **ERES**
- Nie, Norman, Sidney Verba, and John Petrocik. “The Decline of Partisanship” In *Classics of Voting Behavior*. **ERES**
- Fiorina, Morris. “Explorations of a political theory of party identification” in *Classics of Voting Behavior*. **ERES**.

February 3 – Sophistication in the electorate

- Converse, Phillip. “The Nature of Belief Systems in Mass Publics.” **ERES**
- Nie, Norman and Kristi Anderesen. 1974. “Mass Belief Systems Revisited: Political Change and Attitude Structure.” *Journal of Politics* 36(3):540-591. **JSTOR**

- Pierece, John C. 1970. "Party identification and the changing role of ideology in American politics." *Midwest Journal of Political Science*. **JSTOR**

February 5 – Another view of sophistication

- Sullivan, John, James Piereson, and George Marcus. 1978. "Ideological Constraint in the Mass Public: A Methodological Critique and Some New Findings." *American Journal of Political Science*. **JSTOR**
- Brady, Henry and Steven Ansolabehere. 1989. "The Nature of Utility Functions in Mass Publics." *American Political Science Review*. **JSTOR**
- Hansen, J. Mark. 1998. "Individuals, Institutions, and Public Preferences over Public Finance." *American Political Science Review*. **JSTOR**

February 12 – Strategic Voting

- Felsenthal, Dan S. and Avraham Brichta. 1985. "Sincere and Strategic Voters: An Israeli Study." *Political Behavior* 7(4):311-324. **JSTOR**

Participation

February 15 –Rational Turnout and Collective Action

- Problem Set 1 distributed
- Edlin, Aaron, Andrew Gelman, and Noah Kaplan. 2003. "Rational Voting and Voter Turnout." **ERES**
- Schlozman, Kay, Sidney Verba, and Henry Brady. 1995. "Participation's Not a Paradox: The View from American Activists." *British Journal of Political Science* 25(1):1-36. **JSTOR**

February 17 – Activism and Vanishing Voters

- McDonald, Michael and Sam Popkin. 2001. "The Myth of the Vanishing Voter." *American Political Science Review*. **ERES**
- Green, Donald and Alan Gerber. "Getting Out the Youth Vote: Results from Randomized Field Experiments." **ERES**.

Polling

February 19 – Understanding polls

- Problem Set 1 due
- Voss, D. Stephen, Andrew Gelman, and Gary King. 1995. "Pre-Election Survey Methodology: Details from Eight Polling Organizations, 1988 and 1992." **ERES**

February 24 – *Guest Lecture*: Jeff Smith, Ph.D. Candidate, Washington University and Candidate for Democratic Party Congressional Nomination, Missouri 3rd District.

February 26 – Polls and information (in class experiment)

- No reading

Incumbents

March 2 – Sources of the incumbency advantage

- Fenno, Richard. 1977. “U.S. House Members in Their Constituencies: An Exploration.” *American Political Science Review* 72(3):883-917. **JSTOR**
- Cain, Bruce, John Ferejohn, and Morris Fiorina. 1984. “The Constituency Service Basis of the Personal Vote for U.S. Representatives and British Members of Parliament.” *American Political Science Review* 78(1):110-125. **JSTOR**

March 4– Measuring the incumbency advantage

- Levitt, Steven D. and Catherine D. Wolfram. 1997. “Decomposing the Sources of Incumbency Advantage in the U.S. House.” *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 22:45-60. **JSTOR**
- Ansolabehere, Stephen and James Snyder. 2000. “Old Voters, New Voters, and the Personal Vote: Using Redistricting to Estimate the Incumbency Advantage.” *American Journal of Political Science*. **JSTOR**.
- Zaller, John. 1998. “Politicians as Prize Fighters: Electoral Selection and Incumbency Advantage.” **ERES**

Campaign Finance

March 16 – Electoral Rules and Corruption

- Persson, Torsten, Guido Tabellini, and Francesco Trebbi. 2003. “Electoral rules and corruption.” *Journal of the European Economic Association* 1(4):958-989. **ERES**
- Golden, Miriam and Eric Chang. 2001. “Competitive Corruption: Factional Conflict and Political Malfeasance in Postwar Italian Christian Democracy.” *World Politics* 53:588-622. **JSTOR**

March 18– Measuring the effect of campaign spending

- Jacobson, chapter 4.
- Gerber, Alan. 1998. “Estimating the Effect of Campaign Spending on Senate Election Outcomes Using Instrumental Variables.” *American Political Science Review*. **JSTOR**

March 22 – Campaign finance reform

- Ansolabehere, Stephen, Rui de Figueiredo, and James Snyder. 2002. “Why is there so little money in U.S. politics?” Available at http://econ-www.mit.edu/faculty/snyder/files/CF_JEP_Final.pdf.

- Levitt, Steve. “Policy Watch: Congressional Campaign Finance Reform.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 9(1):183-193. **JSTOR**

March 24 – MIDTERM EXAM

The media

March 30 – Campaigns and the media

- Problem Set 2 distributed
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, Shanto Iyengar, Adam Simon, and Nicholas Valentino. 1994. “Does Attack Advertising Demobilize the Electorate?” *American Political Science Review* 88(4):829-838. **JSTOR**
- Zaller, John. “A Theory of Media Politics.” **ERES**
- Strömberg, David. Forthcoming. “Radio’s Impact on Public Spending.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*. Available at <http://www.iies.su.se/~stromber/Radio.pdf>

Rational electioneering

April 1 – The median voter theorem

- Shepsle, Kenneth and Mark Bonchek. *Analyzing Politics*, Chapter 5. **ERES**

April 6 – Non-convergence and evidence

- Problem Set 2 due
- Romer, Thomas and Howard Rosenthal. 1979. “The Elusive Median Voter.” *Journal of Public Economics* 12. **ERES**
- Ansolabehere, Stephen, James Snyder and Charles Stewart. 2001. “Candidate Positioning in U.S. House Elections.” *American Journal of Political Science* 45(1):136-159. **JSTOR**

April 8 – Elections and the economy

- Readings to be determined.

Comparative Electoral Systems

April 13 – Types of electoral systems

- Cox, Chapter 3.

April 15 – *Midwest Political Science Association Meetings, no class.*

April 20 – Duverger’s law

- Problem Set 3 distributed

- Cox, chapter 2
- Riker. 1982. "Duverger's Law: An Essay on the History of Political Science." *American Political Science Review*. **JSTOR**

April 22 – Electoral reform

- Boix, Carles. 1999. "Setting the Rules of the Game: The Choice of Electoral Systems in Advanced Democracies." *American Political Science Review*. **JSTOR**
- Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan. 2000. "Strategic and Non-Policy Voting: A Coalitional Analysis of Israeli Electoral Reform." *Comparative Politics* 33(1):63-80. **ERES**

April 27 – Election timing

➤ Problem Set 3 due

- Smith, Alastair. "Election Timing in Majoritarian Parliaments." Available at http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/faculty/smith/election_time_apsa2000.pdf.

April 29 – Wrap-up