

PSC 332-01  
Elections and Voting  
Fall 2016  
MWF, 1:00-1:50  
204 Curry

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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, which means explaining why 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 many Americans fail to vote and what difference does this make? How does party affiliation influence voters? Do specific policy issues affect how voters cast their ballots? How much do economic conditions affect the outcomes of presidential and congressional elections? What impact do the personal characteristics of presidential candidates have on the way that people vote? What changes have taken place in American voting patterns over the past several decades? How and why do congressional elections differ from presidential elections? What factors are likely to influence the outcome of future 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 analysis of data to examine voting 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 in this course.

This course will be run in more of a seminar style than in a traditional lecture-discussion format. There will a strong emphasis on class participation, which means active engagement in the class sessions. You will be expected to read the material for the class session and to be prepared to discuss it in class. Class participation will count in determining the course grade.

### Student Learning Objectives:

As a result of taking this course, students should be able to:

1. Explain the impact of the important attitudes and orientations that affect individual voting behavior.
2. Describe the relationship between voting behavior and social and demographic characteristics.
3. Identify the sources of change in voting patterns over time.
4. Analyze and interpret survey data in order to investigate individual voting behavior.

### Books

The following two books are available at the bookstore in paperback editions:

P. Abramson, J. Aldrich, B. Gomez, and D. Rohde, *Change and Continuity in the 2012 & 2014 Elections* (2016).

W. Flanigan and N. Zingale, E. Theiss-Morse, and M. Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 13th ed. (2015).

## Library Reserves

There is a considerable amount of library reserve reading for this course. I think that this reading is important for many of the topics. While the course textbooks are very good, they do not cover many topics in sufficient depth, so supplementary reading is needed. Furthermore, I think that it is desirable for students in upper-level political science courses to read some journal articles, so some of the reserve readings are from journals. If you dislike having substantial library reserve reading, this course probably is not for you.

Chapters from the following books are available as e-reserves (through Canvas):

- A. Abramowitz, "Ideological Realignment Among Voters," in J. Stonecash (ed.), *New Directions in American Political Parties*.
- A. Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center*, chpt. 5.
- L. Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chpt. 3.
- A. Campbell, P. Converse, W. Miller, and D. Stokes, *The American Voter*, chpts. 5, 8.
- P. Fisher, *Demographic Gaps in American Political Behavior*, chpt. 6.
- S. Hansen, *The Politics of Sex*, chpt. 4.
- D. S. Hillygus and T. Shields, *The Persuadable Voter*, chpt. 2.
- D. Holian and C. Prysby, *Candidate Character Traits in Presidential Elections*, chpts. 2, 4
- G. Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 8th ed., chpt. 5.
- E. Ladd & C. Hadley, *Transformations of the American Party System*, 2nd ed., chpt. 1.
- J. Leighley and J. Nagler, *Who Votes Now?*, chpt. 2.
- M. Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*, chpt. 7.
- M. Lewis-Beck, W. Jacoby, H. Norpoth, and H. Weisberg, *The American Voter Revisited*, chpts. 7, 11.
- W. Miller and J. M. Shanks, *The New American Voter*, chpt. 8.
- C. Prysby, "Explaining the Presidential Vote," in W. Crotty (ed.), *Wining the Presidency 2012*.
- J. Sudquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, rev. ed., chpt. 1.

The following journal articles are available as e-reserves (through Canvas):

- A. Abramowitz, "Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election with the Time-for-Change Model," *PS: Politics and Policy* (October, 2008).
- R. Erickson and C. Wlezien, "The Objective and Subjective Economy and the Presidential Vote," *PS: Politics and Policy* (October, 2012).
- G. Markus, "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions on the Presidential Vote," *American Journal of Political Science* (February, 1988).
- C. Prysby, "Perceptions of Candidate Character Traits and the Presidential Vote in 2004," *PS: Politics and Policy* (January, 2008).

The following books are available at the library on closed reserve. Consult them if you need information on the 2012 presidential election:

- J. Box-Steffensmeier and S. Schier (ed.), *The American Elections of 2012*.
- J. Ceaser, A. Busch, and J. Pitney, *After Hope and Change: The 2012 Elections and American Politics*.
- W. Crotty (ed.), *Winning the Presidency 2012*.
- M. Nelson (ed.), *The Elections of 2012*.

## Course Requirements

This course is designated as writing intensive. That not only means that there will be a great deal of writing in this course; it also means that you will receive feedback on your writing and that we will devote some class time to discussing writing in political science. More information on this aspect of the course is on another handout.

The grades in this course will be determined by:

1. Reading summaries, due throughout the course. There will be 20 summaries assigned, each worth up to 10 points. Your best 10 summaries will be counted. 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. Details on the reading summaries are on another handout.
2. A paper that examines the relationship between partisan choice and social and demographic factors. This paper will involve a computer-based analysis of survey data from the 2012 presidential election. Details on this project will be distributed at the start of the semester. There will be a preliminary and final draft of this paper, but only the final draft will receive a grade.
3. A paper that analyzes the impact of political attitudes and evaluations on the presidential vote in 2012, based on an analysis of survey data from the 2012 election. Details on this paper will be distributed later in the semester. There will be a preliminary and a final draft of this paper, and both drafts will be graded.
4. Class participation. Class participation will be based in part on attendance, since an empty chair cannot participate at all. However, simply attending class is insufficient to receive a good grade. You also should come to class having read the assigned readings and prepared to discuss them. Asking good questions is an important part of class participation, so think of good questions to ask while you are doing the readings. One important point about the class sessions: we will spend time interpreting tables and charts in the readings (especially when I think that you may have difficulty in properly interpreting them on your own), so bring the books or copies of the reserve readings (if you printed them off) to class on the appropriate days.

The course grade will be determined by a point system:

Reading summaries (10 x 10 points each)	100 points
Paper on social factors and voting	100 points
Paper on attitudes and voting, first draft	100 points
Paper on attitudes and voting, final draft	100 points
Class participation	<u>50 points</u>
Total =	450 points

One note about your written work. You should be familiar with the UNCG academic integrity policy and abide by its provisions in any work that you do. Among other things, this means that your written work should not contain plagiarized material. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me for clarification. While I expect that any work that you submit will be your own work, not that of someone else, I encourage you to study and work together. It is a good idea to discuss the readings, compare data analyses, and exchange ideas with others in the class. I think that you will benefit from the right kind of collaborative work.

## 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 and posted on Canvas. Readings that are on library reserve are so indicated by a “[e-reserve]” following the listing. All of the assigned readings that are on e-reserve are also listed on page 2 of this syllabus.

The readings from the book by Abramson, Aldrich, Gomez, and Rohde focus on the 2012 election. If you want to refresh your memory of that election, skim chapters 1-3 of that book to review the events and outcome of the 2012 presidential election. I also have placed four books on the 2012 election on closed reserve, so you can consult them if you need more information on the issues, events, and candidates in that election.

### A. Turnout in national elections (August 24-31)

Flanigan, Zingale, Theiss-Morse, and Wagner, chpts. 1, 3  
 Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, chpt. 5 [e-reserve]  
 Leighley and Nagler, *Who Votes Now?*, chpt. 2 [e-reserve]  
 Abramson, Aldrich, Gomez, and Rohde, chpt. 4

### B. Party identification (Sept. 7-12)

Flanigan, Zingale, Theiss-Morse, and Wagner, chpt. 4  
 Abramson, Aldrich, Gomez, and Rohde, chpt. 8  
 Lewis-Beck et al., *The American Voter Revisited*, chpt. 7 [e-reserve]

### C. Analyzing data from the 2012 election (Sept. 14-21)

Examine the material on the *Voting Behavior: The 2012 Election* SETUPS Web site  
 ([www.icpsr.umich.edu/SETUPS](http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/SETUPS))

### D. Social factors and the vote (Sept. 23-30)

Flanigan, Zingale, Theiss-Morse, and Wagner, chpt. 6  
 Abramson, Aldrich, Gomez, and Rohde, chpt. 5  
 Fisher, Demographic Gaps in American Political Behavior, chpt. 6 [e-reserve]  
 Lewis-Beck et al., *The American Voter Revisited*, chpt 11 [e-reserve]

### E. Attitudinal basis of the vote (Oct. 3-7)

Flanigan, Zingale, Theiss-Morse, and Wagner, chpts. 7, 8  
 Miller and Shanks, *The New American Voter*, chpt. 8 [e-reserve]  
 Prysby, “Explaining the Presidential Vote,” in Crotty (ed.), *Winning the Presidency 2012* [e-reserve]

## F. Issues, attitudes and the vote

## 1. The role of policy issues in elections (Oct. 10-24)

Flanigan, Zingale, Theiss-Morse, and Wagner, chpt. 5  
 Campbell et al., *The American Voter*, chpt. 8 [e-reserve]  
 Abramson, Aldrich, Gomez, and Rohde, chpt. 6  
 Hillygus and Shields, *The Persuadable Voter*, chpt. 2 [e-reserve]  
 Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chpt. 3 [e-reserve]  
 Hansen, *The Politics of Sex*, chpt. 4 [e-reserve]

## 2. Retrospective evaluations and voting behavior (Oct. 26-31)

Abramson, Aldrich, Gomez, and Rohde, chpt. 7  
 Markus, "The Impact of Personal and National Economic Conditions on the Presidential Vote,"  
*AJPS* (Feb., 1988) [e-reserve]  
 Abramowitz, "Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election..." in *PS* (Oct., 2008) and Erickson and  
 Wlezien, "The Objective and Subjective Economy..." in *PS* (Oct., 2012) [e-reserve]

## 3. The influence of perceptions of candidate characteristics (Nov. 2-7)

Holian and Prysby, *Candidate Character Traits in Presidential Elections*, chpts. 2, 4 [e-reserve]  
 Prysby, "Perceptions of Candidate Character Traits and the Presidential Vote in 2004," *PS*  
 (January, 2008) [e-reserve]

## G. Aspects of electoral dynamics

## 1. Short-run versus long-term electoral change (Nov. 9-11)

Sundquist, *Dynamics of the Party System*, chpt. 1 [e-reserve]  
 Ladd and Hadley, *Transformations of the American Party System*, 2nd ed., chpt. 1 [e-reserve]

## 2. Recent changes in the American electorate (Nov. 14-18)

Abramowitz, "Ideological Realignment Among Voters," in Stonecash (ed.), *New Directions in  
 American Political Parties*. [e-reserve]  
 Levendusky, *The Partisan Sort*, chpt. 7 [e-reserve]  
 Abramowitz, *The Disappearing Center*, chpt. 5 [e-reserve]

## H. Voting behavior in congressional elections (Nov. 21-30)

Jacobson, *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, chpt. 5 [e-reserve]  
 Abramson, Aldrich, Gomez, and Rohde, chpts. 9-11

## I. Summing up and future prospects: looking forward to the 2016 election (Dec. 2-5)

Abramson, Aldrich, Gomez, and Rohde, chpt. 12, 13