

POLS 316: Electoral Behavior: Fall 2006

Tuesday/Thursday 9:30–10:45 a.m., 221 Fitzgerald Hall

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Hours: Wednesday 1–4 p.m., or by appointment.

The public's primary role in our political system is to select our leaders through elections. Most members of the public *only* participate by voting—if they participate at all. However, in addition to those who vote, some citizens participate in others ways as well; these ways may include contributing money, volunteering for a political cause or campaign, running for office, or more. This course focuses on why and how people participate and why they participate in particular ways. Since voting is the most widespread form of political participation, the bulk of the course will focus on why citizens vote the way they do; why does an individual choose to cast his or her vote for candidate A over candidate B?

With this purpose in mind, we will examine some of the factors and processes that characterize the public's orientation and relationship to government and politics. You will become familiar with the theories, models, concepts and data that are used to explain how individuals are influenced by the political process, how they perceive politics, and how they fulfill their role as citizens. The focus of study is individual factors and relationships. We will view institutions as the regulators of individual behavior. Elections, non-electoral participation, and the political variables they represent are our central interest, but individuals provide the central focus.

This course also considers the roles of candidates and campaigns in the electoral process in the United States. Each major topic in the course will be discussed in the context of recent presidential and congressional elections, as well as the current campaign.

It will be helpful to have some background in political science methods or research design, such as POLS 300 (Methods in Political Science), or the equivalent background in another social science field (sociology, psychology, or economics).

Required Textbooks: Readings will be taken from the following books:

- Abramson, Paul R., John H. Aldrich, and David W. Rhode. 2005. *Change and Continuity in the 2004 Elections*. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 1-933116-69-2.
- Flanigan, William H. and Nancy H. Zingale. 2005. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 11th ed. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN 1-933116-67-6.
- Niemi, Richard G. and Herbert F. Weisberg, eds. 2001. *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, 4th ed. Washington: CQ Press. ISBN-1-56802-334-0.

These textbooks should be available at the SLU Bookstore (if they aren't, please let me know!). You may also be able to order them from retailers on the Internet at a discount.

Additional readings, as noted on the syllabus, will be made available either on reserve at the library, online, or as handouts.

Assignments and Grading: Your grade in this course will be based on the following elements:

Research Design	10%	Midterm Exam	30%
Data Analysis Step	5%	Final Exam	30%
Final Research Paper	15%	Participation	10%

The following grades will be awarded in this course:

Final Average	≥ 93.0	≥ 90.0	≥ 87.0	≥ 83.0	≥ 80.0	≥ 77.0	≥ 73.0	≥ 70.0	≥ 60.0	< 60.0
Grade	A	A–	B+	B	B–	C+	C	C–	D	F
Grade Points	4.0	3.7	3.3	3.0	2.7	2.3	2.0	1.7	1.0	0.0

Exams: Both exams will be an open-book, take-home examinations. You may not consult with anyone (classmates, friends, acquaintances, other professors, etc.) other than your professor on this examination. **Late exams will not be accepted (except in the case of illness; see below).**

Research Paper: This is a 12–15 page research paper, suitable for presentation at a statewide or regional academic conference, that analyzes the voting decisions of voters in a recent presidential or congressional election in terms of an extant theory of voter decision-making. The paper will be produced in four stages:

1. You should select a topic (both the campaign of interest and the theory you wish to test) and have it approved by me no later than the week we start on “party identification.” Feel free to ask me for help with selecting a topic and/or campaign.
2. You will then produce an 5–8 page “research design” paper, which will: review the scholarly literature on the theory you plan to test, outline specific hypotheses, and indicate the data you will use to test these hypotheses, as well as the specific statistical method you will use. I will let you know if you will need to make any changes for your research design to produce an effective paper. This research design will be due six weeks before the final due date of the paper.
3. The third stage will be to “run” the data analysis required in the research design, and turn that in to me. The deadline for an initial run will be three weeks before the final due date of the paper.
4. Finally, you will integrate the results of your data analysis with the research design, and write “results” and “conclusions” sections for your paper. This final paper will be due at the beginning of class on the last day of the semester. (I strongly recommend having the paper reviewed for grammar and spelling by the university’s writing center before turning it in.)

Note: You will not be graded on whether or not you find “statistically significant” results; however, you will be expected to have a reasonable explanation of any results (or lack thereof) you find.

The final paper is expected to be of a standard that could be presented at a state or regional political science conference, such as the Illinois Conference for Students of Political Science in March 2007. More information on this conference will be provided at a later date.

Policies: Attendance at class is required, and is a component of your “participation” grade. Please discuss any planned absences with me as soon as practicable. Regular attendance and participation are essential for understanding the material; if you don’t come to class, you will probably be hurting your grade.

All students are expected to be prepared for class, including having completed the relevant readings *prior to class*. Asking thoughtful or insightful questions is just as important as answering questions posed by others in the class. Absences, tardiness, cell phone disruptions and abuse of Internet technologies (e.g., web browsing/IMing during class) will adversely affect your participation grade.

Please arrive at class *on time* and mute (or switch off) all pagers, cell phones, and alarms during class.

Make-up examinations must be scheduled two weeks in advance in the case of an **unavoidable** planned absence; otherwise, make-ups will be given only in the case of an illness or emergency that is **documented** with a doctor’s note dating from *prior* to the exam. Should you have three final exams scheduled for one day, please consult with me to arrange an alternative time to take your final. Other assignments may be made up at the discretion of the professor.

Students are expected to demonstrate basic proficiency in communicating using the English language, as defined by Strunk and White’s *The Elements of Style* and other references. Poorly-written assignments and responses to essay questions may receive reduced credit.

Consistent with departmental policy, your written assignments (including the research paper) are expected to conform with the latest revision of *The Style Manual for Political Science* published by the American Political Science Association. This requirement particularly applies to the use of citations and references in your written work.

This syllabus is subject to revision by the professor.

Academic Integrity and Honesty: The University is a community of learning, whose effectiveness requires an environment of mutual trust and integrity. Academic integrity is violated by any dishonesty such as soliciting, receiving, or providing any unauthorized assistance in the completion of work submitted toward academic credit. While not all forms of academic dishonesty can be listed here, examples include copying from another student, copying from a book or class notes during a closed book exam, submitting materials authored by or revised by another person as the s own work, copying a passage or text directly from a published source without appropriately citing or recognizing that source, taking a test or doing an assignment or other academic work for another student, securing or supplying in advance a copy of an examination without the knowledge or consent of the instructor, and colluding with another student or students to engage in academic dishonesty.

Any clear violation of academic integrity will be met with appropriate sanctions. Possible sanctions for violation of academic integrity may include, but are not limited to, assignment of a failing grade in a course, disciplinary probation, suspension, and dismissal from the University. Students should review the College of Arts and Sciences policy on Academic Honesty, which can be accessed on-line at <http://www.slu.edu/colleges/AS/> under “Quicklinks for Students” or in hard copy form in the Arts and Sciences Policy Binder in each departmental or College office.

Students with Special Needs: Any student who believes that he or she may need academic accommodations in order to meet the requirements of this course—as outlined in the syllabus—due to presence of a disability, should contact the Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action. Please telephone the office at 314-977-8885, or visit DuBourg Hall Room 36. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries.

Course Roadmap: An approximate outline of the content of the course is as follows. Revisions to this roadmap may be made throughout the semester as circumstances warrant.

Introduction Flanigan and Zingale, ch. 1.

Participation and Turnout Flanigan and Zingale, ch. 2; Abramson et al., ch. 5

From Niemi and Weisberg: “Why Is Voter Turnout Low (And Why Is It Declining)?”; Putnam; Rosenstone and Hansen; Franklin.

Models of Vote Choice—Rational Choice, Sociological, and Psychological Lawrence, “The Evolution of the Normal Vote in the 1990s” (literature review section); Abramson et al., ch. 5.

From Neimi and Weisberg: “What Determines the Vote?”; Nadeau and Lewis-Beck; Miller and Shanks; Lodge, Steenbergen, and Brau.

Party Identification Flanigan and Zingale, ch. 3–5; Abramson et al., ch. 8.

From Niemi and Weisberg, “How Much Does Politics Affect Party Identification?”; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson, “Macropartisanship”; Miller; Green, Schickler, and Palmquist; MacKuen, Erikson, and Stimson, “Macropartisanship: The Permanent Memory of Partisan Evaluation.”

Issues, Attitudes, and Public Opinion Flanigan and Zingale, ch. 6; Abramson et al., ch. 6–7.

The Role of the Media Flanigan and Zingale, ch. 7; Zaller, “The myth of massive media impact revived: New support for a discredited idea,” (ch. 2 of *Political Persuasion and Attitude Change*).

How Voters Decide Flanigan and Zingale, ch. 8.

Presidential Campaigns and Elections Abramson et al., ch. 1–3.

Congressional Campaigns and Elections Abramson et al., ch. 9–11.

Ticket-Splitting From Niemi and Weisberg: “Do Voters Prefer Divided Government?”; Fiorina; Burden and Kimball.