

POS 3204
Political Behavior
Fall 2015

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Required Texts:

William H. Flanagan, Nancy H. Zingale, Elizabeth A. Theiss-Morse, and Michael W. Wagner, *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 13th ed. (CQ Press, 2015).
Benjamin I. Page and Lawrence R. Jacobs, *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

In addition, assigned journal articles and book chapters (listed below) can be accessed via either (1) the Smathers Library e-journal link (on-campus at www.uflib.ufl.edu; off-campus with your gatorlink account at www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufproxy.html); or (2) UF e-Learning Support Services at <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>.

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to several major themes relating to public opinion, voting behavior, and political participation – primarily, though not exclusively, in the United States. How much do ordinary citizens know about politics and government? How complete is their understanding of important issues, and to what extent do their preferences on those issues guide their voting choices? Why don't more Americans participate in politics, either at the polls or in other ways? Do low participation rates mean that the United States (or any other country) is less "democratic" than its citizens would like to believe? Why have citizens become increasingly mistrustful of their governmental leaders and institutions? These are just a few of the questions that we will examine over the next few months.

Grades in this course will be based on the following:

Midterm exam	20 percent (Tuesday, Oct 13, in class)
Attendance and participation	20 percent
Periodic written assignments	30 percent
Final exam	30 percent (Tuesday, Dec 15, 7:30 a.m.)

The nature and content of midterm and final exams will be discussed in class. No make-ups will be given except in the case of a fully documented medical or other emergency; anyone who fails to take either exam without such documentation will receive a score of zero. The attendance/ participation component of your grade will be determined using three criteria: (a) daily attendance sign-in (I will provide the sheet of paper, but you are responsible for ensuring that your name is on it); (b) *informed* (showing familiarity with assigned readings) contributions to class discussions; and (c) an occasional pop quiz covering those readings (questions will be simple and answers obvious for anyone who has done the work).

The written assignments are based on topics identified by the course outline provided below. In each instance, students will find an Internet reading relevant to the topic (note: this should not be a published academic study, though it can be an article about academic research that is written for a lay audience) and prepare a short (2-3 pages, double-spaced) essay briefly summarizing the content of that reading *and relating it to themes covered in class*. For the twelve topics listed, you should choose six on which to write essays (all of which will be graded for content and grammar and returned with comments). Don't lose track of where you stand because there will be no opportunities for extra credit at the end. *Note: Internet articles that appear on the syllabus or are discussed in class should not be selected for these assignments.*

TWO NOTES: First, a hard copy of both your essay and the Internet article on which it is based should be handed in during class on the day the essay is due. Second, the main purpose of these assignments is for you to see how ideas discussed in class play out in the real world – so do not base your essay on an academic source (journal article or book chapter) without first getting approval of the instructor. Material written by academics for a lay audience is acceptable, however.

Minus grades will (if appropriate) be assigned in this course. Information about grades and grading policies at UF can be found at <http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

Students are bound by the University of Florida's Student Code of Conduct. Anyone who commits an act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or committing plagiarism on the written essays, will suffer appropriate sanctions and be referred to university authorities for further action.

Any student with a handicap or special need should notify me (and coordinate with Student Services at 202 Peabody Hall) as soon as possible at the beginning of the semester. Every effort will be made to accommodate your situation within the guidelines set forth by the university.

A class listserv has been established so that I can send you occasional announcements and keep you informed about any changes that might occur in the schedule. You are automatically on the list by virtue of being enrolled in this course. You must, however, be sure either to check the email in your gatorlink account on a regular basis, or to forward all gatorlink messages to an account that you use more frequently.

COURSE OUTLINE

Note: Readings highlighted in blue have been/will be posted on e-learning (Canvas).

Aug 25: Introduction

Week 1 (Aug 27-Sep 1): Measuring Public Opinion

Assigned Reading:

Flanagan et al., appendix (pp. 294-305).

[David W. Moore, *The Opinion Makers: An Insider Exposes the Truth behind the Polls* \(Beacon Press, 2008\), Chapters 1, 4.](#)

Brendan Nyhan, "Presidential Polls: How to Avoid Getting Fooled," *New York Times* (7/30/15), http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/29/upshot/2016-presidential-election-polls-how-to-follow.html?ref=politics&_r=0&abt=0002&abg=1

Kevin Quealy and Amanda Cox, "The First G.O.P. Debate: Who's In, Who's Out and the Role of Chance," *New York Times* (7/29/15), <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/07/21/upshot/election-2015-the-first-gop-debate-and-the-role-of-chance.html?action=click&contentCollection=The%20Upshot®ion=Footer&module=WhatsNext&version=WhatsNext&contentID=WhatsNext&moduleDetail=undefined&pgtype=Multimedia&abt=0002&abg=1>

[Nate Silver, "Is the Polling Industry in Stasis or in Crisis?" \(8/25/14\), <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/is-the-polling-industry-in-stasis-or-in-crisis/>](#)

Week 2 (Sep 3-8): Voter Competence

Assigned Reading:

Flanagan et al., Chapter 1.

[Stephen C. Craig and Michael D. Martinez, "Voter Competence," in *The Electoral Challenge: Theory Meets Practice*, 2nd ed., edited by Stephen C. Craig and David B. Hill \(CQ Press, 2011\), pp. 62-90,](#)

including response by Mark Blumenthal.

Rick Shenkman, "How Ignorant Are We? The Voters Choose but on the Basis of What?" (book excerpt posted at <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174951>).

Jennifer Hochschild and Katherine Levine Einstein, "No, We're Not Arguing from the Same Facts. How Can Democracies Make Good Decisions If Citizens Are Misinformed?" *The Monkey Cage* (7/21/15), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/07/21/no-were-not-arguing-from-the-same-facts-how-can-democracies-make-good-decisions-if-citizens-are-misinformed/>

Internet essay #1 due Sep 8 (topic: polling)

Week 3 (Sep 10-15): Partisanship

Assigned Reading:

Flanigan et al., Chapter 4.

Shanto Iyengar, "Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines Now Means That for Some, Partisan Prejudice Can Be Stronger than Racial Prejudice," *London School of Economics and Political Science* (3/27/15), <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2015/03/27/fear-and-loathing-across-party-lines-now-means-that-for-some-partisan-prejudice-can-be-stronger-than-racial-prejudice/>; Thomas B. Edsall, "How Did Politics Get So Personal?" *New York Times* (1/28/15), http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/28/opinion/how-did-politics-get-so-personal.html?_r=1

Amy Walter, "The Myth of the Independent Voter," *Cook Political Report* (1/15/14); <http://cookpolitical.com/story/6608>; Sam Sommers, "Just How Independent Are Independent Voters?" *Huffington Post* (8/17/14), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sam-sommers/just-how-independent-are-_b_1777512.html

Eugene M. Caruso et al., "Political Partisanship Influences Perception of Biracial Candidates' Skin Tone" (2009), <http://www.pnas.org/content/106/48/20168.full.pdf>

Internet essay #2 due Sep 15 (topic: voter knowledge/competence)

Week 4 (Sep 17-22): Ideology

Assigned Reading:

Flanigan et al., Chapter 5.

John Sides, "Why Most Conservatives Are Secretly Liberals," *The Monkey Cage* (3/6/14), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/03/06/why-most-conservatives-are-secretly-liberals/>

Jack Kerwick, "Most 'Conservatives' Are Secretly Neoconservatives," *The New American* (3/12/14), <http://www.thenewamerican.com/reviews/opinion/item/17828-most-conservatives-are-secretly-neoconservatives>

Pew Research Center, "Beyond Red vs. Blue: The Political Typology" (6/26/14), <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/26/the-political-typology-beyond-red-vs-blue/>

Sasha Issenberg, "Born This Way: The New Weird Science of Hardwired Political Identity," *New York Magazine* (4/8/12), <http://nymag.com/news/features/liberals-conservatives-2012-4/#>

Internet essay #3 due Sep 22 (topic: partisanship)

Week 5 (Sep 24-29): Social Groups

Assigned Reading:

Flanigan et al., Chapter 6.

Jeffrey M. Stonecash, "The 2014 House Elections: Political Analysis and the Enduring Importance of Demographics," *The Forum* (2014, issue 4).

Michelle Diggles, "The New Electorate and the Future of the Democratic Party," report issued by Third Way (September 2013), <http://www.thirdway.org/publications/747>

Pew Research Center, "Millennials in Adulthood: Detached from Institutions, Networked with Friends

(3/7/14), <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/03/07/millennials-in-adulthood/>
Internet essay #4 due Sep 29 (topic: ideology)

Week 6 (Oct 1-6) Voting Behavior

Assigned Reading:

Flanigan et al., Chapters 2, 8.

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton University Press, 2013), Chapter 7.

Nate Silver, “Models Based on ‘Fundamentals’ Have Failed at Predicting Presidential Elections”; also John Sides, “In Defense of Presidential Forecasting Models,” *New York Times*/Five Thirty Eight (March 2012).

Internet essay #5 due Oct 6 (topic: social groups)

Week 7 (Oct 8-13): Midterm Review/Exam

Internet essay #6 due Oct 13 (topic: voting behavior)

Weeks 8-9 (Oct 15-20, 22-27): Polarization/Realignment

Assigned Reading:

Morris P. Fiorina, “America’s Missing Moderates: Hiding in Plain Sight”; also Alan I. Abramowitz (with a reply by Fiorina), “Polarized or Sorted? Just What’s Wrong With Our Politics Anyway,” *The American Interest* (March/April 2013).

Pew Research Center, “Political Polarization in the American Public: How Increasing Ideological Uniformity and Partisan Antipathy Affect Politics, Compromise and Everyday Life” (6/12/14), <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>

Morris P. Fiorina, “Americans Have Not Become More Politically Polarized,” *The Monkey Cage* (6/23/14), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/06/23/americans-have-not-become-more-politically-polarized/>

Shanto Iyengar, “Fear and Loathing across Party Lines . . .” (3/27/15), <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/usappblog/2015/03/27/fear-and-loathing-across-party-lines-now-means-that-for-some-partisan-prejudice-can-be-stronger-than-racial-prejudice/>

Andrew Gelman, “Economic Divisions and Political Polarization in Red and Blue America,” *Pathways* (2011), http://www.stat.columbia.edu/~gelman/research/published/PathwaysSummer11_Trends.pdf

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble: Choice and Chance in the 2012 Presidential Election* (Princeton University Press, 2013), Chapter 8.

No Internet essays assigned for Oct 20 or Oct 27

Week 10 (Oct 29-Nov 3): Domestic Issue Attitudes

Assigned Readings:

Flanigan et al., review Chapter 5.

Benjamin I. Page and Lawrence R. Jacobs, *Class War? What Americans Really Think about Economic Inequality* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

Michael I. Norton and Dan Ariely, “Building a Better America – One Wealth Quintile at a Time,” *Perspectives on Psychological Science* (January 2011), <http://www.people.hbs.edu/mnorton/norton%20ariely%20in%20press.pdf>

Pew Research Center, “For the Public, It’s Not about Class Warfare, But Fairness” (3/2/12), <http://www.people-press.org/2012/03/02/for-the-public-its-not-about-class-warfare-but-fairness/>

Internet essay #7 due Nov 3 (topic: polarization/realignment)

Week 11 (Nov 5-10): International/Defense Attitudes

Assigned Readings:

Barbara A. Bardes and Robert W. Oldendick, *Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind*, 4th ed. (2012), Chapter 11.

Adam J. Berinsky, "Public Opinion and the Iraq War," in *Understanding Public Opinion*, 3rd ed., edited by Barbara Norrander and Clyde Wilcox (CQ Press, 2010), pp. 59-82.

Robert J. Lieber, "Politics Stops at the Water's Edge? Not Recently (2/10/14), <http://washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/02/10/politics-stops-at-the-waters-edge-not-recently/>
Internet essay #8 due Nov10 (topic: domestic issue attitudes)

Week 12 (Nov 12-17): Turnout and Participation

Assigned Readings:

Flanigan et al., Chapter 3.

Pew Research Center, "Nonvoters: Who They Are, What They Think" (11/1/12), <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/01/nonvoters-who-they-are-what-they-think/>

Psychology Today, assorted Internet blogs on voter turnout (2010-2014).

Victoria Shineman, "Incentivizing Participation Would Increase Voter Turnout and Political Information," *The Monkey Cage* (11/6/12), <http://themonkeycage.org/2012/11/incentivizing-participation-would-increase-voter-turnout-and-political-information/>

Ari Berman, "The GOP War on Voting" (8/30/11), <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/the-gop-war-on-voting-20110830?page=3>

Internet essay #9 due Nov 17 (topic: international/defense attitudes)

Week 13 (Nov 20-24): Citizen Mistrust

Assigned Readings:

Marc J. Hetherington and Thomas J. Rudolph, *Why Washington Won't Work: Polarization, Political Trust, and the Governing Crisis* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), Chapter(s) TBA.

James A. Barnes, "The Great Distrust," *National Journal* (March 26, 2011).

L. Sandy Maisel, "The Negative Consequences of Uncivil Political Discourse," *PS: Political Science and Politics* (July 2012), pp. 405-411.

Internet essay #10 due Nov 24 (topic: turnout/participation)

No class on Thursday, Nov 26 (Thanksgiving)

Week 14 (Nov30-Dec 4): Campaigns/Political Communication

Assigned Readings:

John Sides and Lynn Vavreck, *The Gamble*, review Chapter 7 (see readings, week 6).

Frank Rich, "Nuke 'Em," *New York Magazine* (6/17/12), <http://nymag.com/news/frank-rich/negative-campaigning-2012-6/>

Ken Goldstein et al., "Even the Geeks Are Polarized: The Dispute over the 'Real Driver' in American Elections," *The Forum* (2014, issue 2).

Sasha Issenberg, "Nudge the Vote," *New York Times Magazine* (10/29/10), http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/31/magazine/31politics-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Jill Lepore, "The Big Lie," *The New Yorker* (9/24/12), <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/09/24/the-lie-factory>

Internet essay #11 due Dec 3 (topic: citizen mistrust)

Dec 8: Final exam review, Internet essay #12 due (topic: campaigns/political communication)

Note: All Internet essays should represent original work by students (or, when the work of others is referenced, provide proper citations). To ensure that this is the case, essays must be submitted to an online plagiarism service called turnitin.com. Here is how it works:

The first step is that you need to create a student profile:

1. go to www.turnitin.com
2. click on create user profile
3. fill in your personal email address
4. fill in your personal password
5. type of user: choose student
6. enter class ID (10267627) and password (vote)
7. follow instructions

To log in after creating profile:

1. enter your personal email and password in the box on the upper right hand corner of the home page (www.turnitin.com)
2. click on POS 3204
3. from there you can submit your paper, just like adding an attachment to an email

Each essay has its own assignment folder. The procedure that you should follow is to (1) give a hard copy of their essay to me during class on the dates specified above, and (2) submit an electronic copy to turnitin.com at some point on the same day. Any assignment that is turned in late (without approval of the instructor) will be docked one letter grade per day. Any assignment that does **not** constitute original work by the author will be subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct.

Some advice about the essays:

Last fall, a student in this class wrote me and asked for a “detailed” description of what I was looking for in the weekly essays. Although we had talked about it in class, the student was confused – and, assuming that she wasn’t alone, I decided to send my answer to the entire class listserv. Here is an expanded version of that answer . . .

Start with what's on the syllabus: “The written assignments are based on topics identified by the course outline provided below. In each instance, students will find an Internet reading relevant to the topic (note: this should not be a published academic study, though it can be an article about academic research that is written for a lay audience) and prepare a short (2-3 pages, double-spaced) essay briefly summarizing the content of that reading *and relating it to themes covered in class.*”

That last part in italics is the crux of it. Do not spend too much time summarizing the article. (I'll read the hard copy you turn in.) Instead, give me a quick overview of whatever aspect of the article you plan to focus on (some articles only have one, others have several) -- and then discuss it with reference to (a) class lectures, (b) assigned readings, and/or (c) additional relevant readings that you may find on your own (this last one isn't a requirement, but in some cases going at least a little beyond the course material will help you to write a better essay). Remember: The way I teach this course is to use academic studies and other empirical data (from media and think-tank surveys, etc.) to help students gain a better understanding of the political environment in the United States. Your goal in these essays is to show me that you can make the connection.

Word of caution #1: Personal opinions – mine included – don't carry much weight here. Observations that are grounded in evidence and/or logic are much more important.

Word of caution #2: Any assertion or statement of fact that is not your own, and is not a matter of what might be called "common knowledge" (including course readings and lectures) should be cited.

Word of caution #3, repeating what I said above: A short summary of the article is ok, a long one not so much. Analyze, don't summarize.