Required texts:

Note: Erikson-Tedin is not a required text *per se*. It is listed here more as a reference that provides general background material on many of the topics covered in this course.

Other books that you might find useful:

Most book titles listed throughout this syllabus have been placed on 2-hour reserve at Smathers Library, though a few (Ellis and Stimson, for example) are available only as e-books. Most articles are available via the Smathers Library e-journal link (www.uflib.ufl.edu), or off-campus with your gatorlink account at www.uflib.ufl.edu/ufproxy.html. Selected book chapters can be accessed through UF e-Learning Support Services at https://lss.at.ufl.edu/.

This course is designed to provide students with an introduction to the academic literature and major controversies regarding public opinion, voting behavior, and political participation – primarily, though not exclusively, in the United States. For example: How much do ordinary citizens know about politics and government? How complete is their understanding of important issues, and to what extent do 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 is less “democratic” than its citizens would like to believe? Why have Americans become increasingly mistrustful of their governmental leaders and institutions? These are only a few of the questions that will be examined over the next few months.

Your grade will be determined according to the following criteria:

Part I. Attendance and participation (25 percent). Attendance matters, since you cannot participate if you’re not in class. However, the largest portion of this grade will reflect whether students make an informed (showing familiarity with assigned readings) contribution to class discussions.

Part II. Weekly essays (25 percent). Each student will complete six essays (each approximately 500 words in length) based on the last twelve topics (#3 through #14) outlined below. These essays should do one of the following:
• provide a theoretical overview linking several (though not necessarily all) of the week’s readings;
• identify a question left unanswered by the week’s readings, and briefly suggest what kind of research might be done to fill in the blanks;
• provide a methodological critique of one or more of the week’s readings; or
• discuss findings from studies of U.S. political behavior in a comparative context and/or vice versa.

Don’t lose track of where you stand (in terms of meeting the quota of six) because there will be no opportunities for extra credit at the end.

Note: It is expected that all essays will represent original work by students (or, when the work of others is referenced, be properly cited). 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 (9236938) and password (behavior)
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 6207 Political Behavior
3. from there you can submit your paper, just like adding an attachment to an email.
4. be sure to get an electronic receipt; this will ensure that you are not penalized in the event that your essay is not properly logged in (no, it doesn’t happen often – but it happens).

Each essay has its own assignment folder. The procedure that you should follow is to (1) give me a hard copy of your essay during class on the specified date; and (2) submit an electronic copy to turnitin.com before 8 p.m. that same day. Any assignment that is late (either hard copy or electronic) will be docked a minimum of one letter grade. Any assignment that does not constitute original work by the author will be subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct.

Part III. Paper/Exam/Teach/Memo. Each student also is required to do any two of the following (25 percent each, for a combined total of 50 percent):
• Write a term paper, approximately 12-15 pages in length, that reviews some topic of your own choosing (selected in consultation with me), develops interesting hypotheses relating to that topic, and provides the outline of a research project appropriate for testing those hypotheses. The paper is due at noon on Friday, April 24. (Note: For some of you, especially the ph.d. types, the paper you do here can serve as the first stage of a project that you will further develop – and perhaps actually execute – in another seminar or at the dissertation stage. With that possibility in mind, you should feel free to consult with other professors about your topic, as appropriate.)
• Complete a written take-home exam, based on material covered in class. There will be two questions similar to what students might see on a ph.d. qualifying exam in political behavior. Questions will be sent to students via email at noon on Wednesday, April 22, and answers are due by noon on Friday, April 24.

• Teach a seminar (ph.d. students only), with performance evaluated by all participants in the class based on clarity, thoroughness, and insights provided on the topic of the day. Those who wish to pursue this option must (a) declare by Tuesday, January 20 which seminar they would like to lead; and (b) give me an outline of the presentation by noon on the day of the seminar.

• Prepare a campaign memo (campaigning students only), approximately 12-15 pages in length, that explains in layman’s terms how the political behavior literature informs some aspect of campaign strategy, tactics, or message. The idea here is to tell the candidate, for example, how the academic literature can help you (as general consultant) to (a) anticipate how certain kinds of people are likely to vote, and suggest ways of tilting the distribution of that vote in your favor; (b) understand or predict voter turnout, and how that might affect your campaign; (c) make smart decisions about how to utilize scarce resources (including but not limited to money); (d) shape your message for maximum impact; (e) deal with events, expected or unexpected, that might occur during the campaign; or (f) understand how the candidate’s strategic position (e.g., partisanship, incumbency, issues, primary challenge) affects his/her probability of success. This memo is due at noon on Friday, April 24.

Note: All term papers, take-home exams, and campaign memos must be submitted in both hard (to me) and electronic copy (to turnitin.com) by the date and time specified above. Failure to comply will result in a penalty of at least one letter grade, depending on the severity of the offense.

Students are bound by the UF Student Code of Conduct. Anyone who commits an act of academic dishonesty, such as cheating on exams or committing plagiarism on written assignments, 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**

**Week 1 (Jan 6): Introduction**
“Politics is more difficult than physics.” (Albert Einstein)

Assigned Readings:

**Week 2 (Jan 13): The American Electorate: Early Impressions . . . and They Weren’t Pretty**
Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Angus Campbell et al., *Elections and the Political Order* (1966), Chapters 4, 5, 8.

Week 3 (Jan 20): Voter Competence: How Stupid Are We?
Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:


Week 4 (Jan 27): Ideology: Beyond Red vs. Blue

Assigned Readings:
Erikson and Tedin, American Public Opinion, Chapter 3.


Recommended Readings:


Stephen C. Craig et al., "Sometimes You Feel Like a Nut, Sometimes You Don't: Citizens' Ambivalence about Abortion," Political Psychology (June 2002).

Week 5 (Feb 3). Partisanship: It’s My Party and I’ll Cry If I Want To

Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:

Week 6 (Feb 10). Political Learning: What Shapes/Moves Public Opinion?

Assigned Readings:
Erikson and Tedin, American Public Opinion, Chapters 4, 5, 8.
Recommended Readings:

Week 7 (Feb 17). Social Groups: Demography Is Destiny . . . Or Not

Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Week 8 (Feb 24). Voting Behavior: Just Another Pretty Face?
Assigned Readings:

Recommended Readings:
Paul R. Abramson et al., *Change and Continuity in the 2012 Election* (2015), Chapters 6, 8.

Week 9 (Mar 10). Retrospective Voting: It’s (Usually) the Economy, Stupid
Assigned Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


Pamela Johnston Conover and Stanley Feldman, "Emotional Reactions to the Economy: I'm Mad as Hell and I'm Not Going to Take It Anymore," *American Journal of Political Science* (February 1986).


**Week 10 (Mar 17). Polarization/Realignment: Can’t We All Just Get Along?**

**Assigned Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 11 (Mar 24). Campaign Effects: Playing to Win**

**Assigned Readings:**


See Week #13 for additional readings on the effects of voter mobilization and campaign advertising.

**Recommended Readings:**


**Week 12 (Mar 31). Issue Opinions . . . Are a Dime a Dozen**

Assigned Readings:


**Recommended Readings:**


Week 13 (Apr 7). Turnout and Participation: How to Be a Good Citizen

Assigned Readings:
- David W. Nickerson et al., “Partisan Mobilization Campaigns in the Field: Results from a Statewide Turnout Experiment in Michigan,” *Political Research Quarterly* (March 2006).

Recommended Readings:


**Week 14 (Apr 14). Representation and Linkage: The Rulers and the Ruled**

**Assigned Readings:**


**Recommended Readings:**


