POS 3204: Political Behavior
Class Periods: Tuesdays period 4, Thursdays periods 4-5
Location: Zoom (id circulated in Canvas)
Academic Term: Fall 2020

Instructor:
Stephen C. Craig
sccraig@ufl.edu
(352) 273-2377 (infrequently monitored in Fall 2020)
Office Hours: Tu/Th 9:30-10:30, We 2:00-3:00 and by appointment, Zoom id 831-661-6708
Web Page: http://users.clas.ufl.edu/sccraig

Main text (recommended but not required):
Elizabeth A. Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 14th ed. (CQ Press, 2018).

All assigned readings (see the course outline below) except for chapters from Theiss-Morse et al. are posted in the Files folder on Canvas (https://elearning.ufl.edu). Most can also be accessed directly online.

Course Overview:
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 preferences regarding 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 has the public 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.

In the past, the course has been lecture-based, with students being encouraged to ask questions and otherwise react to the material being presented in real time. With the online version, it is my intent to lecture (using powerpoint slides) on Tuesdays while leaving Thursdays (the double session) available for additional lecture time (if needed) followed by breakout groups that will hopefully facilitate more active student engagement. Information on how this is going to work will be provided at our first class meeting on September 1.

Students should look around the Canvas site to familiarize themselves with such matters as reading assignments, exams and written essays, grading criteria, and other aspects of the course. You will note that there is one textbook assigned (*Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, 14th ed.) -- though this is less "required" reading than a source that, along with my lecture slides, should prove helpful especially when it comes time to prepare for the midterm and final exams. While students will usually benefit from reading the text, whether you do so is an individual choice. Nothing from the book that is not also covered in class will be included on either written exam.

There are, however, several short articles assigned for each week during the semester. Almost all are internet readings that illustrate how ideas and patterns discussed in class play out in the real world of American politics. These readings are easily digested – they are relatively brief (with one or two exceptions) and in most cases written for a lay audience – and provide the basis for the breakout discussions that we will have every Thursday. **Note that there are four articles on polling that students should read by our first Thursday session on September 3.**

Grades:
Grades will be based on the following:

Midterm exam	20 percent (Thursday, Oct 22, 10:40 a.m.)
Class participation	20 percent
Periodic written assignments	30 percent
Final exam	30 percent (Friday, Dec 18, 10:00 a.m.)

Both midterm and final are <u>open-book, take-home exams</u>. (Although the final is <u>cumulative</u>, it will emphasize material from the second half of the course, i.e., after the midterm.) Each exam will be posted on Canvas at the designated time, and each will be due exactly two hours later. Further details regarding the administration and content of those exams will be provided at a later date. 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. Grading for both exams will be based on a curve, to be determined by the distribution of scores. Based on past experience, a score of

- 85-88 and above will probably earn an A
- 75-80 and above will probably earn a B
- 65-68 and above will probably earn a C
- 55-58 and above will probably earn a D
- any score below 50 will probably earn an E

Plus and minus grades will be assigned as appropriate. Information about grades and grading policies at UF can be found at:

- https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

<u>Written Assignments</u>: As shown in the listing of daily and weekly assignments, we will be covering twelve topics (beginning with "measuring public opinion" and ending with "linkage/representation") over the course of the semester. Students are required to write <u>short essays on any six of these</u>. Step one is to find an internet article (preferably one that is fairly recent) relevant to the week's topic. Since the main purpose here is for you to see how ideas discussed in class play out in the real world, <u>do not base your essay on an academic source</u> (journal article or book chapter) or <u>on a Pew, Gallup, or other poll report/press release</u> without first getting my approval. Material written by academics for a lay audience is acceptable (*Monkey Cage* articles being a good, but not the only, example). ***Note: Internet articles that appear on the syllabus or are discussed in class should <u>not</u> be selected for these assignments.***

Once an article of interest has been identified (if you're not sure whether it's appropriate, send me the link and I will let you know one way or the other), step two is to write a 2-page essay (typed, single-spaced, 12-point font, with a bibliography at the end that is not included in the page count) <u>briefly summarizing the content of the article and relating it to one or more themes covered in class</u>. Don't lose track of where you stand because there will be <u>no opportunities for extra credit</u> at the end, e.g., if there are no more weeks left in the semester and you realize that you've only written five essays, you will receive a zero for the missing essay. On the other hand . . . Students who complete their six required essays by **November 10** will receive a <u>one-half letter grade bonus</u> on their final (average) score for this part of the course.

Essays should be submitted to the appropriate Assignments folder in Canvas **no later than noon** on the day they are due. In most cases, they will be read, graded, and returned to students within a week of their completion. **Anything submitted after the deadline will be penalized one full letter grade, plus one additional letter grade if turned in the following day – after which the essay will not be read or graded at all.**

Grades for the written assignments will be based on the following standard:

- 92-100 = A
- 90-91 = A-
- 88-89 = B+
- 82-87 = B
- 80-81 = B-
- 78-79 = C+
- 72-77 = C
- 70-71 = C-
- 68-69 = D+
- 62-67 = D
- 60-61 = D-
- 0-59 = E

Any written assignment (including midterm and final exams) that does not constitute original work by the student will be subject to penalties consistent with the UF Code of Student Conduct, up to and including receiving a grade of zero and a failing grade in the class.

Strong essays from past students will be posted from time to time on Canvas so you can get a sense of what I'm looking for. In the meantime, here are some basic guidelines that you may find helpful:

- do not summarize at length (include the link for your article and I will read it online; a detailed summary would be redundant);
- do not simply regurgitate points made by myself or by other students during class discussion – bring some insight(s) of your own to the task; at the same time . . .
- purely personal opinions are bad (e.g., you believe that mail-in balloting either does or does not increase the likelihood of voter fraud), statements based on evidence are good (e.g., what do studies show one way or the other on this issue?);
- focus on a single theme (two at the most, and only if they're related) so that you're able to do it justice; and
- cite any book, article, internet source, or idea that is not your own. You should do this by including an alphabetical list of references at the end of your essay just as you would with a term paper in another class. In-text cites should take the following form: (Craig 2020) – do not use footnotes or insert full article/book titles in the text. If I want to know what (Craig 2020) is, I should be able to find out by looking at your list of references.

Class Participation: Given that this course is being taught online, the participation component of your grade is less straightforward than might otherwise be the case. In the past, it has been based on daily attendance, occasional pop quizzes covering the assigned readings, and an evaluation of the extent to which a student has made frequent and informed contributions to class discussion. This time, however, I will encourage everyone to stay engaged with the material by having you submit three potential talk points by **5 p.m. each Wednesday** prior to a breakout Thursday.

At least two of those talk points should relate to the week's assigned readings (one can be based on Tuesday's lecture if you wish) and do something more than just ask a question. While asking an on-point question is fine, you should indicate what you think the answer to that question might be. Each talk point should be presented in a single-spaced (12-point font), full-bodied paragraph where you briefly – but not too briefly – present your thought(s) regarding whatever the topic happens to be. Keep in mind that the main purpose here is for you to show that you are keeping up with both readings and lectures. Failure to follow these

guidelines will have the same result as not submitting talk points at all: You will receive a zero for the assignment. **Talk points should be submitted to the appropriate Assignments folder in Canvas by the deadline noted above. They will be reviewed and some will be shared with the class on Thursday as possible discussion topics.**

Some concluding points:
- Attendance in the Zoom class meetings with cameras turned on is required. Students who can reasonably anticipate an absence should inform me by email as soon as is practical and prior to the anticipated absence. Absences may be excused with documentation of a University, military, or legal obligation, illness, or bereavement.

- Students are bound by the University of Florida's <u>Student Code of Conduct</u>. 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.

- There will be times when I need to communicate with the class as a group. In those instances, I will do so through Outlook (using a listserv) and/or via Canvas. Students should check their incoming mail regularly so as not to miss any important information. The best way for students to connect with me directly is through Outlook (<u>sccraig@ufl.edu</u>). If a reply is needed, I will try to get back to you fairly quickly.

- A word about <u>office hours</u>: Students who wish to talk with me should sign in via Zoom (my personal ID is 831-661-6708) during the hours indicated above. You will then be placed in a "waiting room" and I will get to you in the order of your arrival. If you are unable to connect with me during office hours, or if you wish to discuss matters that are confidential, feel free to request a one-on-one meeting and we will determine a time that works for both of us.

<u>COURSE OUTLINE</u>

<u>Week 1 (Aug 31-Sep 4): Introduction/Measuring Public Opinion</u>
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Appendix: Survey Research Methods.
Nate Silver, "The State of the Polls, 2019," fivethirtyeight.com (11/5/19).
Philip Bump, "The Complex Considerations Undergirding 2020 Polling," *Washington Post* (11/4/19).
Ariel Edwards-Levy, "How Do Americans Feel about Their Finances? It Depends on Whether You Mention Trump," huffpost.com (8/1/17).
Nate Cohn, "No One Picks Up the Phone, but Which Online Polls Are the Answer?" *New York Times* (7/2/19).

<u>Week 2 (Sep 7-11) Voter Competence</u>
Assigned Readings:
Barbara A. Bardes and Robert W. Oldendick, *Public Opinion: Measuring the American Mind*, 5th ed. Ch. 6.
Catherine Rampell, "Americans – Especially But Not Exclusively Trump Voters – Believe Crazy, Wrong Things," *Washington Post* (12/28/16).
Eric W. Dolan, "Study: People with Less Political Knowledge Think They Know a Lot about Politics," *PsyPost* (4/16/18).
Aaron Blake, "A New Study Suggests Fake News Might Have Won Donald Trump the 2016 Election," *Washington Post* (4//3/18).
Elizabeth Suhay, "Science Denial Is Bipartisan," *U.S. News and World Report* (4/8/15).
Andrew Gelman, "Do Shark Attacks Swing Elections?" *Monkey Cage* (10/28/16).

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

<u>Week 3 (Sep 14-18) Partisanship</u>
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 4.
Larry Bartels, "Under Trump, Democrats and Republicans Have Never Been More Divided – on Nearly Everything," *Monkey Cage* (5/21/20).
Yascha Mounk, "Republicans Don't Understand Democrats – and Democrats Don't Understand Republicans," *The Atlantic* (6/23/19).
Sarah E. Croco and Jacob Silverman, "Trump Didn't Shake Hands. Pelosi Ripped Up His Speech. Do Americans Care about Civility?" *Monkey Cage* (2/5/20).
Pew Research Center, "Partisan Differences Over the Pandemic Response Are Growing" (jun 3, 2020).
Michael Tesler, "In 2008, Everyone Thought the Recession Was Bad. But in 2020, Many Americans' Views Depend on Their Party," *Monkey Cage* (6/30/20).
Internet essay #2 due Sep 15 (topic: voter competence)

<u>Week 4 (Sep 21-25) Ideology</u>
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 6.
Ezra Klein, "For Elites, Politics Is Driven by Ideology. For Voters, It's Not," *Vox* (11/9/17).
Robert N. Lupton et al., "Republicans Are the Party of Ideological Inconsistency," *Monkey Cage* (10/2/17).
Lee Drutman, "The Moderate Middle Is a Myth," fivethirtyeight.com (9/24/19).
Robb Willer and Jan Voelkel, "Why Progressive Candidates Should Invoke Conservative Values," *New York Times* (11/30/19).
Sasha Issenberg, "Born This Way: The New Weird Science of Hardwired Political Identity," *New York Magazine* (4/8/12).
Internet essay #3 due Sep 22 (topic: partisanship)

<u>Week 5 (Sep 28-Oct 2) Political Learning: Where Do Our Opinions Come From?</u>
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 7.
Robinson Meyer, "The Grim Conclusions of the Largest-Ever Study of Fake News," *The Atlantic* (3/8/18).
Joshua D. Kertzer and Thomas Zeitzoff, "Elite Cues or Social Cues? The Formation of Public Opinion on Foreign Policy," Harvard University, Weatherhead Center for International Affairs (2/14/17).
Ronald Inglehart, "The Coronavirus May Trigger Tribal Instincts. In Times of Crisis, People Want Strong Leaders," *Monkey Cage* (4/10/20).
Maneesh Arora et al., "What Helps Non-Black People Support Black Lives Matter? A Signal from Someone in Their Own Ethnic Group," *Monkey Cage* (6/18/20).
Joshua P. Darr et al., "No, Trump Isn't Teflon. Scandals Lower His Approval among Republicans – If They See the News," *Monkey Cage* (9/10/19).
Internet essay #4 due Sep 29 (topic: ideology)

<u>Week 6 (Oct 5-9) Social Groups/Conflict and Identity</u>
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 5.
Ronald Brownstein, "There Are Absolutely Two Americas. Sometimes in the Same State," cnn.com (7/20/18).
Erin C. Cassese et al., "How 'Hostile Sexism' Came to Shape Our Politics," *Monkey Cage* (10/2/18).
Andrew L. Whitehead et al., "Despite Porn Stars and Playboy Models, White Evangelicals Aren't Rejecting Trump. Here's Why," *Monkey Cage* (3/26/18).
David Byler, "Millennials Could Push American Politics to the Left – Or Totally Upend Them," *Washington Post* (5/22/19).

Chryl Laird and Ismail White, "Why So Many Black Voters Are Democrats, Even When They Aren't Liberal," *Monkey Cage* (2/26/20).
Internet essay #5 due Oct 6 (topic: political learning)

Week 7 (Oct 12-16) Voting Behavior
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapters 2, 8.
Sam Luks and Brian Schaffner, "New Polling Shows How Much Sexism Is Hurting the Democratic Women Running for President," *Monkey Cage* (7/11/19).
Maggie Koerth, "Does Knowing Whom Others Might Vote for Change Whom You'll Vote For?" fivethirtyeight.com (12/5/19).
Ben Casselman and Jim Tankersley, "The Economy Didn't Save Republicans After All," *New York Times* (11/9/18).
Likhitha Butchireddygari, "Voters Who Think the Economy Is the Country's Biggest Problem Are Pretty Trumpy. That Might Not Help Him Muvh," fivethirtyeight.com (6/6/20).
Justin de Benedictis-Kessner and Chris Warshaw, "A Coronavirus Recession Would Hurt All Kinds of Republican Candidates – Not Just Trump," *Monkey Cage* (3/18/20).
Internet essay #6 due Oct 13 (topic: social groups)

Week 8 (Oct 19-23) Midterm Review/Exam
Internet essay #7 due Oct 20 (topic: voting behavior)

Week 9 (Oct 26-30) Polarization in American Politics
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, review Chapter 4.
Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (Avid Reader Press, 2020), Chapters 1-3.
Alexander Theodoridis and James Martherus, "Trump Is Not the Only One Who Calls Opponents 'Animals.' Democrats and Republicans Do It to Each Other," *Monkey Cage* (5/21/18).
Samara Klar et al., "Is America Hopelessly Polarized, or Just Allergic to Politics," *New York Times* (4/12/19).
Ross Butters and Christopher Hare, "Three-Fourths of Americans Regularly Talk Politics Only with Members of Their Own Political Tribe," *Monkey Cage* (5/1/17).
Greg Martin and Steven Webster, "The Real Culprit Behind Geographic Polarization," *The Atlantic* (11/26/18).

Week 10 (Nov 2-6) Issue Attitudes, Home and Abroad
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, review Chapter 6.
Daniel Treisman, "Why the Poor Don't Vote to Soak the Rich," *Monkey Cage* (2/27/18).
Anne Whitesell and Eleanor Schiff, "Women Who've Been Pregnant Are More Likely to Support Abortion Rights – If You Remind Them of Their Pregnancies," *Monkey Cage* (6/9/19).
Scott Clement and Dan Balz, "Partisan Divisions over Immigration Widen after a Year of Turmoil at Border," *Washington Post* (9/9/19).
Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "Poll Shows a Dramatic Generational Divide in White Evangelical Attitudes on Gay Marriage," *Washington Post* (6/27/17).
Michael Tesler, "Support for Black Lives Matter Surged during Protests, But Is Waning among White Americans," fivethirtyeight.com (8/19/20).
Internet essay #8 due Nov 3 (topic: polarization)

Week 11 (Nov 9-13) Turnout and Participation
Assigned Readings:
Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 3.

Pippa Norris et al., "Why Don't More Americans Vote? Maybe Because They Don't Trust U.S. Elections," *Monkey Cage* (12/26/16).

Russell Dalton, "Why Don't Millennials Vote?" *Monkey Cage* (3/22/16).

Joshua Tucker (channeling Victoria Shineman), "Incentivizing Participation Would Increase Voter Turnout and Political Information," *The Monkey Cage* (11/6/12).

Amber Phillips, "Examining the Arguments against Voting by Mail: Does It Really Lead to Fraud or Benefit Only Democrats?" *Washington Post* (5/20/20).

Larry Buchanan et al., "Black Lives Matter May Be the Largest Movement in U.S. History," *New York Times* (7/3/20).

Internet essay #9 due Nov 10 (topic: issue attitudes)

Week 12 (Nov 16-20) Campaign Effects

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, review Chapter 2.

Maggie Koerth, "How Money Affects Elections," fivethirtyeight.com (9/10/18).

Joshua Kalla and David Broockman, "Persuading Voters Is Hard: That Doesn't Mean Campaigns Should Give Up," *Monkey Cage* (10/11/17).

Sue Halpern, "How Campaigns Are Using Marketing, Manipulation, and 'Psychographic Targeting' to Win Elections – and Weaken Democracy," *The New Republic* (10/18/18).

Erin C. Cassese and Mirya Holman, "Campaign Attacks May Hurt Women Candidates More Than Men – Especially on 'Women's' Issues," *Monkey Cage* (8/31/17).

Kevin Roose, "We Asked for Examples of Election Misinformation. You Delivered," *New York Times* (11/4/18).

Internet essay #10 due Nov 17 (topic: turnout/participation)

Internet essay #11 due Nov 24 (topic: campaign effects)

No class on Nov 24 or Nov 26 (Thanksgiving).

Week 13 (Nov 30-Dec 4) Representation and Linkage

Assigned Readings:

Theiss-Morse et al., *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*, Chapter 1.

John Halpin et al., "Trust in Government in the Trump Era," Center for American Progress (5/24/18).

Bill Bishop, "Americans Have Lost Faith in Institutions. That's Not Because of Trump or 'Fake News.'" *Washington Post* (3/23/17).

Nathan Kalmoe, "A Surprising Number of Americans Endorse Violence Against the Government. Here's Why," *Monkey Cage* (6/14/17).

Tim Wu, "The Oppression of the Supermajority," *New York Times* (3/5/19).

LaGina Gause, "Black People Have Protested Police Killings for Years. Here's Why Officials Are Finally Responding," *Monkey Cage* (6/12/20).

Dec 8: Final exam review, Internet essay #12 due (topic: representation and linkage)