

Fall 2025  
POS 4931

Tues 11:45am-1:40pm  
Thurs 12:50pm-1:40pm

Anderson 101

## *Election Laws and Voting Rights*

Prof. Michael McDonald

### Contact Info

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### Office Hours

W 9:30am-11:30am or by appointment

### **Introduction**

It is fair to say that the American public's interest in election administration is at an all-time high.

The 2000 Florida election revealed how esoteric mechanics of how elections are conducted – punch cards, ballot design, voter roll purging practices, and recount procedures – can affect who is elected president. Twenty years later, these mechanics of election administration arose again as Trump and his supporters challenged the results of the 2020 election, even though Trump's Attorney General Bill Barr – one among many Republican officials expressing similar sentiments – stated, "we have not seen fraud on a scale that could have effected a different outcome in the election."

The last decade also witnessed the Supreme Court's 2013 *Shelby County v Holder* decision, which effectively voided an important section of the Voting Rights Act. States across the country enacted new voting laws ostensibly to combat vote fraud, but opponents charge are intended to suppress votes. This has given way to voting rights organizations using another section of the Voting Rights Act to sometimes successfully challenge these new laws. Other decisions surrounding campaign finance, notably *Citizens United v. FEC*, dramatically changed how campaigns are funded.

In this class we will learn election law and its application to minority voting rights. We will cover the recent evolution of the so-called voting wars to understand how we got to where we are today, and where we are likely to go in the future. Will there be a catastrophic election meltdown? We came close in 2000 and again in 2020. The election law issues we cover will thus likely figure prominently in the courts and among the public moving forward.

## Readings

- Daniel Tokaji. 2024. *Election Law in a Nutshell, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. St. Paul, MN: West Academic Publishing.
- Additional class readings are available on Canvas.

The readings that will be discussed each class are listed below as a Reading Assignment for that day of class.

## Attendance Policy

If you do not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of a course or laboratory in which you are registered, and you have not contacted the department to indicate your intent, you can be dropped from the course. You must not assume that you will be dropped, however. The department will not notify you if you have been dropped from a course or laboratory. You can request reinstatement on a space-available basis if you present documented evidence.

The university recognizes the right of the individual professor to make attendance mandatory (which is the case for this class). After due warning, professors can prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences.

The additional policy for this class is that every student should make the best attempt to attend all classes. A student that **misses four or more classes** without a university-approved excuse (e.g., from the Dean's office, sports department, or other university officials) **will have their overall grade reduced a letter step** (i.e., B to B-). Students do not need, and should not approach the professor, to provide non-university-approved excuses for missing three or fewer classes. A student with ten or more unexcused class absences will receive a failing grade for the entire course and will be barred from attending further classes.

## Graded Work

Grades for this course consist of two midterms, a final, and classroom participation. An grade adjustment may be made for attendance, as described in this syllabus. The weighting of the aspects of the grade are:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Due</u>	<u>% of Overall Grade</u>
Exam 1	Oct 21	45%
Exam 2	Dec 2	50%
Participation		5%

Midterms and exams are given on the assigned dates. Exceptions are given only to students with university-documented excuses. **If you cannot be present for an exam date because of a non-university approved conflict, drop the class now.**

## Participation

Participation will be determined through class discussion and pop quizzes, which may be conducted without warning if attendance lags. As a part of class discussion, the professor may randomly call on students to answer questions on the day's assigned reading. A correct answer will factor positively, a wrong answer or lack of an answer will factor negatively.

## Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	100-92.5
A-	92.4-89.5
B+	89.4-86.5
B	86.4-82.5
B-	82.4-79.5
C+	79.4-76.5
C	76.4-72.5
C-	72.4-69.5
D+	69.4-66.5
D	66.4-62.5
D-	62.4-59.5
E	59.4-0

See the UF Catalog's "[Grades and Grading Policies](#)" for information on how UF assigns grade points.

*Note: A minimum grade of C is required to earn General Education credit.*

## General University Policies

**This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see [this link](#)**

<b>Week 1</b> <b>Aug 21</b>	<b>Thurs: Welcome!</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tokaji Chapter 1</li> </ul>
<b>Week 2</b> <b>Aug 26 &amp; 28</b>	<b>Tues: The 2000 Florida Recount</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hasen Chapter 1 (on Canvas)</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: The Right to Vote</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McDonald Chapter 2 (On Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 3</b> <b>Sept 2 &amp; 4</b>	<b>Tues: The Right to Vote</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tokaji Chapters 2 &amp; 3</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Representation</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mansbridge (on Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 4</b> <b>Sept 9 &amp; 11</b>	<b>Tues: Redistricting 101</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tokaji Chapter 4</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Partisan Gerrymandering</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tokaji Chapter 5</li> <li>• <i>Rucho</i> opinion (on Canvas)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Fla. Const. art. III, §§ 16, 20, 21</a></li> </ul>
<b>Week 5</b> <b>Sept 16 &amp; 18</b>	<b>Tues: Racial Gerrymandering</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tokaji Chapter 6</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Racial Gerrymandering (Con't)</b>
<b>Week 6</b> <b>Sept 23 &amp; 25</b>	<b>Tues: Drawing Effective Minority Districts</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grofman, Handley, and Lublin, Section I and Section II, parts A &amp; B (on Canvas)</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Florida's Congressional Redistricting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> </ul>
<b>Week 7</b> <b>Sep 30 &amp; Oct 2</b>	<b>Tues: Election Administration</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tokaji Chapter 7</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Vote Centers and on Campus In-Person Early Voting</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Douglas Chapter 4 (On Canvas)</li> <li>• Shino and Smith (on Canvas)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 8</b> <b>Oct 7 &amp; 9</b>	<b>Tues:</b> <b>Period 1: Invited Speaker</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Donald Palmer, U.S. Election Assistance Commissioner</li> </ul> <b>Period 2: Issues in Voting Eligibility: Youth Voting</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Douglas Chapter 1 (on Canvass)</li> <li>Wattenberg Chapter 4 (on Canvass)</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Electoral College and Presidential Primaries</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tolbert and Gracey 2018 (on Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 9</b> <b>Oct 14 &amp; 16</b>	<b>Tues: Direct Democracy</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tokaji Chapter 8</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Political Parties</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tokaji Chapter 9</li> </ul>
<b>Week 10</b> <b>Oct 21 &amp; 23</b>	<b>Tues: EXAM 1</b> <b>Thurs: Mail Balloting</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>McDonald Chapter 3 (On Canvass)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 11</b> <b>Oct 28 &amp; 30</b>	<b>Tues: Voting Machines</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hasen Chapter 5</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Election Technology</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Douglas Chapter 5 (On Canvas)</li> <li>Hasen Chapter 6 (on Canvas)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 12</b> <b>Nov 4 &amp; 6</b>	<b>Tues: Campaign Finance</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tokaji Chapter 10</li> </ul> <b>Thurs: Campaign Finance (Con't)</b>
<b>Week 13</b> <b>Nov 11 &amp; 13</b>	<b>Tues: Veterans Day</b> <b>Thurs: Does Money Matter?</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everyone Knows Money Influences Politics ... Except Political Scientists - <a href="#">Link</a></li> <li>Powell (on Canvas)</li> <li>Douglas Chapter 9 (On Canvass)</li> </ul>

<b>Week 14</b> <b>Nov 18 &amp; 20</b>	<b>Tues: Tues: Open Secrets</b> <u>Reading Assignment</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Francia and Herrnson (On Canvass)</li> <li>• <a href="#">Open Secrets</a></li> </ul> <b>Thurs: The 2020 Election</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• McDonald Chapter 5 (On Canvass)</li> </ul>
<b>Week 15</b> <b>Nov 25 &amp; 27</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>
<b>Week 16</b> <b>Dec 2</b>	<b>Tues: EXAM 2</b>
<b>Week 17</b> <b>Dec 12</b>	<b>Fri: FINAL EXAM @ 7:30am-9:30am (If Needed)</b>