This course provides an overview of some of the major research subjects in the field of public opinion, voting behavior and elections. The field is very rich with research on a variety of subjects and we will be able only to sample from a small number of those this semester. We will examine cutting edge research in several subareas and you will obtain some breadth is this research area as well as some depth in parts of it. This semester the course will be more focused on voting, elections, and campaigns, but will also cover some work on public opinion and political communication.

The study of elections (also known as “psephology”) is an intrinsically quantitative field. Elections are about ideas and parties and philosophies and personalities, but ultimately they are about numbers. Who has more votes. The study of public opinion, drawing heavily on survey research data, is similarly a quantitative field of research. As such, you should be familiar with or quickly become familiar with the most commonly used statistical methods in the social sciences, regression analysis and its variants.

While psephology requires the analytic tools of statistical analysis, you should also not have the impression that field is narrow. It is, in fact, amazingly broad. While squarely in political science, the field is by nature interdisciplinary. It draws on sociology in studying groups. It draws on social-psychology in studying attitudes and beliefs. It draws on geography in studying electoral districts. It draws on economics both in the study of the impact of the economy on political decision-making, but also in the study of strategies. It draws on communications studies in studying media effects and it draws on history in setting the contexts of campaigns and elections.

**Required Reading**

There are nine required texts and a number of readings for this course. The books in their order of appearance in the course are:


COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Your course grade will be based on two considerations. Half of your grade is based on your class participation and leadership in class discussions. Each student is responsible for two classes in which they will be discussion leaders and will be assigned several articles in Week 5 on which to be discussion leader. Performance as discussion leader as well as participation in all class discussions will count for half of your grade. You have two choices regarding the other half of your grade. You may either (1.) elect to take a final examination or (2.) write a research paper. You must make this decision by the third week of the class.

Under the research project option you will be responsible for conducting original research on elections, voting behavior, public opinion, or campaigns. The research project must be an independent research project approved by the professor. If one of your PhD fields will be American politics, you are strongly advised to undertake the research paper. If you plan to write a research paper, you must have an approved topic by the fourth week of the class. Your prospectus for your research should be a one page description of your project that explicitly and clearly answers the following questions: (1.) what is the research question? (2.) what data will you be analyzing to answer this question? and (3.) what research methods will you be employing to analyze these data? In addition, include citations to at least three published political science articles, chapters, or books that are relevant to your project. The paper will be due at the time of scheduled final exam for the class.

A note on abbreviations: APSR stands for the American Political Science Review. AJPS stands for the American Journal of Political Science. JOP stands for the Journal of Politics. PRQ stands for Political Research Quarterly. APR stands for American Politics Research. LSQ stands for Legislative Studies Quarterly.

COURSE TOPICS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

** WEEK 1. August 27 **


** WEEK 2. September 3 **

**READ:** Lewis-Beck, Norpoth, Jacoby, and Weisberg, The American Voter Revisited, chapters 1-8.

** WEEK 3. September 10 **

**READ:** Lewis-Beck, Norpoth, Jacoby, and Weisberg, The American Voter Revisited, chapters 9-15 and Afterword.
**WEEK 4. September 17**


**WEEK 5. September 24 – Forecasting Elections**

*READ:* The International Journal of Forecasting Symposium (selections)


The 2008 Presidential Election Forecasts (selections from the October PS)


**WEEK 6. September 31**


**WEEK 7. October 8:**  
*No Class, Yom Kippur*

**WEEK 8. October 15**

*READ:* Hillygus and Shields, *The Persuadable Voter.*

**WEEK 9. October 22**

*READ:* Buell and Sigelman, *Attack Politics.*

**WEEK 10. October 29**

*READ:* Bartels, *Unequal Democracy,* chapters 1-5.
**WEEK 11. November 5**  

**WEEK 12. November 12**  
*READ:* Brader, *Campaigning for Hearts & Minds*.

**WEEK 13. November 19**  
*READ:* Franz, Goldstein, Freedman, Freedman, and Goldstein, *Campaign Advertising and American Democracy*.

**WEEK 14. November 26**  
*No Class: Fall Recess (In plain, politically incorrect language, Thanksgiving)*

**Week 15. December 3**  
*READ:* Brunell, *Redistricting and Representation*.  

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