

## VOTING AND PUBLIC OPINION

PSC 665, Fall 2008  
University at Buffalo, SUNY  
502 Park Hall  
6:00 – 8:50pm Wednesdays

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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 sub-areas and you will obtain some breadth in 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:

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., Helmut Norpoth, William G. Jacoby, and Herbert F. Weisberg. *The American Voter Revisited*, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008). ISBN: 9780472050406.

Campbell, James E. *The American Campaign, Second Edition: U.S. Presidential Campaigns and the National Vote*, (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2008). ISBN: 1585446289.

Popkin, Samuel L., *The Reasoning Voter, Second Edition: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). ISBN: 978-0226675459.

Hillygus, D. Sunshine, and Todd G. Shields. *The Persuadable Voter: Wedge Issues in Presidential Campaigns*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008) ISBN: 9780691133416.

Buell, Jr., Emmett H. and Lee Sigelman, *Attack Politics: Negativity in Presidential Campaigns since 1960*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008). ISBN: 9780700615612.

Bartels, Larry M., *Unequal Democracy: The Political Economy of the New Gilded Age*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 2008). ISBN: 9780691136639.

Brader, Ted, *Campaigning for Hearts & Minds: How Emotional Appeals in Political Ads Work*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). ISBN: 978-0226069890



**WEEK 4. September 17**

*READ:* Campbell, *The American Campaign, Second Edition.*

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

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

- James E. Campbell and Michael S. Lewis-Beck, “U.S. Presidential Election Forecasting: An Introduction,” *International Journal of Forecasting*, 24 (2008): 189-92.
- Alan I. Abramowitz, “It’s About Time: Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election with the Time for a Change Model,” *International Journal of Forecasting*, 24 (2008): 209-17.
- Robert S. Erikson and Christopher Wlezien, “The Economy and the Presidential Vote: What Leading Indicators Reveal Well in Advance,” *International Journal of Forecasting*, 24 (2008): 218-26.
- Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Charles Tien, “Forecasting Presidential Elections: When to Change the Model,” *International Journal of Forecasting*, 24 (2008): 227-36.
- Andrew Sidman, Maxwell Mak, and Matthew J. Lebo, “Forecasting Non-incumbent Presidential Elections: Lessons Learned from the 2000 Election,” *International Journal of Forecasting*, 24 (2008): 237-58.
- James E. Campbell, “Evaluating U.S. Presidential Election Forecasts and Forecasting Equations,” *International Journal of Forecasting*, 24 (2008): 259-71.

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

- James E. Campbell, “Editor’s Introduction: A Symposium on the Forecasting the 2008 National Elections,” PS forthcoming.
- Alan I. Abramowitz, “Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election with the Time-for-Change Model,” PS forthcoming.
- Afred G. Cuzan and Charles M. Bundrick, “Forecasting the 2008 Presidential Election: A Challenge for the Fiscal Model.” PS forthcoming.
- Michael S. Lewis-Beck and Charles Tien, “The Job of the President and the Jobs Model Forecast: Obama for ‘08?” PS forthcoming.
- Brad Lockerbie, “Election Forecasting: The Future of the Presidency and the House,” PS forthcoming.
- James E. Campbell, “The Trial-Heat Forecast of the 2008 Presidential Vote: Performance and Values Considerations in an Open Seat Election,” PS forthcoming.
- Helmut Norpoth, “On the Razor’s Edge: The Forecast of the Primary Model,” PS forthcoming.
- Robert S. Erikson and Christopher Wlezien, “Leading Economic Indicators, the Polls, and the Presidential Vote,” PS forthcoming.

**WEEK 6. September 31**

*READ:* Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter.*

**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**

*READ:* Bartels, *Unequal Democracy*, chapters 6-10.

**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*.  
James E. Campbell and Steve J. Jurek, "The Decline of Competition and Change in Congressional Elections," in *The United States Congress: A Century of Change*, ed. Sunil Ahuja and Robert Dewhirst, (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2003).

