

VOTING AND PUBLIC OPINION

PSC 665, Fall 2017
University at Buffalo, SUNY
502 Park Hall
5:30 – 8:20pm Mondays
Office Hours: 3:30 - 4:30pm Tuesdays & Thursdays and by appointment

Prof. James E. Campbell
522 Park Hall
645-8452
E-mail: jcampbel@buffalo.edu

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 balanced among four subjects: (1.) presidential elections and voting behavior, (2.) political polarization and public opinion, (3.) citizen knowledge and information levels, and (4.) voter turnout.

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. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. (University of Michigan Press). ISBN: 9780472050406.

Campbell, James E. 2008. *The American Campaign: U.S. Presidential Campaigns and the National Vote*, 2nd ed. (Texas A&M University Press). ISBN: 1585446289. **I will give each student a copy.**

Campbell, James E. 2016. *Polarized: Making Sense of a Divided America*. (Princeton University Press). ISBN 978-0-691-17216-3.

Achen, Christopher H. and Larry M. Bartels, 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. (Princeton University Press). ISBN 978-0-691-16944-6.

Lodge, Milton and Charles S. Taber. 2013. *The Rationalizing Voter*. (Cambridge University Press). ISBN 978-0-52-117614-9.

Lupia, Arthur. 2015. *Uninformed: Why People Know So Little About Politics and What We Can Do About It*. (Oxford University Press). ISBN 978-0-19-026372-0.

Hochschild, Jennifer L. and Katherine Levine Einstein, 2015. *Do Facts Matter?: Information and Misinformation in American Politics*. University of Oklahoma Press, ISBN 978-0-806-15590-6.

Rolfe, Meredith. 2012. *Voter Turnout: A Social Theory of Political Participation*. (Cambridge University Press). ISBN: 978-1-107-61798-8.

Leighley, Jan E. and Jonathan Nagler. 2013. *Who Votes Now?: Demographics, Issues, Inequality, and Turnout in the United States*. (Princeton University Press). ISBN 978-0-691-15935-5.

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. Performance as discussion leaders 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 fourth week of the class.

Discussion Leader: Every student will be assigned to be a discussion leader for two weeks. For the meetings in which you are a discussion leader you should be *especially* well versed about the week's reading and should help direct the class discussion, either through questions or comments designed to provoke further analysis of the reading, its methodological soundness, its theoretical contribution, its general importance, and implications for other research. As a discussion leader or team, you should present a brief (no more than 8 to 10 minutes total) summary of the book at the beginning of the class meeting. You should clearly present the following information:

- (1.) what is the research question and hypotheses?
- (2.) why is the research question important?
- (3.) how did the authors attempt to answer the research question (what were the data and how were they analyzed)? and
- (4.) what was the answer to the research question?

You should *not* present a lengthy summary of the book. After this brief presentation and any clarifying questions from other class participants, your responsibility is to raise questions and offer commentary to spur discussion in order to illuminate the quality and importance of the research presented in the book.

Class Participation. Active class discussion and preparation is a major component of any good seminar. It should go without saying, but I will say it in any case, that attendance at and preparation for every class meeting is expected. Discussion leaders are there to facilitate discussion among ALL members of the class. Be prepared to discuss the reading. It should also go without saying, but I will say it: you are expected to bring your copy of the week's book to each class discussing a book. Each student, whether leading the discussion or not, should be well-prepared and should participate actively and thoughtfully in the class discussions.

Each student will also be assigned 2 weeks in which he or she is required to prepare in writing a critical (positive, neutral, or negative) comment or question regarding the week's reading. These are the **reading observation papers**. This need not be more than a single paragraph. They should be sent via e-mail to other members of the class no later than 11pm of the Sunday evening before the Monday night class. These comments will usually be read for reactions by the class. The comments should concern the reading as political science and *absolutely not as literature*. That is, comments regarding whether or not you think that a book is well-written are NOT appropriate for these observation papers. You will not receive a grade on these papers per se, unless they are unacceptable. However, your grade for participation may be affected by how insightful these papers are about the readings.

I will assign the discussion leader assignments by a random draft at the first class meeting and observation note assignments will be linked to your discussion leader week's assignment. Late registrants to the course will be assigned to achieve balance in coverage of the material.

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. JANUARY 30: Introduction

View and discuss portions of:

Harvard Institute of Politics Conference: Jake Tapper, Kellyanne Conway, Robby Mook
<http://iop.harvard.edu/forum/war-stories-inside-campaign-2016>
Theda Skocpol, "Understanding Election 2016" (Skocpol Lecture, Not Panel Discussion)
<https://www.buffalo.edu/president/programs/critical-conversations/Skocpol.html>

WEEK 2. FEBRUARY 6:

Presidential Campaigns I

Read: The 2016 Presidential Campaign

Dan Balz and Philip Rucker, 2016 "An oral history of 2016—How Donald Trump won: The insiders tell their story" *The Washington Post*, November 9, 2016
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/2016-election/how-donald-trump-won-the-inside-story/>
Cook Political Report Staff, 2016. "56 Interesting Facts about the 2016 Election,"
The Cook Political Report, December 16, 2016.
Pew Research Center, 2015. *Beyond Distrust: How Americans View Their Government*.
Introduction and Chapter 7.
Republican Party Primary and Caucus Exit Poll Summary.
Campbell, 2014. "A look at past elections shows that the 2016 presidential race will be extremely tight," *LSE Blogs* (London School of Economics and Political Science) (4/23/14).
Economic Growth during the Obama Presidency (from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Percent change in Gross Domestic Product (quarterly) from the end of the Great Recession
Campaign Finance Summary from Open Secrets, Center for Responsive Politics. 2016. "2016 Presidential Race," (Campaign Finance Report) <http://www.opensecrets.org/pres16>
Gallup Poll. 2016. Favorables/Unfavorables of Candidates, Overall and Within the Candidate's Party (Oct. 8 to Nov. 8)
Real Clear Politics. 2016. Means of Candidate Preferences (Data Series)
ABC News/Washington Post Poll. "2016 Election Tracking No. 10: Strong Enthusiasm Ebbs for Clinton; Trump is +1 in Vote Pref." November 1, 2016.
CBS News/New York Times Poll. 2016. "The 2016 Election: A Lead for Clinton with One Day to Go," November 2-6, 2016.

Fox News Poll. 2016. November 7, 2016.

Campbell, 2016. "So, Where Does This Race Stand? Underlying Dynamics Suggest the Climate Is Tough For a Status Quo Candidate," *New York Daily News*, November 3, 2016. <http://www.nydailynews.com/opinion/james-campbell-race-stand-article-1.2857045>

CNN. 2012 and 2016. National Exit Polls (and the National and State votes).

Election Forecasting

Campbell, 2016. "Introduction: Forecasting the 2016 American National Elections," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 49 (4), pp. 649-53.

Campbell, 2016. "The Trial-Heat and Seats-in-Trouble Forecasts of the 2016 Presidential and Congressional Elections," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 49 (4), pp. 664-68.

Campbell, 2016. "Seeing the Forest for the Trees: Presidential Election Forecasts and the Fundamentals," *Sabato's Crystal Ball* website (9/22/16).

Campbell, 2017. "A Recap of the 2016 Election Forecasts: Introduction" *PS: Political Science & Politics*, forthcoming April 2017.

WEEK 3. FEBRUARY 6:

Presidential Campaigns II

READ: Campbell, 2008. *The American Campaign*

Recent Presidential Campaigns

Campbell, 2010. "The Exceptional Election of 2008: Performance, Values, and Crisis," *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, v.40, n.2 (June 2010), pp. 225-46.

Campbell, 2013. "The Miserable Presidential Election of 2012: A First Party-Term Incumbent Survives," *The Forum*, v.10, n.4 (February 2013) pp.20-28.

WEEK 4. FEBRUARY 20

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

WEEK 5. FEBRUARY 27

READ: Lewis-Beck, Norpoth, Jacoby, and Weisberg, *The American Voter Revisited*. Chapters 9-15 and Afterword.

WEEK 6. MARCH 6

READ: Campbell, *Polarized*. Chapters 1-5 and appendices A & B.

WEEK 7. MARCH 13

READ: Campbell, *Polarized*. Chapters 6-9.

MARCH 20: NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8. MARCH 27

READ: Achen and Bartels, *Democracy for Realists*. Chapters 1-6.

WEEK 9. APRIL 3

READ: Achen and Bartels, *Democracy for Realists*. Chapters 7-11 and appendix.

WEEK 10. APRIL 10

READ: Lodge and Taber, *The Rationalizing Voter*.

WEEK 11. APRIL 17

READ: Lupia, *Uninformed*.
Huckfeldt, Robert. 2017. "Interdependence, Communication, and Aggregation: Transforming Voters into Electorates," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, 50 (1), pp. 3-11.

WEEK 12. APRIL 24

READ: Hochschild and Einstein, *Do Facts Matter?*

WEEK 13. MAY 1

READ: Rolfe, *Voter Turnout*.

WEEK 14. MAY 8

READ: Leighley and Nagler, *Who Votes Now?*

