

POLS V 3250
VOTING AND POLITICAL BEHAVIOR
BARNARD COLLEGE/COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, DIANA CENTER 504
SPRING 2015, MONDAY/WEDNESDAY, 11:40-12:55

INSTRUCTOR:

Michael G. Miller* Email: mgmiller@barnard.edu
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* Email is by far the best way for students to reach me.

OFFICE HOURS

Always:	Other Times:
Mon 10:00-11:30	By Apt.
Weds 10:00-11:30	

TEACHING ASSISTANT:

Giancarlo Visconti Email: gv2214@columbia.edu
Office: IAB 741

OFFICE HOURS

Always:	Other Times:
Thurs 3:00-4:00	By Apt.

This course explores causes and effects of political behavior in the United States. “Political behavior” is a broad concept, and can include many areas of engagement with civic life. Here, we will focus quite a lot on voting behavior, but will also spend considerable time discussing why people engage in other behaviors such as contributing to or volunteering for candidates, how they interpret information and use it to form preferences, and how external forces can affect individuals’ propensity to participate. We will focus primarily on mass politics—beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of ordinary citizens rather than of activists or elites—in the United States. However, we will also explore the effect of elite behavior on mass behavior. We will also focus on the interconnections between social structure, culture, and politics.

In short, this course will focus on developing an understanding of the mechanisms that drive voting, contributing, and other political activism. While the course will be taught almost exclusively through the lens of American politics, many of the lessons can be applied to other countries as well.

Classes will be lecture-driven. I do not require a pre-requisite introductory course in United States government, but I do highly recommend it.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

This course will introduce students to the concepts, major themes, and debates in the study of American political behavior. Students who complete the class will learn how to:

1. Differentiate between various forms of political participation.
2. Identify the major debates in the study of both mass and elite political behavior.
3. Consider the manner in which people respond to external stimuli that might affect their political behavior in both the near- and long-term.
4. Critically engage media coverage of the electoral system, government, and mass participation.
5. Assess the theoretical and/or empirical quality of academic arguments about political behavior in the American context.
6. Use empirical evidence and cited academic sources to present an effective argument.

COURSE TEXTS

These books are available for purchase at the Columbia University Bookstore. In nearly all cases, you'll also be able to find the books for this course online, either new or used.

Required Texts

Flanigan, William H., et al. 2014. *Political Behavior of the American Electorate*. CQ Press. **13th Ed.**

Green, Donald, and Allen Gerber. 2008. *Get Out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout*, Brookings Press. **2nd Edition**

Lewis-Beck, Michael S., et al. 2008. *The American Voter Revisited*. University of Michigan Press.

Other Readings

Many of the course readings may come from works not included above. Links to these will be provided most of the time via Courseworks. At other times, works may be placed on either electronic or paper reserve. In either case, students are responsible for obtaining readings via the library regardless of whether electronic links are provided.

COURSE RULES, GUIDELINES, AND SUGGESTIONS

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING:

All students will complete two exams and two papers (see below for a description of all assignments). Course grades will be based on the percentage of 100 total points that students obtain based on their performance on these four components.

Exams (30 points each)

There will be two exams. The midterm will be on March 11, and the final—which is cumulative in focus—will occur during the final exam period. The exam condition is closed-note and in-class, with format consisting of two long-answer essays. I will provide students with a minimum of four long-answer essay questions at least one week before the exam date. Two of these will be randomly drawn in class on the day of the exam.

Exams will require you to refer to information from lectures, reading, and in some cases, political events in the world. I rarely lecture “from the book.” That fact, combined with a fairly robust list of required reading, make both keeping up with the reading and class attendance crucially important for success in this class.

Response Paper: (10 points) Due February 13

This assignment is a paper of about 1,500 words (5 pages or so) in response to a prompt that I will provide. Students will have the choice of at least three questions to engage, and should develop a well-sourced, critical response. A more detailed description of this assignment will be provided.

Final Paper: Engaging Conventional Wisdom Papers (30 points) Due April 18

This assignment is a paper of about 3,000 words (10 pages or so) on a topic of the student's choosing, approved by me. Students will identify a piece of “conventional wisdom” about American political behavior that is held as fact by the media or pundits. The student will identify at least three instances in which this conventional wisdom has been communicated via the mass media. The student will then present a **critical academic argument** refuting that conventional wisdom, backed by cited, scholarly sources. Encyclopedias, including online versions, will not be allowed as sources.

This paper is intended to encourage evidence-based argument. The best papers will accomplish at least three crucial tasks:

1. Trace the evolution of the conventional wisdom and consider why the media get it wrong,
2. Consider how the conventional wisdom affects debate about politics in the United States, as people most often encounter it.
3. Consider whether correcting misperceptions about political behavior might affect real-world phenomena such as elections or public policy.

A more detailed description of this assignment will be provided.

DUE DATES AND SUBMISSION

I will only accept work submitted via CourseWorks, which saves you the trouble of printing and aids organization on my end. Submitted files must include the student's name, both in the document **and** the final name. Work is due **before** midnight on the date due. **Late work will not be accepted for credit.** That said, if you need an extension, **ask.** I will make reasonable accommodations for what I feel are good reasons. But try to avoid making these requests the day before an assignment is due, and have a well-documented rationale for doing so.

Students wishing to reschedule an assignment due to “academic burden” such as exams for other classes occurring within a certain period of time must show an approved petition from Barnard or Columbia administration—note that these are generally only obtainable for final exams. Finally, a grade of *Incomplete* will be assigned only in well-documented and exceptional circumstances, such as a Texas-sized meteor impacting Earth, the Minnesota Vikings winning the Super Bowl, or a zombie apocalypse.

RULES FOR STYLE

Use a standard Times font in 12-point size, double-spaced with one-inch margins. Please number and staple your pages, if applicable. Papers should include a title page. Please proofread and spell-check all drafts before bringing them to class. I prefer citation style recommended by the American Political Science Association, but you should use any style with which you are comfortable, so long as you are consistent throughout. That said, no end notes are allowed.

ASSISTANCE AND ACCOMMODATIONS

I respect and uphold applicable college/university policies pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically disabled, visually and/or hearing impaired students, and students with documented learning disabilities; discrimination based on age, race, ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, or religion; and all forms of harassment. I am willing to audio-record and share class sessions for students missing class due to religious holidays or for some other acceptable reason, provided sufficient advance notice. In compliance with Barnard/Columbia policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. The Office of Disability Services (008 Milbank) is a useful resource for students who need assistance. Students who need accommodations must coordinate through ODS, and I ask that you inform me early in the semester. Finally, I reserve the right—at my discretion—to make accommodations for students who are parents of young children, or who are active-duty members of the United States Armed Forces, as necessary. Regardless of reason, students should not hesitate to contact me to discuss any special accommodations they may need.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Students have the responsibility of fulfilling their academic obligations in a fair and honest manner. This includes avoiding plagiarism, cheating, collusion or other inappropriate activities. Examples of “plagiarism” include, but are not limited to: copying word-for-word or altering small components of a text, with or without attribution, or borrowing core ideas from others without citing. Ignorance of these rules does not excuse a failure to comply with them, and I will strictly enforce the Barnard Honor Code (BHC) in all appropriate areas. Students engaging in these or any other intellectually dishonest activities will receive no credit for the applicable assignment, and may face additional disciplinary sanctions (such as probation, suspension, etc.) per the BHC, after referral to applicable administrative units. The responsibility for understanding the BHC lies with the student. The plagiarism policy is available at <http://firstyear.barnard.edu/firstyear/plagiarism/introduction>

COMMUNICATION AND AVAILABILITY:

If you want to communicate with me, email is by far the most efficient method—certainly more so than my office phone. Student correspondence is my top email priority, and I will almost always reply within 6 hours. Note however that I will generally not reply to email after 11 PM, because I am an old man with no life and often cannot stay awake past 10:30. When communicating via email, I remind students that email should generally be composed with a professional tone, especially if we do not know each other well. This is good practice as you transition to the workplace.

It is the student’s responsibility to ensure enrollment in CourseWorks and to check Barnard/Columbia email, preferably daily, since this is how I will communicate with you outside of class. If you prefer another email address, set up forwarding from your Barnard/Columbia address.

As to availability, I am here to help you and am generally at your service. I am happy to meet with students outside of my normal office hours, either in person or via Skype. If you cannot make office hours but require additional assistance, do not hesitate to let me know and I will make every reasonable effort to accommodate you.

RULES FOR DISCUSSION

Politics can be a tricky topic. Open and free discussion is encouraged in our class, and all viewpoints are welcome in my classroom. Please be respectful of your fellow students and your instructor. With regard to the latter, I ask that you do not pack your things before class is over. If someone is still speaking, we should all still be listening.

Much of what we will discuss in this class is subjective. The strength of class sessions will therefore depend on students’ willingness and ability to argue. However, it is important that you argue well. The binding rule for discussion in this class is *The Fairness in Conversation Act* (FICA), which exists by my dictatorial authority.¹ Per FICA, the use of what I call “Jedi logic” (making unfounded assertions with the wave of a hand) is illegal and punishable by public challenge. FICA is intended to foster evidence-based critical argument. I will say more about this in class.

¹I have unapologetically re-purposed this idea from Paul Allen, Minneapolis sports talk radio personality.

LAPTOPS, TABLETS, AND CELL PHONES

Inappropriate use of electronic devices during class time provides a distraction for instructor and student alike. There is a recent group of studies suggesting that use of laptops for note-taking in university classes reduces students' final grades by roughly one mark. Moreover, the same studies suggest the existence of a "secondhand smoke" effect as students near the laptop user are distracted by its screen. I believe that everyone has the right to make their own choices, but consider this clause your "surgeon general's warning" and understand that, guided by social science, I am taking steps to protect those around you. So, if you are not taking notes on your device, please leave it at home. If you use a device for note-taking during class, you must sit in the designated seats for device-users, and know that I will probably call on you first.

Finally, please know that one of my personal foibles is that I find student texting in-class to be very distracting. As such, I do not want to see your phones in class, nor are you allowed to text under the table. Phones should be silenced or powered down. If you use any device in a distracting fashion and/or one that is not related to the class (**including texting**), I reserve the right to ask you to leave. So to be clear: If the usage of your phone is more important than engaging with the course, you are welcome to not attend. In the event of an emergency, please step out to use your phone.

SYLLABUS CHANGES

Changes in the syllabus may be made from time to time in order to correct errors, adjust the schedule, fine tune course details, or to address unforeseen issues. Changes will be discussed and announced in class. It is the student's responsibility to attend class to be aware of any syllabus changes. The official syllabus will always be available in CourseWorks.

COURSE CALENDAR

Lectures will follow this schedule approximately. Regardless of whether we are ahead or behind of the lecture schedule, students should keep up with the assigned reading on this calendar.

Week 1 (January 21): Introduction and Fundamentals

Required Reading:

Lewis-Beck et al. Ch. 1-2.

Week 2 (January 26 and 28): Primer on Political Science Research Methods

Required Reading:

Flanigan et. al Appendix.

Druckman, James N., Donald P. Green, James H. Kuklinski, and Arthur Lupia. 2006. "The Growth and Development of Experimental Research in Political Science." *American Political Science Review* 100(4): 627-635.

Fenno, Richard F., Jr. 1986. "Observation, Context, and Sequence in the Study of Politics." *American Political Science Review* 80(1): 3-15.

Week 3 (February 2 and 4): Culture, Democracy, and Civic Engagement

Required Reading:

Verba et al. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Ch. 9-10.

Rozell, Mark J., and Mark Caleb Smith. 2012. "Religious Conservatives and the Transformation of Southern Politics." In *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*. Charles S. Bullock III and Mark J. Rozell, eds. Oxford University Press.

Black, Merle and Earl Black. 2012. "Deep South Politics: The Enduring Racial Division in National Elections." In *The Oxford Handbook of Southern Politics*. Charles S. Bullock III and Mark J. Rozell, eds. Oxford University Press.

Week 4 (February 9 and 11): Getting Out the Vote 1: History and Basics

Required Reading:

Flanigan et. al Ch. 3

Lewis-Beck et al. Ch. 5

Bensel, Richard. 2004. *The American Ballot Box in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge. Ch. 2.

Green and Gerber. Ch. 1

Week 5 (February 16 and 18): Getting Out the Vote 2: Who Votes and Why

Required Reading:

Green and Gerber. Ch. 2-10.

Week 6 (February 23 and 25): Party and Partisanship

Required Reading:

Flanigan et. al Ch. 4

Lewis-Beck et al. Ch. 3-4, 6

Week 7 (March 2 and 4): Issues, Ideology, and Vote Choice

Required Reading:

Flanigan et. al Ch. 5

Lewis-Beck et al. Ch. 7-8

Week 8 (March 9): Catchup and Continuance

*****MARCH 11: MIDTERM EXAM*****

Week 9 (March 23 and 25): Beyond Party: Political Networks and Collective Interest

Required Reading:

Flanigan et. al Ch. 6

Lewis-Beck et al. Ch. 11-13.

Olson, Mancur. *The Logic of Collective Action*.1-22, 33-52

Week 10 (March 30 and April 1): Media and Behavior

Required Reading:

Flanigan et. al Ch. 7

Prior, Markus. 2007. *Post-Broadcast democracy: How Media Choice Increases Inequality in Political Involvement and Polarizes Elections*. Ch. 2, 7.

Iyengar, Shanto, and Donald R. Kinder, 2010. *News That Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Ch. 3-4

Week 11 (April 6 and 8): Electoral Strategy and Campaign Behavior

Required Reading:

Flanigan et. al Ch. 2-3

Lewis-Beck et al. Ch. 14

Miller, Michael G. 2015. "The Power of an Hour: Candidate Effort in State Legislative Elections." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*. Forthcoming.

Allen, Kristen, et al. 2015. "Office Space: A Geo-Spatial Analysis of the Effects of Field Offices on Voter Turnout." Typescript.

Week 12 (April 13 and 15): Campaigns and Information

April 13: Do Campaigns Matter?

Required Reading:

Gerber, Alan. 2004. "Does Campaign Spending Work? Field Experiments Provide Evidence and Suggest New Theory." *American Behavioral Scientist* 41: 541-574.

Jacobson, Gary C. 2014. "Do Campaigns Matter?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 18

April 15: Knowledge and Perception

Required Reading:

Delli Carpini Michael, and Scott Keeter. 1997. *What Americans Know About Politics and Why it Matters*. Ch 2-3.

Zaller, John R. 1992. *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Cambridge University Press. Ch. 2-3.

Week 13 (April 20 and 22): Misperception and Rationality

April 20: Misperception

Required Reading:

Nyhan, Brendan, and Jason Reifler. 2010. "When Corrections Fail: The Persistence of Political Misperception." *Political Behavior* 32(2): 303-330.

Dowling, Conor, Michael Henderson, and Michael G. Miller. 2015. "How Long Does New Knowledge Last? The Enduring Quality of Political Misperception." Typescript.

April 22: Economics and Behavior

Required Reading:

Bartels, Larry. 2005. "Homer Gets a Tax Cut: Inequality and Public Policy in the American Mind." *Perspectives on Politics* 1(1): 15-31.

MacKuen, Michael B., Robert S. Erikson, and James A. Stimson. 1992. "Peasants or Bankers? The American Electorate and the U.S. Economy." *American Political Science Review* 86(3): 597-611.

Week 14 (April 27 and 29): Exogenous Shocks and Clientelism

April 27: Seemingly Unrelated Events

Required Reading:

Achen, Christopher, and Larry Bartels. 2012. "Blind Retrospection: Why Shark Attacks are Bad for Democracy." Typescript.

Healy, Andrew J., Neil Malhotra, and Cecilia Hyunjung Mo. 2010. "Irrelevant Events Affect Voters' Evaluations of Government Performance." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. 107(29): 12804-12809.

April 29: Clientelism

Required Reading:

Kitschelt, Herbert, and Steven Wilkinson. 2007. "Citizen-Politician Linkages: An Introduction." In *Patrons, Clients, and Policies: Patterns of Democratic Accountability and Political Competition*. H. Kitschelt and S. Wilkinson, eds. Cambridge University Press.

Stokes, Susan, Thad Dunning, Marcelo Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco. 2013. *Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism: The Puzzle of Distributive Politics*. Cambridge University Press, Chapter 8 (What Killed Vote Buying in Britain and the United States).

Weitz-Shapiro, Rebecca. 2012. "What wins votes: Why some politicians opt out of clientelism." *American Journal of Political Science* 56(3).

*****FRIDAY MAY 8: FINAL EXAM, 9 AM*****