

United States National Elections
POLI 412H
Spring 2017

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| PROFESSOR | Jason M. Roberts |
| OFFICE | Hamilton Hall 315 |
| OFFICE HOURS | Thursday 1:30-4:30 and by appointment |
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| LOCATION | Phillips 228 |
| TIME | Tues/Thurs 9:30-10:45 |

Course Description

This course is an in-depth study of the dynamics of American presidential and congressional elections. The first half of the course will focus on the connection between elections and governing. We will then explore historical patterns in presidential nominations and elections, considering how they have or have not changed over the past two election cycles. The second half of the course will focus on topic related to the mechanics of voting and congressional elections. Topics will include the incumbency advantage, the role of strategic politicians, the impact of money in congressional elections, and differences between House and Senate races.

Expectations

I expect all students to behave professionally in this class. I am generally intolerant of disruptive behavior in the classroom, including talking during lectures, reading newspapers, and ESPECIALLY the ringing of cell phones. Class discussions are expected to be civil, rational, and respectful of the opinions of others. Although class attendance is not mandatory, the course will be structured like a seminar. You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings. Students with poor attendance or who do not participate in a meaningful way will receive low scores for course engagement.

Class Discussion

This course will be run as a seminar. Students will sign up to write discussion question and facilitate class discussion. The instructor will provide topic overviews, context, and guidance in keeping the discussion on topic. Students should come to class prepared to discuss the assigned readings for each day.

Required Texts

- Achen, Christopher H. and Larry Bartels. 2016. *Democracy for Realists: Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton University Press.

- Issenberg, Sasha. 2013. *The Victory Lab: The Secret Science of Winning Campaigns*. Broadway Books.
- Cohen, Marty et al. 2008. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform*. University of Chicago Press.
- Jacobson, Gary J. and Jamie L. Carson. 2016. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*. 9th Edition. Rowman and Littlefield
- Other assigned readings will be posted to Sakai.

Course Requirements

Exams (2) 50% Exams will be taken in class and will consist of free response and essay questions.

Writing Assignment 35% The paper will be due April 13, 2017. Details on the writing assignment will be posted to Sakai.

Class Engagement 15% The instructor will evaluate your participation and engagement in this course through monitoring of attendance, participation, and discussion questions.

Miscellany

Grading and Makeups

A final grade of “incomplete” will only be given in this course under exceptional circumstances and is solely at the discretion of the instructor. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one letter grade per day late. In addition, written assignments that do not follow the guidelines of the assignment and/or have poor grammar and spelling will be severely penalized. As a general rule, make-ups for exams will not be given. Students who must miss exams because of scheduled activities of an official University student organization, a religious holiday, or a verifiable illness should contact the instructor IN ADVANCE of missing an exam so that alternative arrangements can be made.

Assignments

You are responsible for keeping a copy of all written assignments for the course. This ensures that we will not run into problems with lost assignments. You are also responsible for keeping copies of the assignments once they are handed back. Sometimes errors do happen, and a grade may not be recorded for you. If this happens you must be able to produce the GRADED paper to verify that the assignment was completed and that the grade is correct.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is broadly defined as submitting work that is not your own without attribution, and is not acceptable in this or any other academic course. Any academic dishonesty found on an assignment results in a failing grade for that assignment and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent permissible under University of North Carolina guidelines, which can be accessed at: <http://honor.unc.edu>.

Student Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability condition (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, systemic, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations should contact the instructor and the Academic Success Program (919-962-7227) at the beginning of the semester.

Instructor Availability

If you would like to speak with me outside of class time, feel free to stop by my office during regularly scheduled office hours. If you are unable to meet during office hours, you can arrange an alternate time to see me by setting up an appointment. I also respond quickly to email inquiries.

Communication

Periodically the professor may communicate with students via email, regarding assignments, schedule changes, or other course related matters. Students are responsible for the content of *all* such communications.

Tentative Course Outline

| Date | Description | Required Readings |
|--------------|---------------------------|--|
| January 12 | Introduction | Silver1, Silver2, Silver3, Noonan |
| January 17 | Ideals and Reality | <i>Democracy</i> Chs. 1-2 |
| January 19 | “Pure” Democracy | <i>Democracy</i> Ch. 3 |
| January 24 | Retrospection | <i>Democracy</i> Chs. 4-5 |
| January 26 | It’s the Economy, Stupid | <i>Democracy</i> Ch. 6 |
| January 31 | Great Depression | <i>Democracy</i> Ch. 7 |
| February 2 | Groups and Identities | <i>Democracy</i> Chs 8-9 |
| February 7 | Realism | <i>Democracy</i> Ch. 10-11 |
| February 9 | Nominations I | <i>Party Decides</i> Chs. 1-2, Prokop |
| February 14 | Nominations II | <i>Party Decides</i> Chs. 3-5 |
| February 16 | Nominations III | <i>Party Decides</i> Chs. 6-7 |
| February 21 | Nominations IV | <i>Party Decides</i> Chs. 8-9 |
| February 23 | Mea Culpa | Cohen et al. |
| February 28 | MIDTERM EXAM | n/a |
| March 2 | Voting I | <i>Foley, Wand</i> |
| March 7 | Voting II | Ahlquist, Hajnal et al., Roberts |
| March 9 | Science | <i>Victory Lab</i> Chs. 1, 2 |
| March 14 | SPRING BREAK | n/a |
| March 16 | SPRING BREAK | n/a |
| March 21 | Door Knocking | <i>Victory Lab</i> Chs. 3, 4 |
| March 23 | Eggheads | <i>Victory Lab</i> Chs. 6-8 |
| March 28 | Congressional Elections I | <i>Cong. Elections</i> Ch. 2 |
| March 30 | Candidates | <i>Cong. Elections</i> Ch. 3 , Maestas |
| April 4 | Primaries | <i>Slingshot</i> , TBA |
| April 6 | NO CLASS – MPSA | n/a |
| April 11 | Voters | <i>Cong. Elections</i> , Ch. 5 |
| April 13 | Money | <i>Cong. Elections</i> , Ch. 4, Heberlig |
| April 18 | Gerrymandering | McCarty |
| April 20 | National Tides | <i>Cong. Elections</i> Ch. 6 |
| April 25 | TBA | TBA |
| April 27 | Wrapup | n/a |
| May 5 - 8:00 | FINAL EXAM | n/a |