POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS

POLS 125
University of Vermont
Fall 2015
MWF 2:20-3:10 PM
Lafayette Hall, Room 100

CONTACT INFORMATION

Dr. Deborah L. Guber
Associate Professor of Political Science
519 Old Mill

Phone: 656-4062
E-mail: Deborah.Guber@uvm.edu
Internet: http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/

Office hours: MW 10:45-11:45, 1:00-2:00 PM (and by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines U.S. national elections and political parties. Topics to be discussed (among others) include electoral realignments throughout history, voting for President and Congress, party competition, voter turnout, incumbency advantage, and the electoral foundations of divided party control of government.

The course has several objectives—

1) To introduce students to important literature in the field, developing familiarity with basic theories of party organization, election mechanics, and voting behavior;

2) To apply these concepts to recent electoral strategies in both presidential and congressional campaigns;

3) To assess the current state of American electoral politics by probing deeper questions surrounding electoral systems and policy response, democratic accountability, and collective responsibility for political outcomes.

REQUIRED READING

The following books are required and may be purchased at the college bookstore:

  ISBN: 9780495899167
CLASS REQUIREMENTS

Our emphasis throughout the semester will be on critical thinking and the development of strong, analytical writing skills. Graded assignments are designed to evaluate your growth in these areas. Assignments are also designed to give you many opportunities, using different skills, to build a strong grade in this course.

1) A large part of your final grade (30%) will be determined by a take-home paper due at the end of term. This work must be submitted no later than Friday, December 11 at 10:30 AM.

2) Two essay-based exams will be administered in class, each worth 30% of your final grade. The dates for these are Monday, October 19 and Wednesday, December 2.

3) Finally, your active participation and attendance is essential to the effectiveness of this class. It will account for the remaining 10% of your grade.

The following rules regarding assigned work are important. Please read this syllabus carefully before deciding to enroll in class. All students are expected to read, understand, and abide by these policies:

In fairness to others, students are not permitted to do “extra credit,” either to compensate for a poor grade or a missed class. Since a total of four grades cumulate to determine your final grade (and no one assignment dominates), there are plenty of opportunities to improve your standing.

If a student misses an exam for reasons that are both serious and outside of their control, they may make up that work, but only on a set day and time at the end of the semester. During the Fall 2015 term, make-up work is scheduled for Wednesday, December 9 from 3:30-4:30 PM.

Due dates on final papers are set by the Registrar’s Office at the beginning of the term and cannot be rescheduled, except under the conditions described in the course catalog. Written documentation of need must be provided.
### GRADING STANDARDS

The grades I assign are based on the following criteria:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92-100</td>
<td>A (Excellent (A range))</td>
<td>Grades in the &quot;A&quot; range are reserved for work that is superior in quality. &quot;A&quot; papers are lively, interesting, and intellectually sophisticated. The writer develops a clear and creative thesis, and supports their argument with solid and persuasive evidence. The paper itself is polished and beautifully written, free of grammatical and typographical errors. Above all, &quot;A&quot; papers reflect originality. The writer’s own voice and logic are present on the page.</td>
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<tr>
<td>90-91</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>88-89</td>
<td>B+ (Good (B range))</td>
<td>Grades in the “B” range reflect work that is good to very good in quality. The paper completes all of the requirements of the assignment at hand. It may have minor errors and flaws, but the foundation of the work is solid, clear, and reasonably well-organized. “B” papers address topics in a thoughtful way, but offer less insight and originality than “A” papers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>82-87</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-81</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78-79</td>
<td>C+ (Fair (C range))</td>
<td>A “C” paper represents work that is satisfactory. The writer offers a thesis, but it is usually too broad, or too vague. The paper tends to make assertions without offering specific examples or supporting evidence from class lectures, discussions, and reading assignments. The overall impression of the paper is that of a rough draft. More effort at revision is encouraged and spelling and grammatical errors often require correction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72-77</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-71</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-69</td>
<td>D+ (Poor (D range))</td>
<td>A “D” paper is an unsatisfactory paper. It is sloppy, incoherent and poorly written, marred by mechanical faults (e.g., errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling), and/or factual errors. The writer has difficulty developing an idea, and holding a paragraph together. The thesis of the paper—that is, what the paper is arguing—is usually absent or incomplete.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62-67</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-61</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≤ 59</td>
<td>F (Failing (F))</td>
<td>A failing grade is given for work that is exceedingly poor, cannot be understood, or has little relevance to the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No Credit (0)</td>
<td>A grade of “zero” is given for any work that is not completed.</td>
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</table>

### CLASS ATTENDANCE

Attendance accounts for 10% of your final grade in this class. It is recorded by your signature on the attendance sheets passed around in class each day. All students receive two excused absences to cover minor illnesses and family emergencies, but 10 points will be deducted from your attendance grade for every class you miss after the first two. In other words, if you miss class frequently it is possible for your score to fall into negative numbers.

If either of your excused absences remain unused at the end of term, I will apply those to your attendance score, but please note that you may NOT use them for frivolous events.
(e.g., oversleeping, skiing, a shopping trip to Montreal, etc.) and then request more later when serious circumstances develop.

You need also to be aware of the following:

- You are solely responsible for making sure you sign the attendance sheet before leaving class. If you do not, your name cannot be added at a later point.

- Any student involved in the forgery of signatures—either on the “giving” or “receiving” end—will receive an automatic zero for that entire portion of their grade, and will in addition be subject to the university’s policy on academic honesty.

- Beyond the two “free” absences described above, I do not grant excused absences unless the circumstances are exceptional, or you travel out of town as a member of a UVM club or sports team. If you are a member of a sports team, please be sure to forward a copy of your schedule to me in writing as soon as it becomes available, so that attendance sheets can be marked accordingly on those days when your team travels out of town.

In addition to daily attendance, you are also encouraged to participate actively in class discussions. Thoughtful and frequent participation in class is typically rewarded as a “tie-breaker,” in the event that your final score is close to the next higher grade.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students are expected to be familiar with the UVM “Code of Academic Integrity” and with its standards, in particular. For instance:

1. **Students may not plagiarize.** All ideas, arguments, and phrases, submitted without attribution to other sources must be the creative product of the student. Thus, all text passages taken from the works of other authors (published or unpublished) must be properly cited. The same applies to paraphrased text, opinions, data, examples, illustrations, and all other creative work. Violations of this standard constitute plagiarism.

2. **Students may not fabricate.** All experimental data, observations, interviews, statistical surveys, and other information collected and reported as part of academic work must be authentic. Any alteration, e.g., the removal of statistical outliers, must be clearly documented. Data must not be falsified in any way. Violations of this standard constitute fabrication.

3. **Students may work cooperatively, but not collude.** Students are encouraged to collaborate on academic work within any limits that may be prescribed by their instructors. Students may only provide, seek or accept information about any academic work that will be submitted for a grade, to or from another student, with the authorization of the instructor. Violations of this standard constitute collusion.

4. **Students may not cheat.** Students must adhere to the guidelines provided by their instructors for completing academic work. Students may not claim as their own work any portion of academic work that was completed by another student. Students may only use materials approved by their instructor when completing an assignment or exam. Students may not present the same (or substantially the same) work for more than one
course or within the same course without obtaining approval from the instructor of each
course. Students must adhere to all course reserves regulations. Students may not act
dishonestly or convey information that the student knows or should know to be false, by
actions such as lying, forging or altering any document or record in order to gain an
unfair academic advantage. Violations of this standard constitute cheating.

Offenses against this code are deemed serious and insult the integrity of the entire
academic community. Suspected violations will be reported immediately to the Center for
Student Ethics & Standards for further investigation and may result in sanctions as serious
as an automatic “F” in the course, or even expulsion from the university.

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Students have the right to practice the religion of their choice. Please submit your
documented religious holiday schedule for the semester to me by the end of the second full
week of classes. Students who miss work for the purpose of religious observance will be
permitted either a make-up exam or a penalty-free extension.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In keeping with University policy, any student with a documented disability interested in
utilizing accommodations should contact ACCESS, the office of Disability Services on
campus. ACCESS works with students and faculty in an interactive process to explore
reasonable and appropriate accommodations via an accommodation letter to faculty with
recommended accommodations as early as possible each semester.

Location: A170 Living/Learning Center
Telephone: (802) 656-7753
E-mail: access@uvm.edu
Website: http://www.uvm.edu/access

CLASSROOM PROTOCOL

In coordination with the Department of Political Science, I have adopted the following
protocol for classroom behavior:

1. Students are expected to attend and be prepared for all regularly scheduled classes.

2. Students are expected to arrive on time and stay in class until the class period ends. If a
   student knows in advance that he or she will need to leave early, he or she must notify
   the instructor before the class period begins.

3. Students are expected to treat faculty and fellow students with respect. For example,
   students must not disrupt class by leaving and reentering during class, must not distract
   class by making noise, and must be attentive to comments being made by the
   instructors and by peers.
4. Students must turn off and stow *all* electronic devices (e.g., laptops, iPads, cell phones, etc.) before class begins. Why don't I allow such devices for taking notes? This post from Buzzfeed says it all: "11 Things You're Actually Doing on Your Laptop During a Lecture."

Students who violate any of these rules may be subject to whatever *grade penalty* I deem appropriate.

**ASKING FOR HELP**

Be sure to ask questions whenever you need to. Here is how:

- I am generally available to answer quick questions both before and after class.

- I hold office hours on a first-come, first-serve basis every Monday and Wednesday from 10:45-11:45 AM and again from 1:00-2:00 PM. If those hours are not compatible with your schedule, please do not hesitate to ask for an appointment. My office is located on the 5th floor of Old Mill, room 519.

- While you can reach me by telephone at (802) 656-4062, e-mail is generally faster. I check e-mail on a regular basis, but please understand that I may not be able to respond immediately to messages sent in the evening or on weekends. My e-mail address is: Deborah.Guber@uvm.edu

**CLASS CALENDAR**

*Note: All reading assignments marked [online] can be found on the POLS 125 website under the heading "Calendar."*

**I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

**Monday, August 31: Why Elections Matter**


**II. POLITICAL PARTIES IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**

**Wednesday, September 2: The Function of Political Parties**


**Friday, September 4: The American Two-Party System**

LABOR DAY HOLIDAY: Monday, September 7

Wednesday, September 9: Electoral Realignments and Party Systems


Friday, September 11: Understanding Ideology

Molly Ball, “Can the Republican Party Survive Trump?” The Atlantic (August 24) [online].

Monday, September 14: Party Polarization


Wednesday, September 16: Third Party Insurgents


III. THE CITIZEN AS VOTER

Friday, September 18: Voter Turnout in Comparative Perspective


Monday, September 21: The Vanishing (or Resurgent) Voter?

**Wednesday, September 23:**  *Motorize or Mobilize?*


**Friday, September 25:**  *The Politics of Voter Turnout: Fraud and Suppression*


**Monday, September 28:**  *How We Vote, Part 1: Identity Politics*

Ann Friedman, “All Politics is Identity Politics,” *The American Prospect* (July 29, 2010) [online].  

**Wednesday, September 30:**  *How We Vote, Part II: The Culture Wars*


**Friday, October 2:**  *How We Vote, Part III: Reason and Emotion*


**Monday, October 5:**  *How We Vote, Part IV: Issue Voting*


**NO CLASS: Wednesday, October 7 and Friday, October 9**

*(Professor attending the Phi Beta Kappa Society’s 44th Triennial Council in Denver, Colorado)*

**Monday, October 12:**  *How We Vote, Part V: Candidate Evaluations*

Wednesday, October 14: Putting It All Together


NO CLASS: Friday, October 16

(Professor attending a Yale University conference on “Building Public & Political Will for Climate Action” in New Haven, Connecticut)

EXAM #1: Monday, October 19

IV. CANDIDATES AND CAMPAIGNS

Wednesday, October 21: The Incumbency Factor in Congressional Elections


Friday, October 23: The Candidate-Centered Campaign


Monday, October 26: Drawing District Lines


Wednesday, October 28: Decoding Midterm Elections


Friday, October 30: Reforming Congressional Elections


Monday, November 2: The Electoral College


Wednesday, November 4: The Presidential Nomination Process

Friday, November 6:  *A History of Presidential Campaigns*


Monday, November 9:  *From Broadsides to Broadcasts: The Changing Role of the Media*

Mary E. Stuckey, “Here We Go Again: Presidential Elections and the National Media,” *Perspectives on Political Science* (Spring 2000): 99 [online].
Evgenia Pertez, “Going After Gore,” *Vanity Fair* (October 2007) [online].

Wednesday, November 11:  Film

🎬 “The War Room,” an excellent documentary about the 1992 Clinton campaign, will be viewed in class.

Friday, November 13:  Film

🎬 “The War Room” concludes.

Monday, November 16:  Campaign Advertising


Wednesday, November 18:  *Pundits vs. Pollsters: The Art and Science of Forecasting Elections*


Friday, November 20:  *Show Me the Money: The Politics of Campaign Finance*


@property

THANKSGIVING RECESS:  November 23-27

Monday, November 30:  *When Pigs Fly: In Search of Real Campaign Finance Reform*


✍ EXAM #2:  Wednesday, December 2
V. PARTIES IN GOVERNMENT

Friday, December 4: Gridlock and Divided Government


Monday, December 7: Partisanship and Polarization


Wednesday, December 9: Fixing Elections


✍️ FINAL PAPER DUE: Friday, December 11 by 10:30 AM.