



U.S. Electoral Politics

Political Science 196b
University of Vermont
Spring 2000
Tu Th 2:00 – 3:15
Lafayette Hall, Room 111

Dr. Deborah L. Guber
Assistant Professor of Political Science
522 Old Mill

Phone: 656-4062
E-mail: dguber@zoo.uvm.edu
Internet: <http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/>

Office hours: Tu Th 12:30 – 1:30, 3:30 – 4:30 (or 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.

Course 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) The bulk of your grade will be determined by two take-home essay examinations. The first will be due on Thursday, March 16, and the second on Tuesday, May 9. Each of these papers will be weighted as 30% of your final grade.
- 2) Two brief quizzes will be administered in class also, each worth 10% of your final grade. The dates for these quizzes are listed below in the class schedule.
- 3) Finally, your attendance and active participation is *essential* to the effectiveness and enjoyment of this class. It will account for the remaining 20% of your grade. Opportunities here are many. Your comments and opinions in class are always encouraged, but you may also improve this area of your grade by talking with me privately during office hours and by sending me your thoughts on the course via e-mail.

Required Reading

For your convenience, the following books may be purchased at the college bookstore.

- William H. Flanigan and Nancy H. Zingale, Political Behavior of the American Electorate, 9th edition (1998). Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Anthony Gierzynski, Money Rules: Financing Elections in America (2000). Westview Press.
- Paul Herrnson, Congressional Elections: Campaigning at Home and in Washington, 2nd edition (1997). Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- William J. Keefe, Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America, 8th edition (1997). Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Stephen J. Wayne, The Road to the White House 2000: The Politics of Presidential Elections (2000). Boston: Bedford/St. Martins.

In addition, a number of additional reading assignments are available on the Internet. Hyperlinks are provided on the class web page under “Class Schedule” at:

http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS196/Spring_2000/

Classroom Protocol

Please note that this instructor and the Department of Political Science have adopted the following classroom protocol.

1. Students are expected to attend and be prepared for all regularly scheduled classes. (Attendance will be taken and will count toward your final grade.)
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 ostentatiously not paying attention or by leaving and reentering the classroom during the class period. Actions which distract the class from the work at hand are not acceptable. It is expected that students will pay respectful attention to comments made by the lecturer and by fellow students.
4. Behavior that departs from these guidelines as well as any additional guidelines specific to the individual course is not acceptable and may be cause for disciplinary action.

Class Schedule

Note: All reading materials marked (online) are available on the class web page under the heading "Class Schedule"—

http://www.uvm.edu/~dguber/POLS196/Spring_2000/

I. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Tuesday, January 18: *Do Elections Really Matter?*

No reading assignment.

II. POLITICAL PARTIES IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

Thursday, January 20: *Why Parties?*

Keefe (1997): Chapter 1.
James Madison, Federalist #10 (online).
George Washington's Farewell Address (online).

Tuesday, January 25: *A History of the Party System*

Keefe (1997): Chapter 2.

Thursday, January 27: *Collaborative Project #1*

"Political Parties and Their Platforms" (online, "Group Projects")

III. UNDERSTANDING PARTISAN CHANGE

Tuesday, February 1 & Thursday, February 3: *Electoral Realignments and Party Systems*

Flanigan and Zingale (1998): Chapter 3.

Tuesday, February 8: *Collaborative Project #2*

"The 1994 Elections: Realignment at Last?" (online, "Group Projects")

IV. VOTER REGISTRATION AND TURNOUT

Thursday, February 10: *Why Americans Don't Vote*

Flanigan and Zingale (1998): Chapters 1-2.
The League of Women Voters, NVRA Factsheet (online).
Marshall Ganz, "Motor Voter or Motivated Voter?" The American Prospect, 28 (1996): 41-48 (online)

Tuesday, February 15: *Collaborative Project #3*

"Motorize or Mobilize? The Challenge of Increasing Voter Turnout" (online, "Group Projects")



QUIZ #1: Thursday, February 17

V. VOTING BEHAVIOR

Thursday, February 17: The “Funnel of Causality” Introduced”

Flanigan and Zingale (1998): Chapters 4 & 5

Tuesday, February 22: Long Term Influences on the Vote

Flanigan and Zingale (1998): Chapter 6.

Thursday, February 24: Short Term Influences on the Vote

Flanigan and Zingale (1998): Chapter 8.

VI. ELECTIONS FOR CONGRESS

Tuesday, February 29: *The Incumbency Factor*

Herrnson (1997): Chapters 1-6.

Thursday, March 2: *The Candidate-Centered Campaign*

Herrson (1997): Chapters 7-11.

Steven Stark, “Too Representative Government,” The Atlantic Monthly, May 1995 (online).



TOWN MEETING DAY RECESS: Tuesday, March 7

Thursday, March 9: *Collaborative Project #4*

“Term Limits: Right Time or Wrong Idea?” (online, “Group Projects”)

VII. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

Tuesday, March 14: *The Electoral College*

Wayne (2000): Chapter 1.

Explore the [U.S. Electoral College Calculator](#) (online).



MIDTERM PAPER DUE: Thursday, March 16

Thursday, March 16: *The Nomination Process*

Wayne (2000): Chapters 4 & 5.

Keefe (1997): Chapter 3.



SPRING RECESS: March 20-24

Tuesday, March 28: *Collaborative Project #5*

“‘Why Great Men Are Not Chosen President:’ A Critical Look at the Presidential Selection Process” (online, “Group Projects”)

Thursday, March 30: *The Changing Role of the Presidential Candidate*

T.B.A

Tuesday, April 4: *Film*



The War Room, an excellent documentary on the 1992 Clinton campaign, will be viewed during class hours.

VIII. THE SCIENCE AND ART OF CAMPAIGNING

Thursday, April 6: *The Media Campaign*

Wayne (2000): Chapters 6 & 7.

Flanigan and Zinglae (1998): Chapter 7.

Tuesday, April 11: *Campaign Finance*

Gierzynski (2000): All.

Thursday, April 13: *Collaborative Project #6*

“If It Isn't Broken... Or Is It? Campaign Finance Reform in the 90s” (online, “Group Projects”)



QUIZ #2: Tuesday, April 18

IX. DIVIDED GOVERNMENT

Tuesday, April 18: *The Electoral Origins of Divided Government*

Keefe (1997): Chapter 6.

Thursday, April 20: *Truth and Consequences*

Richard M. Valelly, “Divided The Govern,” The American Prospect, 11 (Fall 1992): 124-136 (online).

X. DIRECT DEMOCRACY

Tuesday, April 25: *The Voter as Legislator*

Explore the Direct Democracy Center (online).

XI. ELECTORAL REFORM

Thursday, April 27: *The Politics of Reform*

Keefe (1997): Chapter 7.

Wayne (2000): Chapter 9.

Michael Link, “A Radical Plan to Change American Politics,” The Atlantic Monthly, August 1992 (online).

Tuesday, May 2: *Why Elections Matter*

No reading assignment.



FINAL PAPER DUE: Tuesday, May 9