

POLS 3033
Electoral Behavior

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Office Hours:
Wednesday 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Wednesday 1:00 PM-3:00 PM
Thursday 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM
and by appointment

[email](#)
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Elections serve as a means of linking citizens to government. They provide a means of legitimizing governmental authority. This course will consider various explanations that have been offered for American elections, especially those of the last seven decades. Theories of electoral behavior and current controversies in the study of elections will be examined. We will also be examining the linkages between voting behavior, campaign behavior, and the actions of elected officials. Note that we will spend time on both presidential and congressional elections.

The course is largely devoted to reading and discussing the relevant literature. Since the reading load is not especially onerous, I expect you will have completed the reading assignments BEFORE class. Careful and timely preparation for class is essential. I will be calling upon you a number of times throughout the semester. Being in class that day will add one point to your final examination score. Answering my question correctly will add another point to your final exam score.

There will be unannounced quizzes over the material throughout the term. The highest 75% of the quizzes (however many there will be is to be determined) will count. So, if there are four quizzes, the highest three will count. If there are eight, the highest 6 will count. These quizzes will constitute 10% of your final grade.

There will be three examinations consisting of short/medium answer and identification items over the course of the semester. These examinations will draw from both the reading and the lecture. All of the examinations are cumulative. The first two exams are each worth 20% of your final grade. The final exam is worth one-quarter of your final grade.

Aside from the examinations, you are to write a research paper. In this paper, I want you to develop a hypothesis concerning elections and evaluate this hypothesis with the available evidence. Do not simply look for evidence that supports your hypothesis. Look for evidence regardless of whether it supports your hypothesis. This paper is to be much more than simply a summary of what others have had to say on a topic. If you simply do a literature review, you will

not be happy with your grade. There will be more on the writing process as the semester continues. You will note, however, that there are several due dates associated with the paper. Aside from these due dates, you are required to meet with me about your paper. At each of these stages, you will receive a grade and comments on what you have turned into me. At each stage of the paper, you are to turn in the previous graded component. If you neglect to do this, there will be a one letter grade penalty. Late assignments are penalized a full letter grade a day (weekends do not count). You are required to use the *American Political Science Association Style Guide* that is in the page linked [here](#) in writing your paper. Proper usage of this resource will be a component of your grade on the paper. The paper is worth 25% of your grade. The first stage of the paper is a proposal or a plan of attack. In this, you are to tell me what you are going to do in your paper. Specifically, what hypothesis, or hypotheses, are you going to be testing. Where are you going to get the information you need to test your hypotheses? Do not simply tell me political science journals or government data. If I write resubmit on your proposal, that means make changes to it and turn it in again.

I will diligently enforce the University Academic Integrity Policy. See the following:

<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/fsonline/customcf/currentfacultymanual/part6section2.pdf>.

If you have any questions as to how this is related to this class, please see me. Note that violations of the academic integrity policy, such as committing plagiarism, may result in the assignment of an XF for the course and additional punishments.

East Carolina University seeks to comply fully with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Students requesting accommodations based on a disability must be registered with the Department for Disability Support Services located in Slay 138 (252) 737-1016 (Voice/TTY).

The course syllabus is a general plan for the course; deviations announced to the class by the instructor may be necessary.

Learning Objectives

- Comprehend and explain how surveys are conducted, including sampling and questionnaire design, and how to interpret their results
- Evaluate political science theories of how people form opinions and translate opinions into answers to survey questions
- Understand—and reflect on—debates about the “competence” of the public and how much public opinion does (and should) affect public policy
- Understand the connections between voters, elections, policy responsiveness, and democratic accountability
- Understand the determinants of voter choices, including the different political science theories of voting behavior
- Evaluate various theories of why we vote the way we do
- Understand the dynamics of Congressional elections
- Understand how political scientists study and analyze voting and elections, and contrast their findings with the views of media pundits and campaign professionals

Required Texts

Aldrich, John H., Jamie L. Carson, Brad T. Gomez, and David W. Rohde. 2018. *Change and Continuity in the 2016 Elections*. Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press. (hereafter Aldrich et al.)

Asher, Herbert B. 2016. *Polling and the Public: What Every Citizen Should Know*, 9th edition. Washington D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.

Jacobson, Gary C. and Jamie L. Carson. 2015. *The Politics of Congressional Elections*, 9th edition. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (hereafter J/C)

Other Readings (to be emailed)

Popkin, Samuel L. 1994. *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

A selection from *PS: Political Science and Politics* on political forecasting.

Exam I 25 September
Exam II 30 October
Exam III 6 December 11:00-1:30

Hypothesis, plan of attack, and preliminary sources: 18 September 2018 20%
Introduction to paper: 16 October 2018 20%
Revised introduction to paper and analysis: 15 November 2018 40%
Completed paper: 29 November 2018 20%

Reading Schedule		
August 21-23	Syllabus, Introduction, and Polling and the Public	Aldrich et al., Introduction Asher, Chapter 1
August 28	Nonattitudes	Asher, Chapter 2
August 30	Wording/Context	Asher, Chapter 3
September 4	Sampling Techniques	Asher, Chapter 4
September 6	Interviewing/Data Collection	Asher, Chapter 5
September 11	Media and Polls	Asher, Chapter 6
September 13	Polls and Elections	Asher, Chapter 7

September 18-20	Analyzing/Interpreting	Asher, Chapter 8
September 27	Nomination Race	Aldrich et al., Chapter 1
October 2	General Election Campaign	Aldrich et al., Chapter 2
October 4	Results	Aldrich et al., Chapter 3
October 11	Turnout	Aldrich et al., Chapter 4
October 16	Social Forces	Aldrich et al., Chapter 5
October 18	Candidates/Issues Gathering Information	Aldrich et al., Chapter 6 Popkin
October 23	Performance Voting	Aldrich et al., Chapter 7
October 25	Party Identification Forecasting	Aldrich et al., Chapter 8 PS forecasting
November 1	Introduction	J/C, Chapter 1
November 6-8	Context	J/C, Chapter 2
November 13	Candidates/Issues	J/C, Chapter 3
November 15	Campaigns	J/C, Chapter 4
November 20	Voters	J/C, Chapter 5
November 27	National Politics and Congressional Campaigns Elections and the Politics of Congress	J/C, Chapters 6 & 7
November 29	Polling and Democracy Future of American Politics	Asher, Chapter 9 Aldrich et al., Chapter 11

In the event of a weather or other emergency, information about the status of classes at ECU is available the ECU emergency information hotline (252-328-0062) and on the ECU emergency alert website (<http://www.ecu.edu/alert>).

If face-to-face classes are suspended, I will send an email to your university account and an announcement via Blackboard that details how we will communicate during the disruption and how the course will proceed.